

# Rethinking society

*Individuals, Culture and Migration*

Volume 2

**Migration and Society**

Literature, Translation, Film

**Migration and Society**  
**Literature, Translation, Film**

Edited by:

**Vladimer Luarsabishvili**

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This book demonstrates the role of migration in the formation and development of societies. Forming part of the second volume of the book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration*, the principle aim of *Migration and Society* is to reveal the main peculiarities of a phenomenon of migration in a complex world of human communication.

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## Contributors

ASIER BARANDIARAN AMARIKA graduated in Basque Philology from the University of Deusto (1993). After two years of secondary education, he taught at the University of Navarra from 1995 onwards. He has been there the secretary of the Diploma in Basque Studies since 2002. In 2006 he was appointed coordinator of the Chair of Language and Culture at the University of Navarra. In 2002, he obtained his PhD from the University of the Basque Country, after presenting his doctoral thesis supervised by Professor Jon Kortazar. In the same year, 2002, he also obtained a Master's degree in Primary Education from the Complutense University. In 2009 he joined a research group called LAIDA. Since 2011 he has been professor at the University of the Basque Country in the Department of Language and Literature Didactics. He has published several books on the rhetoric of Basque oral literature and has written literary reviews and studies on Basque journalism and Basque literature. In recent times, he has paid particular attention to Basque literature in Navarre.

MARCO BRUNO (PhD) is Associate professor of Sociology of Culture and Communication at Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Communication and Social Research. His main research focuses on media, diversity and migration; media, culture and Muslim world; journalism and history of journalism; news-framing; political communication. He authored the book *Cornici di realtà. Il frame e l'analisi dell'informazione* (Milano, 2014) and various articles and essays on media representations of immigration.

MARTA ESPINOSA BERROCAL, PhD in Literary Studies, she is currently working as an associate professor at the Complutense University of Madrid and Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle universities. Interested in contemporary literature, she has studied the hybrid forms of poetic narrative as well as the literary representation of memory and violence.

ANTONIO GARRIDO DOMÍNGUEZ is currently working as a professor at the Complutense University of Madrid. As a researcher, his major interests are the theory and analysis of contemporary narrative, the theory of literary fiction and hermeneutics. His main works are *El texto narrativo*, *Aspectos de la novela en Cervantes y Narración y ficción*. *Literatura e invención de mundos*.

MARÍA MARCOS RAMOS earned a B.A. (University of the Basque Country) and a Ph.D. (University of Salamanca) in Audiovisual Communication, and she was granted the Extraordinary Doctoral Award from the University of Salamanca. She is assistant professor of Audiovisual Communication at the University of Salamanca and she collaborates with the Audiovisual Observatory of the University of Salamanca, where she participates in various research projects on media and ethnic minorities. Her current research studies the representation of immigration and gender in audiovisual fiction, cinematographic representation of society in cinema and analysis of audiovisual fiction, etc. topics on which she has published articles in scientific journals and monographs. She is the editor of two books: *Cine desde las dos orillas: directores españoles y brasileños* (Andavira, 2018) and *A ambos lados del Atlántico: películas españolas y brasileñas premiadas* (Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2020) and director of the *Congreso Internacional Historia, Literatura y Arte en el cine en español y en portugués* that has been made since 2011.

JUAN MIGUEL ZARANDONA is associate professor at the University of Valladolid (Soria), Spain. His major research interests are related to translation studies and the humanities: contemporary literature, history of translation, cultural studies and the postcolonial world. He is editor of the journal *Hermēneus* on Translation Studies and the book series *Vertere* and *Disbabelia*.

LUCIANO NOSETTO is professor of State Theories at the School of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Social Sciences by the University of Buenos Aires, where he directs the research group *Methods in Political Theory*. He is the author of *Michel Foucault y la política*, *Lecturas de Carl Schmitt: Forma y contenido de la teología política*, and *Leo Strauss: de Nietzsche a Platón*. He translated Leo Strauss' *Natural Right and History* into Spanish. He currently holds a permanent position as independent researcher at the Argentine National Council of Science and Technology.

JAVIER SÁNCHEZ ZAPATERO is Professor at University of Salamanca, where he teaches Literary Theory and Comparative Literature. Currently, he is leader of the research group about Spanish Civil War Literature (*Los Internacionales y la Guerra Civil Española: literatura, compromiso y memoria*) and co-director of an anual

conference about crime fiction (Congreso de Novela y Cine Negro). Among other titles, he is the autor of the books *Escribir el horror: Literatura y campos de concentración* (2010), *Max Aub y la escritura de la memoria* (2014), *Max Aub: Epistolario español* (2016), *Continuará... Sagas literarias en el género negro y policiaco español* (2017, in collaboration with Àlex Martín Escibà) and *Arde Madrid. Narrativa y Guerra Civil* (2020).



## Introduction: Individuals and Society

VLADIMER LUARSABISHVILI

The book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration* aims to describe the structural peculiarities and functional characteristics of modern society. In the era of globalization, multiculturalism and massive migrations, the disappearance of one set of values and the appearance of another is observable. Society as a form of human interactions is subjected to revision and re-definition from the points of view of philosophy, rhetoric, history, literature and psychology, among others.

*Rethinking society* means the critical examination of modern ways of communication and their impact on the creation of new sets of values. Different approaches to the system of education and its role in the formation of free individuals may be of crucial importance for personal liberty and for establishment of liberal democracies all round the world.

*Individuals* are the main composers of human progress due to their different and original approaches to human values and basic rights. As Bertrand Russell put it, “[...] a community needs, if it is to prosper, a certain number of individuals who do not wholly conform to the general type. Practically all progress, artistic, moral, and intellectual, was dependent upon such individuals, who have been a decisive factor in the transition from barbarism to civilization.” The role of individual needs to be reconsidered in modern socio-cultural ambience and historical context which is one of the main challenges for modern society.

*Culture* is an ambience where values are formed and shared. Peter Burke indicates the coexistence of *Cultural History* and *History of Cultures* making emphasis on five moments of the development of the History of Culture in different parts of the world. The cultural tradition is a mode of experience and acting which reveals the intellectual possibilities and human perspectives of creation and thinking. “Studies

in Culture” may contain basic mechanisms of human relations demonstrating the acceptance or rejection of ideas, values and relations.

*Migration* facilitates diffusion of ideas and values, reveals possibilities for adaptation in the new *topos* and conditions the formation of new individual and/or collective narrative. According to Stephen Greenblatt, in an age of global mobility we need to rethink the essence of culture.

\* \* \*

*Migration and Society* is the second volume of the book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration*. Its principle aim is to reveal the main peculiarities of a phenomenon of migration in a complex world of human communication. Researchers from different universities of Europe and Latin America have contributed to this volume, studying multiple aspects of human coexistence in modern society. As a book series editor, I would like to thank all authors for their kind participation – I indicate here my sincere debt to them for their encouragement with this project. Special thanks to the members of Editorial and Advisory Editorial Boards for their remarks and suggestions.

## Two Insights into Borders from the Perspective of the Novel

Marta Espinosa Berrocal and Antonio Garrido Domínguez

**Abstract:** This paper concerns the concept of the border, one of the main analytical instruments of postcolonial studies, through the analysis and interpretation of two novels that put their focus on Mexico-USA frontier. The most important issue is that there are several meanings associated to this border like, among others, it separates not only two countries but also two ways of life and works as a memorial to those who have been ignored by the official history and excluded from the social contract.

**Keywords:** novel, frontier, migration, racism, exploitation

1. The fact that changes in society ultimately affect literature in one way or another is a well-known fact that has been demonstrated by both today's sociology of literature and other fields, such as cultural studies. It is therefore hardly debatable that one of the latest, most relevant worldwide phenomena is the significant increase in migration or displacement due to famine or war, and the impact that this has had on the notion of the border in literature. In both Europe and America, the main destinations of migratory movements from Africa, the Middle East, and Central or South America, the border represents both the ultimate goal and the major obstacle to achieving a supposedly better life. Nowadays, the border is one of the core concepts of Post-colonial Studies and, according to Oswaldo Zavala the border, in the context of Latin America, should be understood as a "geopolitical notion" (Spanish colonization); the teleological objective of various modernity projects" (by the nations that achieved emancipation from the tutelage of Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century); and, finally, as "a cultural signifier". It is undoubtedly a complex concept of confrontation and symbiosis that is not without controversy (2017: 219- 224). It is important to note that in the books analysed, namely, *Lost Children Archive*, by Valeria Luiselli (2019) and *Ni siquiera los Muertos* by Juan Gómez Bárcena (2019), these notions - particularly the first and the last - are used partially or totally as a means of gauging the significance of the border in literature. In the latter case, the closest notion would be that of Homi Bhabha, who places the border on an epistemic horizon (2005).

2. The first novel to be analysed is *Ni siquiera los muertos* by Juan Gómez Bárcena (2019), in which the border is identified, in the first place, as the wall that separates Mexico from the United States - the Trump wall. We will show that in this novel, the significance of the border goes far beyond the geopolitical or socio-political sphere and enters what could be called a world view or meaning of life. Hence, what at first appears to describe the physical border between Mexico and the USA ends up referring to strikingly immaterial realities; the border, therefore, is a metaphor.

Although it does not fulfil all the criteria, Gómez Bárcena's text initially conforms to what M. Bajtín (2019: 289-327) calls the "coming of age" novel, a genre with a long tradition based compositionally on a series of features such as the road, the journey, the obstacles - that illustrate the strength or weakness of the hero - and the search. The road starts in central Mexico and extends beyond the border of the United States. The journey, the pursuit of the Indian Juan by his Spanish namesake through inhospitable lands and along dusty roads, is always oriented northwards and spans five centuries, a duration that accentuates the allegorical nature of the journey. It is, in fact, a journey through the history of Mexico, stopping off at milestones such as New Spain, the Revolution, the Trump wall, and even an event as recent as the ongoing killing of young women in and around Ciudad Juárez.

The trip is first and foremost presented as a hunt for Juan the Indian who, in both the doctrinal and socio-political sense, represents a real danger both for political and ecclesiastical power. The main reason for his arrest is that his proclamations have revealed his unorthodox religious views and his opposition to the Crown. Doctrinally, his behaviour is justified at first because he has been conveniently indoctrinated by the Franciscans in the great truths of Christianity, and this training compels him to undertake his own translation of the Bible, a text he interprets in terms of evangelical authenticity and requirements. This is the basis for his proclamation of the equality of men, the ideal of poverty, and the need to embrace justice - something that, it is implied, is sorely lacking in New Spain. This is why he needs

to be eliminated, and after others had failed, Juan de Toñanes was eventually hired to carry out the task: the Viceroy's envoys sent him out to hunt for the Indian Juan and bring him back dead or alive. Accepting the commission means abandoning his home, his humble business, and leaving his partner defenceless in exchange for 250 escudos and a horse; if he is successful, he will be rewarded with a further 1000 escudos.

The pursuer's journey takes place in a physical space that can be located in Mexico, and as mentioned above, he always travels northward, which is the direction taken by the Indian Juan, according to a series of informants he meets along the way. The pursuit is always based on statements from people who have known or been in contact with Juan the Indian, and who guide him in the direction of the object of his pursuit. The trip, without ceasing to be physical, gradually turns into a spiritual journey, particularly from the moment when Diego de Fraga, someone who had previously been entrusted with this mission and is now a devoted follower of the Indian, gives the pursuer the manuscript of the translation of the Bible with his comments and highlights, together with a hand-painted portrait of the translator. From this moment on, the pursuer's opinion of his indigenous namesake begins to change, particularly when he realizes the extent of his appeal among the different communities he encounters, and the power of the biblical passages on which he relies. The idea that Juan the Indian is some kind of prophet, a very different character from the one described by the Viceroy's envoys, starts to take shape in the pursuer's mind. As this conviction grows, the pursuer - without relinquishing his mission - slowly starts to see Juan the Indian in an entirely different light.

The narrator's critical opinion of institutions or social classes is made clear early on in the trip, and continues throughout the text. A good example of this is the way he describes the role of the Spanish administration and the different religious orders. Perhaps the most striking criticism is his consideration of indigenous people as persons, his description of how they are treated by the authorities or by those who are entrusted with their protection. Especially interesting in this regard is the conversation between the priest, the doctor and the

*encomendero* [government envoy] in the tavern, in which they discuss the weakness and poor aptitude of the indigenous people for physical work (2019: 100-108, 120-130).

In addition to their shared name, another curious fact, and one that suggest that the two characters (among others) are doppelgangers, is their great physical resemblance and the fact that Juan the Indian knows of the existence of the pursuer, always seems to know when he will arrive, and even provides him with help through informants or intermediaries. His resemblance to other people leads to him being believed dead on several occasions, although the pursuer is not taken in by appearances and always continues his search. The first of these reflections, as mentioned above, is Juan himself, and the best proof lies in the testimonies to this effect of the Chichimeca Indians and the fact that he is dressed in the threadbare clothes of the one they call the *Padre* [Father]. However, the identification-confusion extends to other characters who are called by different names depending on their characteristic activity, such as '*padre*' or '*padrecito*' [little father] (religion), '*patron*' (owner of the cotton factory), '*el compadre*' (the Mexican revolution), '*padrote*' (businessman). Juan, however, is not deceived by these decoys and knows the true identity of Juan the Indian (371). The false doubles are an attempt to trick the pursuer into giving up his mission, and reveal the benefit of the contradiction between being and appearing in this novel. Nothing is what it seems: Juan the Indian's doppelgangers, the insurmountable wall, the promises of a better life after crossing the border or overcoming the obstacle, the arrival in the country where life is supposed to be much easier. This is one of the great trials, together with the many difficulties and dangers encountered on the road, that Juan must overcome before reaching his goal.

Although he always seems to be aware of the movements of his pursuer, Juan the Indian never appears before him physically. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the north, the border - which is reached on the back of *La Bestia* the freight train that crosses Mexico and stops at this point loaded with chemicals, minerals, cement and Central American emigrants -

becomes the final destination. This is the end point of the whole journey; behind that point lie benefits of a much more attractive way of life than that lived by the pursuer Juan and the other travellers perched on the roof of the train carriages.

Nadie le pregunta adónde se dirige. Todos van a lo mismo: a los dólares, a la chamba, al jale, el buen dinero. Todos van a los Estados Unidos, que a veces llaman USA, y a veces América, o con los gringos, o al norte, o incluso de ningún modo, sólo señalan el horizonte y basta. Hablan de la frontera, de llegar a la frontera, como si la frontera fuera un lugar, un destino en sí mismo y no sólo una raya que se traspasa. Allá, al otro lado, está el dinero. Está la prosperidad. Está el futuro. Y todos se dirigen a ese futuro, encaramados en el techo de un vagón que viaja vacío, en un tren que no se detiene... Este tren no es tren sino la Bestia. Lo llaman la Bestia, explican, porque su voracidad no se agota nunca. Un monstruo que se alimenta sólo de carne centroamericana (Gómez Bárcena, 2019: 315).<sup>1</sup>

The last two encounters - with the *Navaja* and, above all, the woman dressed in black are particularly relevant. At the request of the Juan the Indian, the *Navaja* helps the narrator cross the border through a tunnel hidden in the wall; he, moreover, like the previous informants, extols the virtues of Juan the Indian and emphasises the great physical resemblance between them. Despite this, Juan's first impressions of the cross-border territory are not good; he is disappointed and decides to return south. The sudden appearance of the woman in black driving a truck and, above all, her long speech to Juan as they drive into the desert, compels him to change his decision. It is interesting to note, in this respect, that the woman, who is the last important figure the pursuer encounters, ultimately decides the final meaning of the text and, more specifically, of the border. In reality, this is the moment when the figure of Juan the Indian - an image that only exists in the words of others - is

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<sup>1</sup> [No one asks where they are going. They are all going to the same place: to dollars, to work, a job, good money. They are all going to the United States, which they sometimes call the USA, and sometimes America, or they're going to the gringos, or to the north, or even just to a place, a destination in itself, or simply a line to be crossed. There, on the other side, is money. Prosperity. The future. And they are all heading to that future, perched on the roof of an empty carriage, on a train that doesn't stop ... This train is not a train, it's *La Bestia*. They call it *La Bestia*, they explain, because of its insatiable voracity. It is a monster that eats only Central American meat.]

definitely transformed into an idea of life.

Juan's journey through Mexico is, ultimately, a journey of revelation and transformation: a manifestation of the true entity of the hunted man and, as a result, the start of the pursuer's inner process. This progression starts to become evident relatively early on in the book, and is consolidated in women's important discourse in the final chapter. It is there that the meaning of the border and what the journey north represents become clear: the promise of an apparently better future and at the same time the evils of modern ultra-liberal capitalism, such as the systematic exploitation of human beings and the pre-eminence of money. But the border also represents violence against women from Central America on their way north, who are viciously killed in the vicinity of the border after being raped. These women are discarded like waste - some are not even buried. It is a hellish price to pay for daring to embark on a painful journey to feed their families, and the fact that the description appears at exactly this point clearly shows the true colours of a world dominated by the aforementioned values (333-336). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) refers to the association between the border and violence - more specifically, sexual violence against women. She is actually referring to the border as a kind of third country between Mexico and the United States, where relations between these two states, since the time of the occupation of the Mexican north by the US, have been marked by a permanent situation of violence against indigenous women. These women have not only had to face the difficulty of finding their place in a hostile social and work environment, but those who have been sexually assaulted have also had to bear the rejection of their own community. The border, according to the author, becomes the pretext for systematic discrimination and marginalization:

La frontera entre Estados Unidos y México es *una herida abierta* donde el tercer Mundo se araña contra el primero y sangra... Las fronteras están diseñadas para definir los lugares que son seguros y los que no lo son, para distinguir el *us* (nosotros) del *them* (ellos)... Un territorio fronterizo es un lugar vago e indefinido creado por el residuo emocional de una linde contra natura. Está en estado permanente de transición. Sus



habitantes son los prohibidos y los *baneados*. Allí viven *los atravesados*: los bizcos, los perversos, los *queer*, los problemáticos, los chuchos callejeros, los mulatos, los de raza mezclada, los medio muertos; en resumen, quienes cruzan, quienes pasan por encima o atraviesan los confines de lo <<normal>> (Anzaldúa, 1987: 46).<sup>2</sup>

But above all, behind the frontier, behind the bright lights and promise of a better life, lurks one of the greatest dangers for humanity, albeit in the guise of progress: atomic energy. Nuclear explosions have been perfected to such an extent that they can now kill people but spare objects, things, in other words, anything that can provide some benefit apart from the destruction of living beings. In the words of the author, “a place for the things we make, but not for us” (Gómez Bárcena, 2019: 398).

Thus, the border is fed by positive and, above all, negative connotations. The former includes its appeal for Mexicans and Central Americans as the incarnation of a future full of promise of a better life in every way. Ultimately, however, the negative connotations prevail, starting with the racism that awaits them: America’s father (Trump) has identified Mexican women with the snake in the famous story who ends up causing the death of the woman who had saved him from starvation and cold. The border is not only the great physical obstacle that divides two countries and bars access to the ideal world, it also separates, above all, two civilizations, two ways of understanding life: to the north lies the wealth and abundance that the South lacks, but it also harbours racism and, above all, a way of life dominated by unscrupulous capitalism. The worst danger, however, as mentioned above, is nuclear energy, because it means certain death for many. For this reason, the woman in black’s final suggestion is to live neither in the north nor the south, but in a third

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<sup>2</sup> [The border between the United States and Mexico is *an open wound where* the first world scratches the third world until it bleeds ... Borders are designed to define places that are safe and those that are not, to differentiate the *us* (us) from the *them* (them)... A border territory is a vague, diffuse place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a permanent state of transition. Its inhabitants are the forbidden, the *banned*. The population is made up of misfits: the cross-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the street mutts, the mulattoes, the half-castes, the half dead, in short, those who cross over, those who pass over, or go beyond the confines of “normal”.]

desolate, inhospitable place - the desert - and to start a new life there based on simplicity, with no attachments or material possessions. Thus, the future ultimately takes the form of a house standing alone in the middle of the desert, with only a human being on the threshold. This is the important lesson learned from such a long journey through time and space: the riches of the great north are but a decoy that conceals great danger.

3. Valeria Luiselli's book *Lost Children Archive* (2019) echoes many of the notions of border we have just highlighted from *Ni siquiera los muertos*. Set in a different biographical context and with different geographical "borders", both authors are from the same generation and are published by the same company, but offer us two very different novels published in the same year. The blatant fiction we found in Gómez Bárcena's novel is blurred in *Lost Children Archive*, a book that flirts with the limits of fiction, and has been translated into Spanish by the author herself and Daniel Saldaña Paris. In fact, the title of the original English version, *Lost Children Archive*, evokes a previous book by Luiselli (2016), *Los niños perdidos (un ensayo en cuarenta preguntas)* [The lost children, an essay in forty questions], based on the author's personal experience as an interpreter for undocumented children arriving in the United States from Central America to obtain their "Green card", their passport to the American dream. The book is structured around the time lag between the questions asked (supposedly logical, coherent, ordered) and the responses of children whose lives are "so broken and devastated" that it seems impossible to give them a narrative logic. The essay thus goes beyond the socio-political circumstances of the presidential elections that installed Trump in power to reflect on the difficulty of narrating the border, that space inhabited by the silence of a cruel, violent desert, full of scams and dangers, which ultimately kills some of those "lost children", the most vulnerable on that journey.

*Lost Children Archive* returns to the motif of migrant children but from a much more complex literary perspective, where the border is filled with nuances and acquires various symbolic values. Its omnipresence is

justified by the US geography and the reason for the trip that shapes the story-line. Spatiality is responsible for the unfolding of events in Luiselli's work, built from fragments that the reader pieces together to form something akin to a photo album. In fact, a Polaroid camera, a gift from the parents to the child of the tribe for his tenth birthday, is one of the central objects and witnesses a journey that eventually crosses the borders outside the family nucleus, evidencing distances and silences between the individuals who form a community. Moreover, the border becomes a language, the only code that can tell the tale based on fragments and previous words. For this reason, we will analyse the border from three perspectives: the one that affects the outskirts of the text and is echoed in Luiselli's novel (geopolitical border between Mexico and the United States); the one involving the relationship between each family member and the community they have created (that has to do with identity); and the one that eventually shapes the aesthetics of the book.

3.1. The first definition is socio-political in nature and ties in directly with the aforementioned essay on the "lost children." The title, the reason for the family road trip, the items on the questionnaire, or the portrait of the protagonist who appropriates one of the homodiegetic narrative voices in the book, directly indicate this intertextual relationship that evidences a socio-political criticism of the border - present, essentially, in four aspects.

The first is related to the replica of the voice that testifies to the violence suffered by these refugee children. Like the 2016 essay, the narrator who opens the novel is a young Mexican mother settled in the United States who has worked as an interpreter in a New York immigration court, a portrait that also takes us back to the image that the author transmits beyond the confines of her books. If, as Doležel claims, first-person narrators may be less reliable in "authenticating" the fictional world they are trying to construct with their words, in *Lost Children Archive* the possible weakness of the narrative voice (which, as we will see, is one of the structural pillars of the work) is compensated by the implicit image of the author, witness and documentarist of the lives of

these children, built on several levels: textual, peritextual (a good example is Jon Lee Anderson's introduction to *Los niños perdidos*) and epitextual. This insistence on indicating the outskirts of the text from inside reinforces in some way the ethical character of her narrative voice, strengthening her rhetorical authority and the logic of her arguments, which come from proven, documented sources.

This voice is mainly responsible for a narrative built essentially on fragment-scenes within a frame-story about the journey of a family-tribe from New York to Arizona. The two adults of the tribe met while engaged in a New York University project to document the "soundscape" of the city, which compels both to pay particular attention to all kinds of stories and echoes. This frame-story allows the author to introduce Manuela, mother of one of the narrator's daughter's schoolmates. Manuela is of Mexican origin and speaks Triqui, one of the most complex tonal languages that the narrator wishes to document in her sound catalogue. The conversation leads Manuela to confide in the narrator and tell her the story of her other two daughters for whom her grandmother had made identical dresses with the mother's phone number sewn into the neck, so that they could travel to the US with the help of a "coyote". The girls reach the border, but are arrested. The narrator's involvement with this story then begins, and she offers to translate the papers they need in exchange for Manuela make a recording in Triqui. Thus, the socio-political frontier is not evident on an exclusively enunciative level, but moves to the "semantic" level of the story. On this second level, meanwhile, the story of Manuela's daughters is echoed in the news on the radio that the family listens to during their trip. This becomes the main topic of their conversations, and forms the basis for what the narrator calls their "family lexicon":

Cuando nuestros hijos hablan sobre los niños refugiados, los llaman siempre "los niños perdidos". Supongo que la palabra "refugiado" es más difícil de recordar. E incluso si el término "perdidos" no es muy preciso, en nuestro léxico familiar los refugiados se han convertido en "los niños perdidos". Y

en cierto sentido, supongo, sí son niños perdidos. Son niños que han perdido su derecho a la niñez (Luiselli, 2019: 97-98).<sup>3</sup>

This complicit lexicon is full of shades of meaning, since “lost” is not only a simple translation of connotative concepts from a political perspective (conveying, therefore, an explicit complaint), but it also allows us to merge two plots that are part of the diegesis of the book, and which revolve around three stories: the aforementioned story of Manuela’s daughters; the stories of refugee children heard over the radio; and the temporary disappearance of the narrator’s children, who are literally “lost” at one point in the trip. The relationship that is woven between these stories shapes the different narrative levels of the book that are resolved (and dissolved) towards the end.

Placing the above-mentioned paragraph in one of the fragments entitled “Tales” of the chapter “Undocumented” is no coincidence either - the titles are in fact not at all innocent. In the scene, the mother/co-driver listens to the stories the children invent to entertain themselves in the car. In them, the Apache children they have heard fascinating stories about from their father are mixed up with the “lost children” who dominate much of the radio news they listen to inside the refuge that is the car. As well as being a “border” way of constructing stories, these “echoes” elevate the condemnation of the US-Mexico border to a more universal level as a condemnation of violence, of the absence of the “lost” when compiling the History of events.

Thus, the *Elegies of the Lost Boys* appear scattered throughout the novel as a lament for the absent who take on new names and faces in each era (which History takes care to erase). The text, apocryphal (and also “lost” as the boy confesses at the end of the novel) is the work of one Ella Camposanto (a character inspired by the Mexican author Nellie Campobello, author of *Cartucho*) and narrates, in seventeen fragments the adventures of a group of children who try to cross the border with

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<sup>3</sup> [When our children talk about refugee children they always call them “the lost children.” I guess the word “refugee” is harder to remember. And even if the term “lost” is somewhat vague, in our family lexicon refugees have become “the lost children”. And in a sense, I suppose they are lost children. They are children who have lost their right to childhood.]

the help of a *coyote*.

3.2. Borders, however, are not just an exterior phenomenon. A part of that world of contrasts appears to filter through the windows of the car-refuge from which the family observe and pass through the different borders of the American landscape. The frame-story of the family-tribe is built to the syncopated rhythm of a journey that requires stops, stories, games and flashbacks, and is told as a fragment, dwelling on details, on the little things that shape a familiar world perceived from the double perspective provided by the voices of the mother and the child (to which is added a third, heterodiegetic, voice that narrates the *Elegies for lost children*). The voices are superimposed using repetition and difference, since many of the scenes previously narrated by the mother are reinterpreted by the child, who re-tells them from the other perspective with the same titles and passages.

This structure also responds to a borderline way of storytelling, in which voices are separated in order to multiply perspectives that write the border between community and individual, symbolized in the book by the nucleus of the family-tribe that is created in the opening pages. In the midst of poetic reflections on the beauty of everyday life (as in the noises their children make while they sleep), the transformation of an uninhabited space into a home, or the implicit pacts of silence about previous partners, the mother explains how the tribe is a family (16), using a special vocabulary and grammar:

La niña es hija mía y el niño es de mi marido. Soy madre biológica de una, madrastra del otro y madre de facto de los dos. Mi esposo es padre y padrastro de cada uno, respectivamente, pero también padre de ambos, así sin más. Por lo tanto, la niña y el niño son; hermanastra, hijo, hijastra, hija, hermanastro, hermana, hijastro y hermano. Y puesto que estas construcciones y estos matices innecesarios complican demasiado la gramática del día a día —el nosotros, el ellos, el nuestro, el tuyo—, tan pronto como empezamos a vivir juntos (...) adoptamos el adjetivos posesivo nuestros, mucho más simple, para referirnos a los dos. Se convirtieron en lo que son: nuestros hijos. Y a veces, a secas: el niño, la niña. Los dos aprendieron rápidamente las reglas de nuestra gramática privada, y adoptaron los sustantivos comunes mamá y papá, o a veces ma y pa. Y al menos hasta ahora nuestro léxico familiar ha

definido bien los límites y los alcances de este mundo compartido (Luiselli, 2019: 14).<sup>4</sup>

They all take on a “border identity” not only as emigrants living in the United States who create a family within borders other than those of their origins, but as individuals who seem reluctant to fit into a community, such as “those problematic particles we study in chemistry class that have covalent instead of ionic bonds – or maybe it was the other way around –” (Luiselli 2019: 16-17). The family, seen from the relationship and the encounter, from the permanent oscillation between universes, and from hybridism, embodies the values of “border identities” described by Miano.<sup>5</sup> The family as a border space, as duality and contrast, does not cancel out identities but multiplies them into a delicate group that remains intact until the end of the story, even when that community is in danger of rupturing. In the boy’s audio to the girl (using pseudonyms stolen from his favourite games and songs), he constructs a story for the girl to read years later (or at least makes her promise her mother she will), when forgetfulness threatens to erase that sense of belonging to a tribe “documented” in a Polaroid photo, a tape

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<sup>4</sup> [The girl is my daughter and the boy is my husband’s. I am the biological mother of one, stepmother of the other and de facto mother of both. My husband is the father and stepfather of each, respectively, but also the father of both, just like that. Therefore, the girl and the boy are stepsister, son, stepdaughter, daughter, stepbrother, sister, stepson and brother. And since these constructions and these unnecessary details complicate everyday grammar too much - us, they, ours, yours - as soon as we started living together (...) we use the far simpler possessive adjective ours to refer to both. They become what they are: our children. And sometimes, just the boy, the girl. Both quickly learned the rules of our private grammar, and started using the common nouns mama and papa, or sometimes ma and pa. And at least so far our family lexicon has successfully defined the limits and scope of this shared world.]

<sup>5</sup> Léonora Miano, a Cameroon author based in France, has compiled a series of essays on this feeling of “multi-belonging” in *Habiter la frontière*, from where we take the following passage that seems to be particularly relevant to define “border identities”:

C’est par ce terme (“identités frontalières”) que je définis habituellement ma propre identité. Je la dis frontalière, ancrée non pas dans un lieu de rupture, mais au contraire, dans un espace d’accolement permanent. La frontière, tell que je la définis et l’habite, est l’endroit où les mondes se touchent inlassablement. C’est le lieu de l’oscillation constante: d’un espace à l’autre. C’est là où les langues se mêlent, pas forcément de manière tonitruante, s’imprégnant naturellement les uns des autres pour produire sur la page blanche, la représentation d’un univers composite, hybride.

La frontière évoque la relation. Elle dit que les peuples se sont rencontrés, quelquefois dans la violence, la haine, le mépris, et qu’en dépit de cela, ils ont enfanté du sens (Miano, 2012: 25).

recorder, and in shared games, songs, and books (419-423).

The notion of the nuclear family as a border metaphor is made explicit in some way in the text itself, when the newly inaugurated tribe discovers that it has come into existence one night when the parents decide to record the nocturnal and involuntary sounds of the children while they sleep:

... tal vez las familias nuevas, como las naciones jóvenes después de una violenta guerra de independencia o una revolución, necesitan anclar sus comienzos en un momento simbólico y fijar ese instante en el tiempo. Esa noche fue nuestra fundación: fue la noche en que nuestro caos se convirtió en cosmos (Luiselli, 2019: 22).<sup>6</sup>

This cosmogony, fed by the children's demand for stories about that shared family history, finds its counterpart in the discovery of the differences with others. Otherness, isn't it 'a vague and indeterminate place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary? Is it a constant state of transition? 'This is how Gloria Anzaldúa, the *Chicano* [Mexican-American] author, defines borders in her famous book *Borderlands*. The quote, which heads the opening lines of the first part of "Box III", could well dialogue with Miano's reflections by stating that border identities are born from painful experiences. From the "space of constant transition", which is the border, the discovery of that strange part of the new community also brings in contrasting feelings, "Why is it that searching through someone's things gives one a touching, sad feeling, as if the person's belongings, in their absence, have exposed their deep fragility? (Luiselli, 2019:88). That feeling of strangeness that the narrator's husband's books awake in her becomes a structural motif of the book by making an inventory of the different "boxes" evoked by the move, the trip, the constant to-ing and fro-ing between places and non-places, although "the place and the non-place are, rather, false polarities (...), palimpsests on which the intricate game of identity and relationship is constantly re-inscribed" (Augé, 1992: 84).

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<sup>6</sup> ... perhaps new families, like young nations after a violent war of independence or a revolution, need to anchor their beginnings in a symbolic moment and embed that moment in time. That night was our beginning: it was the night our chaos became a cosmos.



The journey undergone by the family-tribe, as a perfect metaphor of that false polarity, strengthens the pendular duality of the border identities found in the family, a structure that is also a metaphor for that palimpsest or constant rewriting of the relationships between its different members.

3.3. The importance of documenting, of building a story, is one of the obsessions of the novel, as we have seen. From the different quotes that create a rich dialogue between text and paratext right up to the explicit reflections of the narrator, and including the symbolism of the adult protagonists' jobs (documentary filmmaker and documentarist), the need to construct narratives marks, in some way, the rhythms of the book. A need (like the young girl's need to know the end of the stories) that is frustrated by the impossibility of giving the stories of the migrant children told by the mother of the tribe any kind of narrative coherence. The mother confesses that she is prey to "doubts and problems" that paralyse the process of compiling the material collected during different interviews (102).

This feeling of anxiety when embarking on a coherent narrative is not only reflected at the diegetic level with explicit musings on the difficulty of documenting the facts, but is also translated into an implicit (and explicit<sup>7</sup>) poetry based on different transtextual mechanisms. But,

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<sup>7</sup> In that sense, we could read the heading "Present future", a kind of metaliterary poetic device:

Ya no estoy segura, sin embargo, de lo que ese "después" significa. Algo cambió en el mundo (...) Experimentamos el tiempo de manera distinta (...) Tal vez es solo que sentimos la ausencia de futuro porque el presente demasiado abrumador y por tanto se nos ha hecho imposible imaginar un futuro. Y sin futuro, el tiempo se percibe nada más como una acumulación (...) Y quizás la frustración del niño al no saber qué fotografiar, o cómo encuadrar y enfocar las cosas que observa desde el coche, mientras atravesamos este paisaje extraño, **sea simplemente un signo de cómo nuestras maneras de documentar el mundo resultan insuficientes** (Luiselli, 2019: 131).

[I am no longer sure, however, what that "after" means. Something changed in the world (...) We experience time differently (...) Perhaps it's just that we feel the absence of the future because the present is so overwhelming that it prevents us from imagining the future. And without future, time is perceived as nothing more than an accumulation (...) And perhaps the child's frustration at not knowing what to photograph, or how to frame and focus on the things he sees from the car as we travel through this strange landscape, is simply a sign of how insufficient our ways of documenting the world are.]

in case this issue is overlooked by some confused reader, the author includes a link to “References (notes on sources)”, where she emphasises the importance of intertextuality in her work in these terms: ... references to sources - textual, musical, visual or audiovisual - were not intended as *apostils* or ornaments that decorate the story, but rather as interlinear markers that point out the polyphonic conversation that the book maintains with other works” (Luiselli, 2019: 453). And if any doubt remains, she insists, “I am not interested in intertextuality as an explicit and performative gesture, but as a compositional method or procedure” (Luiselli, 2019: 454).

Intertextuality elevates the border to an aesthetic category as a space for the exchange of different rhetorical devices. Descombes (cited by Augé, 1992) explains how in the Proustian universe some characters create a cosmology around a shared rhetoric. This idea, which can be extrapolated beyond the world of Combray, helps us reflect on the impossibility of entering the world of the other without taking over their words. Luiselli’s intertextual approach means *writing* the border as a rhetorical and aesthetic territory of encounters with the voices of others. And she does so in a number of ways, from hypertext influences and quotes that give rise to *Elegies for lost children* (fragments followed by Rilke, Pound, Conrad or Eliot, among others) to the incorporation of books, songs or photographs as objects that acquire a symbolic value for the tribe, such as *Lord of the Flies*, that they listen to as an audiobook during the journey. After listening to several unsuccessful “beginnings” (the title of the fragment) (*The road, Pedro Páramo, On the road, The invisible man, The heart is a lonely hunter ...*), they opt for Golding’s book read by the author himself, because it is “a story that will keep both our kids or us grounded in reality and can even help us ask questions that will help us see it more clearly” (100). The distances between reality and fiction also blur in this space inhabited by echoes that are not only literary: images (essentially photographs) and songs interweave that world of multiples in which references become as

confused as their channels of perception.

For Miano, the border is also written and constructed following the compositional rules of jazz, the ultimate mestizo music known for its circularity, tension, polyphony and repetition (Miano, 2012: 29), all of which are prevalent in Luiselli's work. From another, albeit similar, perspective, Gloria Anzaldúa, in an interview to mark the new issue of *Borderlands* (1987) in 2016, claims that the publication of her book legitimised *Chicano* authors not only from the thematic point of view, but also stylistically with the implementation of "code switching" that translates the border, *mestizo*, identity of the author herself by using different registers, languages, fragments and even genres within the same text (Anzaldúa, 2016: 277). The ideas of both these authors point in the same direction as Luiselli when she denounces<sup>8</sup> the ethical and aesthetic complacency shown by some authors who address the problem of violence by merely fictionalizing what is reported in the media. The border cannot be exclusively the "subject" of the novel, but must find an aesthetic channel through which to express itself.

4. In short, the border is presented as a core concept in the two novels analysed. In the case of *Ni siquiera los muertos*, the border provides the impetus for one Juan's lengthy pursuit of another Juan from the ends of the earth through Mexican territory. The main objective of this pursuit is to capture the native American, but it gradually become a spiritual quest for the pursuer himself, who goes from following a human being for a particular purpose to becoming seduced by a meaning of life. For this reason, we believe that the text certainly contains an added twist in which we see how the pursuer represents Mexico and Latin America seduced by the well-being of their great neighbour to the north while forgetting that some human needs are not satisfied by crossing a border, however difficult, because they pursue very different goals. The abundance of material goods and belief in progress are undermined here by other realities, the significance of which is beyond dispute. This is

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.eltiempo.com/lecturas-dominicales/entrevista-con-la-mexicana-valeria-luiselli-sobre-su-novela-desierto-sonoro-455902>.

why, as mentioned above, this story is mainly about a clash of civilizations, of ways of understanding life seen through the notion of the border (and all that it implies). The story also appears to champion Latin America over the Anglosphere – an attitude so prevalent in *Ariel*, José Enrique Rodo (1900), and later echoed by Claudio Lomnitz (1992) - and a (possible) utopian dimension of the story.

The notion of the border is equally complex in *Lost Children Archive*. In a purely socio-political sense (and the most evident in the novel), the border becomes a condemnation of violence; a protest against absences, against identities - some of which are hybrid and others that are ignored in the discourse of history; a memorial to those who have been excluded from the “social contract”, as in that almost unfinishable sound catalogue whose echoes are reflected in the present of writing. But that border that seems to affect “the others” (the lost children, Manuela’s daughters) becomes a force that shapes the border identities of each member of a community forged from different pieces that only fit together through a narrative. And it is probably this need to be told from the border where the strength of Luiselli’s novel lies: to turn the border into a literary record that shows its shortcomings, duplicities and openings, the only way to reveal those voices that silence conceals, and maybe the only way to allow us to perceive the sounds of the desert as an echo.

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Argon Valley, the South African Utopia of Ahmed Essop (1931- ),  
or Reflections on Why the Story “The Pagans”  
Will Never be Translated into Spanish

Juan Miguel Zarandona

**Abstract:** Ahmed Essop (India 1931), a South African man of letters belonging to the country’s Indian community, can be regarded as a master short story writer who has not yet been appreciated as much as he deserves. However, his readers know well how his pages depict his nation’s hard contradictions and bitter traumas, and how he does it involve the five senses and with great realism. And he has done it on a continuous basis, from the very beginning of his literary career. In spite of this, from time to time, he has also managed to express himself in other literary genres and creative possibilities, as it is the case of the short story “The Pagans”, published in Johannesburg in 2002. This text shows, and shares, all the typical characteristics of a very old and prestigious kind of texts, the Utopian one associated with travel to exotic regions, most frequently set in the reign of the imagination. Consequently, its mere existence does not surprise as much as its African, or, to be more precise, South African, origin. It has not been a region that has been able to indulge frequently in much literary escapism. This special writing has always proved to be a luxury. This has also been a rarity within the whole context of Essop’s literary output. Because of all these facts, this article, apart from analysing and evaluating briefly the textual Utopian framework of the story, taken from the tradition or breaking away from it, beyond any precise time or space, or necessarily originating in its author’s conflictive African scenario, will try to reflect on the hypothesis claiming that many circumstances will prevent this fictional short story from being ever translated into Spanish. Among science fiction specialists it is a commonly accepted truth to believe that the universe is probably inhabited by other intelligent beings, but, due to its immense size, we will never be able to contact them and their civilized planets. We are referring to the well-known ‘Drake equation’, a mathematical formula that tried to provide an answer to this dilemma from 1961. Texts constitute a similar huge universe. There are so many in so many languages that their likelihood to get translated one day is almost nil. This phenomenon can also be studied with the help of mathematical combinations.

**Keywords:** Ahmed Essop, translation, Utopia, Africa, exotic worlds, Drake equation

## 1. Ahmed Essop (1931- )<sup>9</sup>

Ahmed Essop is a South African citizen born in India, who grew up and developed his skills as a writer in South Africa's most complex city, Johannesburg, a place that is featured in almost all of his works and about which he offers a unique perspective, based on his exceptional life circumstances. He was born a Muslim in a country (India) where the dominant culture and religion were different, and raised in a country and continent (Africa) where the culture and religion were also diverse and different from his own. As a child, he would learn a language other than his mother tongue and adopt it as the language he would use for his Afro-diaspora literary works.<sup>10</sup> He had to learn how to be African and how to speak English. Moreover, since he arrived in Africa, he has belonged to a minority group, within the most invisible minority in a country with many minorities, very often in conflict with each other (white, black, mixed race – known as “coloureds” in South Africa).

In short, he is a very complex personality, who over time has become a unique artist who writes short stories, novels, poems, essays and conducts humanistic research. His fiction reflects, in particular, the realities that have surrounded him until he could be defined as a privileged chronicler and witness of more than forty years of history of his nation and the great changes it has undergone.<sup>11</sup>

His strictly literary bibliography, completely unknown to the Spanish public, even those who are more well informed and in the know, consists of the following key titles: three novels, *The Visitation* (1980),

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<sup>10</sup> For more general information on the multi-secular diaspora of the communities of Indian origin on African coasts and territories, and on the specific characteristics of their fate and destiny in South Africa, see: Calpin 1949; Maasdorp 1977; Arkin *et al.* 1989; Bhaha and Vahed 2006: 242-253; Hofmeyr and Williams 2011a and 2011b: 2-19.

<sup>11</sup> For a more complete knowledge of the complex history of the South African nation, see: Thompson 1995; Welsh 2000; Johnson 2004; Heywood 2004; Lapiere 2009; Hamilton *et al.* 2010a and 2010b.

*The Emperor* (1995) and *The Third Prophecy* (2004); and four collections of short stories, *The Hajji and other Stories* (1978), *Noorjehan and other Stories* (1990), *The King of Hearts and other Stories* (1998) and *Narcissus and other Stories* (2002).

As indicated in the previous paragraph, it cannot be said that there is any Spanish acceptance, or even recognition, in the Spanish language, of the printed words of Ahmed Essop. The Spanish ISBN Agency, for example, does not have any records for Ahmed Essop. It seems, therefore, that it has never been translated into Spanish.<sup>12</sup> Is this surprising at all or, on the contrary, is it very logical?

Unfortunately, it is indeed very logical for a country where translated African literature, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, is not very well received and is characterised by few translations. This even extends to the works of great, world-renowned authors from this region, which have few editions, are always part of minority collections, and are appreciated by few readers, because they cannot overcome the stigma of being (almost) unknown writers, and are not very appreciated by the general reading public. Most of the literature of post-colonial black Africa remains untranslated or has made little or no impact, if ever translated.

## 2. South African literature from the Indian community

In this regard, it should be recalled that South African Indian literature, in other words, literature produced by immigrants and descendants of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, from all their various communities of origin, is also not very well-known, even in their own country. To the extent that not so many years ago, it was possible to read comments like the following one, which today are considered unfair and far from reality:

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<sup>12</sup> The Spanish ISBN Agency is not aware of, and does not even have on record, is that there is a translation published in the twelfth edition of the magazine *Hermēneus* by the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation of Soria of the University of Valladolid. This is the tale “Two Sisters” (Essop, 1978b: 32-38), titled “Dos Hermanas”, translated by Sabrina Solar (Essop, 2010: 337-345).



In the field of creative literature, however, Indians have not distinguished themselves as other South Africans have. Only a handful of writers have had their work published and no major writer has emerged so far. One wonders why this is the case [...]. That there is creative talent is certain. It is, however, rarely developed to its full potential (Arkin *et al.*, 1989: 201).

The processes of reintegrating works from this community began, like so many other things, with the political and social transformation that the South African nation experienced since the end of the previous century, with the advent of the so-called New South Africa.<sup>13</sup> The same South African intellectuals of Indian origin played a leading role in the review of the situation and expansion of the national literary canons:

In this period of ongoing change, it is necessary to incorporate these marginal voices in a more determined way into the critical discourse [...]. I draw attention to a neglected corpus of writing in South African literary criticism (Govinder, 2008b: 2-3).

The rebirth of South Africa is an opportune moment for examining the literary wealth of Southern Africa. The rebirth of the country affords a space, hitherto resisted, to excavate our suppressed literary heritage in all its diversity [...] a local topography that has been hitherto ignored (Govinder, 2008b: 343).

The situation of South African women writers from the Indian community is even more dire, as some scholars have emphasised: “Some of the recent critical discussions and surveys of South African literatures proceed as if writing by South African Indian (women) simply does not exist” (Govinder, 2008: 4).

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<sup>13</sup> The end of the former South African regime, including the years prior to that, constituted a revolution in all areas of life of the Southern African nation, including in English literature, which has undergone a profound change and updated all its traditions and main guiding principles, from the production of a truly inclusive canon to the role to be played permanently by the English language as the main language for the first time in the nation. The following volumes are very illustrative in this regard: Adey *et al.* 1986; Van Wyk Smith 1990; Nixon 1997:64-77; Govinder 2008a.

This whole situation, of course, has serious international consequences with regard to how South African authors of Indian origin are received abroad, as the Spanish example so clearly shows:<sup>14</sup>

The way South African literary critics and anthropologists represent South African literature to themselves has ramifications in the international community. There is almost total ignorance of the existence of South African Indian (women's) writings at this level (Govinder, 2008b: 19).

### 3. The story "The Pagans", by Ahmed Essop

This story "The Pagans" was published in 2002 (28-44), in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, by the local publisher Ravan Press, as part of the abovementioned collection of stories, *Narcissus and other Stories*. It is a very special short story that contrasts with the immense majority of short stories by this author, as indicated above, which tend very clearly to be colourful literary chronicles of the life of the residents of Indian origin of his city of Johannesburg.<sup>15</sup> In this story, the author experiments and becomes more versatile, building a narrative linked to a long-standing tradition: so-called Utopian literature, later also transformed into Anti-Utopian or Dystopian literature throughout the 20th century, a conversion that has also borne many fruits in the history of the Republic of Letters.

"The Pagans" is developed and expressed with all the typical characteristics of the genre already established to a great extent by its founding text: *Utopia* (1516), by the famous author Thomas More (1478-1535). Among others, as the good readers of Sir Thomas More, martyr and saint, will recall, he discovers Utopia in a non-Utopian

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<sup>14</sup> To get a better understanding of the journey of South African literature by authors of Indian origin and the processes for rescue from marginalisation that are currently taking place, see the following manuals: Govinder 2008b; Frenkel 2010; Chetty 2010.

<sup>15</sup> A bibliography based around Ahmed Essop should include the following bibliographical references: Smith 1985: 64-72; Freed 1988: 1-13; Hagen 1990: 59-69; Chetty 1999: 272-278; Smith 2000: 157-163; Killam 2000b: 94; Chetty 2002: 252-258; Cornwell *et al.* 2010: 89-90). However, it is clear that this writer who is so original still requires the publication of a good and complete collection of his works and literary philosophy. This will be both an ongoing and an urgent task.

world, our own world or a world that we know, and devotes himself to studying it.

He discovers Utopia in a non-Utopian world, our own world or a world that we know, and devotes himself to studying it.

Therefore, there are travellers who move away from the known or plausible reality to discover the other Utopian reality that they encounter in the most unexpected way: “One day, two geologists, who were exploring the interior of Kirenia, reached Argon Valley. They were welcome and kindly treated. When they returned to Teros, reports appeared in newspapers of the existence of a pagan commune in the hinterland” (Essop, 2002: 29); or, as a further example: “The delegation set out in a vehicle that had been specially adapted to withstand the semi-desert terrain they were to travel through. They took enough water and provisions, and an adequate supply of petrol. After a week’s journey, they saw from a distance, four waterfalls that had the appearance of ceremonial swords. Soon they reached Argon Valley” (Essop, 2002: 30-31).

Likewise, the weight of the dialogues is fundamental, as an ancient method, learned from the wise men of ancient Greece, of collective debate that seeks to enhance knowledge and personal and community learning: “In the evening, after supper, Helio-Arkan and the visitors engaged in conversation. He said to them, ‘When we came to settle here, we decided to change our names. This change was fundamental, as we wished to break away from our former lives in an urban environment’” (Essop, 2002: 32).

The typical isolation of the Utopian world, as a method of protection and guarantee of its future existence, is always under threat: in Ahmed Essop's story, the unusual Argon Valley, which is specifically a South African Arcadia (because of its origin), also appears in this narrative:

The pagans, who called themselves Argons, had migrated from the port city of Teros into the distant interior of the country of Kirenia over three decades before. They consisted of about five hundred men, women and children, who lived in a valley perpetually fed with spring water falling from fissures in a

Cliff face. Originally this part of Kirenia had been semi-desert.<sup>16</sup> When the Argons arrived, an earth tremor caused the cliff face to crack in four places and water flowed down to transform this part of the region. Here they settled and built their home. Argon Valley, as they termed it, was perfumed by jasmine, gardenia and rose plants<sup>17</sup> (Essop, 2002: 28).

Argon Valley, as it was logical to expect, since this was the island of Thomas More's *Utopia*, is a world with no privately-owned property or monetary exchange, and therefore with the joint enjoyment of all property: "Do you have any monetary currency here?" Mr Rostand inquired. "None. For everything belongs to the commune. We are free of possessions and personal wealth" (Essop, 2002: 32).

Its inhabitants form a society that rejects urban civilisation and its conquests: "They reject all that we term civilisation: our democracy, sciences, arts, sophisticated urban infrastructure, newspapers, radios, television and modern forms of transport" (Essop, 2002: 35).

The non-existence of a religion other than an instinctive type of natural religion that is pantheistic and devoid of conflict can also be considered a prototypical element of the rationalist utopianism displayed by the inhabitants of Argon Valley: "You do not believe in God or gods?" "We live as grateful partners with our habitat and do not think of the beyond." "Then you have no religion?" "As we do not consider our destiny to be beyond this planet, metaphysical beliefs do not arise. But

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<sup>16</sup> Although Utopian literature does not belong to any specific place, its scope is in the imagination, a paragraph like this one betrays that it is about a fantasy that is marked by the geography and history of South Africa. The civilised port city of Teros reminds us of Cape Town, and one cannot deny that the trip to the far-flung continental interior with a semi-desert landscape takes its inspiration from the Great Trek (1835-1843), the great march by the Boer or Afrikaaner settlers to the interior of the new nation that was in the process of being formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the foundation of the so-called Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State, by those who arrived at the time and dared to challenge the powerful British Empire.

<sup>17</sup> However, Ahmed Essop is not a South African of European origin, therefore his Asian and Eastern cultural roots are also reflected in his imaginative description of the valley as a garden with the typical perfumes of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Apart from the fragrance of these flowers, he lists the full set of fragrant plant specimens of all kinds (plants, shrubs and trees), which creates a powerful feeling of being in the Garden of Eden. The original list particularly emphasises the following "lavender, mint, sage, rosemary, palms, cypresses, magnolias, camellias, azaleas, tulips, dahlias, chrysanthemums, irises, lilacs, purple wisteria, carmine, saffron, bougainvillea", etc. (Essop, 2002: 28).

we do have ethical values and these are instilled into our children from an early age” (Essop, 2002: 32-33).

This community is headed by a firm but benign monarchical regime, a feature with many precedents in this genre:

The leader of the pagans was Helio-arkan, a tall, athletic man with violet eyes and sleek bronze hair. His wife, Astarte, was equally attractive, with platinum-blond hair descending to her feet. Both their faces reflected the tranquility of beings who saw themselves as totally dependent upon the planet Earth for their survival and happiness. This tranquility was present in the faces of all the Argons (Essop, 2002: 28-29).

The absolute mastery of oral culture, together with a distrust of writing and its dangers, is curious as a Utopian element, albeit very appealing, no doubt: “Do you teach reading and writing?”, Helio-arkan replied, “Ours is essentially an oral society. The word is a special gift of Nature and has to be used with care and precision. We have many poets among us and we love to hear them recite. We do have a few scribes who keep records and calligraphers who inscribe our poetry and songs” (Essop, 2002: 33).

Of course, as a concession to the more supposedly modern times we live in now and their phobias and phobias, the diet is vegetarian, and it is an alcohol-free life: “7. They do not drink liquor or smoke. 8. They are vegetarians” (Essop, 2002: 35).

#### 4. The Drake Equation

In the spirit of a full and well-intentioned collaboration between the so-called sciences (empirical, experimental, etc.) and the human sciences or humanities, we should recall the figure of Frank Drake (1930- ), a radio astronomer by profession and career researcher, who was President, and currently President Emeritus, of the well-known SETI (Search for Extra-terrestrial Intelligence Institute), [www.seti.org](http://www.seti.org), founded in 1984 in California.

While working for the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), based in Green Bank, West Virginia, young Drake asked

himself a basic question in 1961: “Is it possible to estimate how many civilisations there are in our galaxy, i.e. the Milky Way, that are likely to have detectable radio broadcasts?”, combined with an even more intriguing second question: “Why have we never seen or heard of aliens on television?”<sup>18</sup>

The result of the reflections of his excitable scientific curiosity, crystallised into the so-called Drake Equation or Formula, as it has been known ever since, which would identify the fundamental factors that can answer this question:

$$N = R^* \cdot f_p \cdot n_e \cdot f_l \cdot f_i \cdot f_c \cdot L$$

The data are not sufficient, something that even the author of the formula acknowledges, but it has always been accepted by the scientific community as a serious contribution and, of course, a first theoretical approach to the intriguing problem.<sup>19</sup>

More precisely, this would be the scientific meaning of each of the letters of the equation in schematic presentation:

**N** would be the number of civilisations that would meet these conditions.

**R** (*Rhythm*)

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<sup>18</sup> To date SETI has not detected, as far as is known, any sign of independent extra-terrestrial life, even though they have kept on trying. Of course, it has also not produced the fact of being able to see real aliens on our television screens.

<sup>19</sup> Since the equation was presented for the first time to the scientific community, changes and contributions have been made to it and, of course, it has been attacked, although it has always been considered and contemplated as a first illuminating step that helps us understand this basic condition that, without being able to avoid it, we encounter every time we observe the enigmatic immensity of a starry sky on any summer night: are we alone in the Universe?

- Annual rate of formation of suitable stars in a galaxy.
- 10 per year.

$f_p$  (*fraction/planet*)

- Fraction of stars that have planets in their orbit.
- 0.5 (half).

$n_e$  (*number/ecosphere*)

- Number of planets within the star's ecosphere, in other words, not very close to it, or that are too hot for the existence of life, or too far away, in other words, so cold that it also prevents the possibility of living beings.
- 2 (each star has two planets of this type).

$f_l$  (*fraction/life*)

- Fraction of these planets where life has developed.
- 1 (100%, life could develop in both).

$f_i$  (*fraction/intelligent*)

- Fraction of these planets where life has evolved into intelligent life.
- 0.01 (1%, life that is also intelligent).

$f_c$  (*fraction/communication*)

- This intelligent life is trying to communicate and has developed enough technology to be able to do so.
- 0.01 (1%, life that can and will communicate).

$L$  (*lapse*)

- Length of time, measured in years, during which an intelligent and communicative civilisation can exist.

- 10,000 years, as history teaches us.

The result of applying the formula, transformed into mathematical values, would be as follows:

$$N = 10 \times 0.5 \times 2 \times 1 \times 0.01 \times 10,000 = 10$$

In other words, a surprisingly small number of ten possible civilisations in our galaxy, the Milky Way, meet these characteristics. One of these galaxies is our own, which is estimated to contain between 200 and 400 billion stars. Moreover, this is in a universe that is believed to have 500 billion galaxies.

Against this background, the conclusion is obvious: such intelligent civilisations exist, but it will be very difficult to find them, so we will never see extra-terrestrials on our television screens, which is the most likely hypothesis.

The brilliant ingenuity of Blake's equation has given rise to numerous applications and adaptations of the same, from the world of scientific rigour to the ingenuity of popular culture, including one as curious as that proposed by Peter Backus, whose question was: “Why I don't have a girlfriend. An application of the Drake Equation to love in the UK”, and which we advise you to review despite its unoptimistic, albeit humorous, conclusion.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> In 2010, Peter Backus, a British citizen, used a successful adaptation of Drake's equation to confirm what were the possibilities of finding a bride in the United Kingdom and the news made the headlines in national daily newspapers. He used parameters such as: growth of the population, percentage of the female population, appropriate age of the candidates, residence in London, university education, physical attractiveness, etc. The result was that there were only twenty-six women throughout the country who fulfilled the requirements. However, he got married not long after that, as was also announced in all the press, which proved that statistics and mathematical calculations of probabilities can be crushed.



## 5. Translation and Drake's Equation

Can this equation be applied cost-effectively and meaningfully to the world of translation traffic between the world's languages? This story, "The Pagans", can be used by Ahmed Essop, and its fate in the global translation market as an example of the possibilities of this mathematical calculation to illuminate and foresee what will and will not be translated in the future. Can it indeed be said that "The Pagans" will never be translated into Spanish, in the same way as those who claim and believe that we will never see extra-terrestrials arriving on our planet on our television screens?

In this case, this would be the formula we propose:

$$P = N_1 \cdot N_2 \cdot f_e \cdot f_i \cdot f_{ca} \cdot f_{esa} \cdot f_{esai} \cdot R \cdot T$$

And this is the meaning of this application of the equation to the world of translation:

**P** would be the number of possibilities that exist for the translation into Spanish of the story "The Pagans" by Ahmed Essop.

**N<sub>1</sub>** (total number of books)

- Number of books published worldwide in a year, according to data provided by UNESCO.
- 1,500,000 on average between 2001-2010, including 400,000 in China, 300,000 in the United States and 200,000 in the United Kingdom.

**N<sub>2</sub>** (number of books in Spanish)

- Number of books published in Spanish in a year.

- 150,000 on average between 2001-2010, according to UNESCO. In Spain, according to the Spanish Ministry of Culture, this would be around 75,000 per year.

- 0.1 (10%).

$f_t$  (fraction/translations)

- Of these books, how many are translations?

- 2001-2010.

- 25% (0.25)

$f_e$  (fraction/English)

- Of these translations, how many are from English?

- 2001-2010.

- 50% (0.5).

$F_{ea}$  (fraction/English - Africa)

- Of these translations, how many are from African English?

- 2001-2010.

- 1% (0.01).

$f_{esa}$  (fraction/English - South Africa)

- Of these translations, how many are from South African English?

- 2001-2010.

- 10% (0.1).

$f_{esai}$  (fraction/English – South African Indian community)

- Of these translations, how many are from English of the Indian community in South Africa (2001-2010)?

- 1% (0.01).

**R (rarity)**

- Among the possible indicators of this rarity, it should be taken into account that the theme is not strictly speaking South African, that it does not present an exotic Africa, but a universal theme (the Utopian concern). In other words, something that nobody expects to come from this continent and furthermore that was published by a small local publisher with no international distribution and that the story in question is in a volume that cannot be purchased on the internet.
- 1% (0.01).

**T (time)**

- As time goes by, less interest is aroused by a literary text and fewer possibilities for translation exist.
- Between 2002, the original year, to 2020, the date of these reflections, nearly twenty years have passed.
- 0.08.

The mathematical result of the equation, on this occasion, would produce the following very small result:

$$\mathbf{P = 1,500,000 \times 0.1 \times 0.25 \times 0.5 \times 0.01 \times 0.1 \times 0.01 \times 0.01 \times 0.08}$$
$$\mathbf{= 0.00015 \%}$$

## 6. Conclusions

According to the calculations, the resulting figure is about the same as the 0.00015% probability that the story «The Pagans» will one day be translated into Spanish, which is almost equivalent to saying that such an act of intercultural communication, thanks to literature, will never take place.

With a few exceptions, and despite what appearances may indicate, the truth is that the vast majority of texts that have been in history, the less powerful or the more minor the language involved, remain and will remain untranslated, not even into a single language. Furthermore, most of them have a minimum, or even zero number of possibilities of attracting the attention of a translator, incited by his or her own interest or spurred on by an outside force (individual or editorial) that initiates the process; that most of them cannot even dream of obtaining a community of target readers that will welcome them and encourage the emergence of such a translation. For all these authors and literary creations, the application of Drake's Equation adapted to translation is a realisation of the heavy burden that marks their fate of being received beyond their own language, if they had even considered crossing such a threshold.

Consequently, if it is true that it is a minimally probable event that we will see aliens on our television screens, apart from in science fiction films, it is even less likely that “The Pagans”, written in English, will be translated into Spanish, as has been discovered, even though these are two very strong languages with powerful publishing industries that support them and large masses of readers that bring them to life. However, many are the possible so-called “candidates”, and few are the chosen ones.

Therefore, we can only say that each translated author, that each text that is translated into another language, whether it is the combination of a major to a major language, or a minor to a minor language (or even one that is becoming extinct), with all the possibilities in between, is in

fact a small great miracle that we should not become accustomed to so easily.

Furthermore, this should make us have a higher appreciation of some of the translations that, even more miraculously, break through the barrier of mathematical improbability. We are referring to the previously mentioned translation of the story “Two Sisters” (1978b), “Dos Hermanas” (2010), in Spanish, by Ahmed Essop (see note 4 of this article). It may be that “The Pagans” has not been translated into Spanish and never will be, but there is no denying the palpable reality that another story by Ahmed Essop, also against all odds, has been translated, the first and only one, into Spanish. Blake’s Equation, adapted to the translation that has engaged us, helps us to understand in all its transcendence how unusual and extraordinary a translation can sometimes be.

Finally, we believe that the perspective, results and surprise provided by the Drake Equation applied to translation have been sufficient rewards to propose continuing along this path, from refining and consolidating the new formula proposed here today in the future, to making it widely applicable to many other acts of translation that continue to test it. The time has come, thus, to answer one of the previously posed and still unresolved questions: whether this equation can be applied cost-effectively and meaningfully to the world of translation traffic between the world’s languages, and whether it can ever be a useful tool for predicting what will not be translated and why, and perhaps devising strategies to combat or at least to some extent counteract this trend.

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# Migration in the Media as a Problematic Construction of the Discourse in Public Space

Marco Bruno

**Abstract:** The narrative of immigration is also the collective narration and construction of a self - a community, a space defined by material and symbolic borders, a nation as an ideological construct - in which the media play a predominant role. Moving from the analysis of the literature and from different empirical paths, this contribution highlights the main focal points about the media representation and public discourse of migration as social construction. The relationship between media frames and public policy is strong and the Italian case shows many interesting patterns in building a public discourse focused on some consolidated interpretations, a repertoire of recurrent images and iconic representations of the foreigner, mainly seen as “different”, “foreigner” and “enemy”. Despite the variability of events and political and institutional frameworks, this horizon of social representations maintains a significant coherence in the construction of a public discourse that, on the one hand, regenerates community and national belongings and, on the other, legitimizes policies of exclusion.

**Keywords:** Media representations; Migration; Framing; News-media

## Migration and public representations

All too often, in the analysis of major social phenomena, the communication and media related aspects are relegated to an exclusively symbolic dimension performing a mere superstructural representation in relation to social facts. The analysis of how the complex issue of migration is constructed and represented by the media shows, however, that there is a strong relationship between public discourse, the communicative capacity of the actors and policies on the phenomenon, with feedback effects even on the very characteristics of a social problem, which cannot be reduced to its structural characteristics alone. The fact that these characteristics are shown (also in terms of statistical consistency) to be very divergent from the set of media representations - which, therefore, are often configured as bias -

is not a neutral element and contributes to defining aspects and limits of the discourse on migration not only on a symbolic level.

It is therefore a question of investigating *where* the current representation is constructed, which can be effectively denied by statistical evidence by scholars of the migration phenomena (Ambrosini, 2018: 8), and above all of understanding that this construction has its own specific mechanisms that deserve to be scientifically explored in depth also, and primarily, from an analytical and systematic reading. In this sense, the methods and disciplinary perspectives involved are clearly, for the approach proposed here, those of the sociology of communication and media studies, which can certainly operate in a complementary way with disciplines such as social psychology, linguistics and sociolinguistics, semiotics, etc.

It is increasingly necessary to identify convergent paths of analysis from different perspectives. An interesting example is that of language, a privileged point of observation in the practices of media and social construction of reality<sup>21</sup>. Beyond the different degrees of interest and investigation on the theme of language, it is sufficient - in our case with a sociological perspective - to recognise the effect of linguistic objectification of media practices and discourses: years of "practices and discourses on immigration have produced a legacy that has been objectified in language. Of all the ways that could be imagined to tell the story, only a few narratives recur as fixed patterns" (Maneri, 2009: 75).

Research also identifies the constellation of interfering themes that, from time to time, characterise the images of the migration phenomenon, also informing the discourse with their own dominant frames and standard narratives. This is the case of the strictly security-based dimension (Altheide, 1997, 2002), but also of crisis communication (starting with Cohen, 1980), of the humanitarian one (among others, Horsti, 2012, Musarò, Parmiggiani, 2014; Abbas et al., 2019) or of the military one (Musarò, 2017) and so on. The stylistic

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<sup>21</sup> On the subject, see Faloppa, 2015, 2016.

features, the practices of representation, the hierarchy of actors legitimised to define the field and the limits of the discourse for each of these perspectives contribute to designating immigration as a territory of discursive colonisation and the exercise of symbolic power (Castells, 2009). It is evident that the first element of such a dynamic is the “invisibility” of the immigrant as a *subject* capable of exercising his or her own *agency* and *voice*, even though it may be equally reductive to believe that speaking out is enough to change the deep features of a field of representation whose features are structurally in the hands of actors such as politics or media institutions.

The framing perspective for the analysis of media representations of migration. A theoretical-empirical programme

An analysis of the literature confirms the importance (in this phase and more generally for the communication-migration theme) of the framing perspective, almost as a unifying element, a theoretical-empirical perspective of undoubted effectiveness, albeit not without its ambiguities and complexities<sup>22</sup>.

From a constructivist perspective and since Goffman's essential study (1974), framing describes the process by which the organisation of social experience takes place through interpretative frames. From the perspective of communication and media, framing basically refers to the ways in which themes and stories are represented and through which meanings are attributed to them. This concerns at least two complementary conceptions: the frame as a framework that delimits and "frames" some aspects (and not others) of a given issue, and the structure of relations that organises and connects these elements and makes them coherent with each other; the combination of these representational processes thus gives that content a certain meaning among many possible ones.

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<sup>22</sup> Widely explored on various occasions: on the subject, among others, Reese et al., 2001; de Vreese, 2005; Cacciatore et al., 2016; for our own attempt at systematisation: Bruno, 2014.

Underlying many conceptions of framing is the principle of salience, i.e. the first framing mechanism is precisely the selection of certain aspects of reality and not others. This element, coupled with the focus on an evaluative "posture", is evident in one of the best known definitions, that of Entman (1993: 52), which states that framing means "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". The principle of connectivity emphasised by Gamson makes it possible to shift our gaze further towards other formulations of the frame, which attempt to grasp above all its significance as a tool in the process of the social construction of reality; Gamson speaks of a "central organising principle that holds together and gives coherence to a diverse array of symbols or idea elements" (Id. 2003, x).

The frame perspective appears particularly effective both in its standard or quantitative empirical applications (e.g., but not only, through single, bivariate or multifactorial analyses; see among others Mancini et al, 2019; Gerli, 2019; Binotto, Nobile, Rega, 2018; see also Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017; Tudisca et al., 2017), as well as with more qualitative or non-standard methods (among others, Van Gorp, 2005; Horsti, 2007; Pogliano, 2011, 2015; Pogliano, Solaroli, 2012; Bruno, 2016a, 2016b).

## Media frames and public policy

In general, it is a well-established scientific evidence that social and media representations exert greater *power* in framing events, so much so as to clarify their responsibilities and the set of metaphors and feelings associated with them (Bruno, 2014). Consequently, what has emerged explicitly in the last decade has been the widespread use of the concept of frame and the process of framing, alongside reference to agenda-setting phenomena (Shaw, 1979; Lang, Lang, 1983; Protes, McCombs, 1991).

On the one hand, the effects of the above-mentioned mechanisms concern the process of choosing and selecting news; on the other hand, they involve the way in which the public creates its own opinion around specific topics and judges political action (Entman, 2007; Weaver, 2007; Scheufele, Tewksbury, 2007). Moreover, these linguistic conventions, once assumed, can influence stakeholders (Freeman, 1984), the scientific world and expertise, and turn into public policies (Edelman, 1964, Gamson, Lasch, 1981; Gamson, Modigliani, 1989; Gamson, 2000; Bosco, 2002). It is no coincidence that research on the framing process has examined how and to what extent frames are diffused in the arenas of public policy-making and social issues (Lawrence, 2001; Scheufele, Iyengar, 2014).

For this reason, in more recent years the literature has begun to consider the central role of the news-frame as the outcome of a complex process, heterogeneous and multidimensional in its empirical dimension (D'Angelo, 2002; D'Angelo, Kuypers, 2010) and belonging to an increasingly fragmented and hybrid media ecosystem (Chadwick, 2013). In this regard, the advent of social media has not played a secondary role. They have revolutionised not only the *news-making* and *news-sharing* processes, but also those constructing their meanings and interpretations (frame building). The transversal change has also affected the hierarchy of information sources, with Facebook and Twitter leading TV and print media for a growing share of the population (Pew Research Center, 2016), while also imposing a horizontal transformation, as regards the actors of news production, no longer limited to the traditional elites of journalists and politicians, but open to external contributions.

Therefore, in the face of new information flows (Chadwick, 2013), which compared to the traditional news cycle present more complex temporal structures in relation to the breadth and variety of the actors involved in them, the analyses of social representations, images and language, such as that of public discourse, cannot ignore either these increasingly cross-media and networked dynamics of news

construction, or the role of frames, employed by newspapers and media to connote, articulate and systematise information.

Also, in order to investigate the epistemological dimension, a taxonomy of frames and news frames used to define migration phenomena present in the international literature (for a useful reconstruction, see Pogliano, 2019), can start from the distinction between general and specific frames. Among the general frames - for example - there is the use of the metaphor of emergency and social problem to define the phenomenon: with few exceptions, immigration is presented as an emergency and a problem to be solved. This has several consequences in terms of public policy making by referring to the use of exceptional, peremptory measures. However, the contribution tries to do something else, it tends to *bring together* these useful definitions into a three-part narration, immigration-specific, that accounts for both the issues addressed (arrivals, social or cultural consequences) and the linguistic and political conventions (foreign, domestic, society-culture) but above all describes the more unitary and complex narrative and argumentative universes that inform them and make them coherent. The usefulness of framing analysis, in our opinion, lies precisely in its ability to *simultaneously* consider the role of various elements (argumentative and lexical constructs, metaphors, images) considering them as “framing devices” (Gamson, 1992), capable of defining and structuring discourses on diversity. Thus, it is not just a matter of recognising and classifying a set of messages or their components, but of defining a dynamic and often conflicting field of representations (Binotto, Bruno, 2018a) "in which forces and actors operate towards a specific definition and construction of reality" (Pogliano 2019: 32-36). Framing, therefore, as a balance between different paradigms - first and foremost the constructionist one (Altheide, 2002, 2006; Best, 2008) - and different analytical perspectives - e.g. the conjunction between discourse analysis and the sociology of broadcasting.

In order to identify *specific frames*, however, we start from two elements: *a)* the reconstruction of frames as principles of explanation and cataloguing of news; *b)* the recurrence of formulas, isotopies,

metaphorical or stereotypical figures to define immigration or foreign people. On the one hand, more or less structured typologies are used, such as those found in Benson and Van Gorp's research. The former constructs a division into three main frames - "immigration-as-threat, as victim or as hero" (Benson, 2013; Pogliano 2019: 101-107) - the second constructs a binary division between the figure of the intruder and that of the victim (Van Gorp, 2005). At this point one can identify the particular linguistic ties or clichés used to define, mainly in disparaging or negative terms, the figure of the foreigner, the migrant or the "immigration problem". To a large extent, this mechanism can be traced back to the *dehumanisation* of the people who are the protagonists of the events (Dal Lago, 1999; Musolff, 2015) and the bringing of the issue back into a division between us and them (Van Dijk, 1991, 2003; Arcimaviciene, Baglama, 2018).

#### Media, migration and public discourse. The Italian case

Many years of Italian research experience and the international literature show a representation of migratory phenomena structured around some consolidated interpretations, a repertoire of recurrent images and iconic representations of the foreigner, mainly seen as "different", "foreigner" and "enemy". Despite the variability of events and political and institutional frameworks, this horizon of social representations maintains a significant coherence in the construction of a public discourse that, on the one hand, regenerates community and national belongings and, on the other, legitimises policies of exclusion.

This is reflected in the overall consonance of findings related to the thematic nodes of criminalisation, irregularity or, more sporadically, religious (Islam in primis) or cultural factors (Van Dijk, 1991; Boomgaarden, Vliegthart, 2009; Ceobanu, 2011; Palidda, 2011; Bond et al., 2015; Haynes et al., 2016; Burroughs, Williams, 2018; Berry et al., 2015; Greussing, Boomgaarden, 2017).

In the specific Italian case, in addition to the works dating back to the 1990s and the early 2000s on information media (Marletti, 1991, 1995; Belluati, Grossi, Viglongo, 1995; Maneri, 1996, 1998; Ter Wal, 1997, 2002; Mazzara, 1998; Cotesta, 1998, 2002; Corte, 2002), more recently it has been possible to thematise the media representation of immigration in the various moments of its communicative process, from the production to the transmission and reception of news (Binotto, Martino 2004) up to the mechanisms of construction of the image of the foreigner (Musarò, Parmiggiani 2014; Binotto, Bruno, Lai 2016).

To summarise the acquisitions of these years of study on the theme of the media representation of immigration and minorities, in other interventions we have traced and defined as prevalent two news frames present in most of the media treatment of migration: these are "security" and defence against "crime" on one side, "landings" and entry into the national space on the other (Binotto, Bruno 2018a). In the second case and especially in the last decade for the second theme, that of arrivals in Italy by sea and the "migratory crisis", a third minority frame has been added structured around the narratives of the "humanitarian" and often pietistic dimension of rescue, firstly brought forward by military operations such as Mare Nostrum, and then by the narrative of the operations carried out by the Coast Guard or by the boats of the NGOs operating in the Mediterranean (Musarò, 2017; Binotto, Bruno, 2018b). As we have seen, each of these news frames corresponds to a set of news themes (arrivals, political debate, etc.), news selection and treatment processes and a set of recurring themes, styles and clichés in journalistic narration (the news as a typical example). These practices and conventions of Italian and international information have contributed decisively to orienting the social definition of the "immigration problem" around frames and arguments that have become increasingly dominant over the years, a public discourse that has oriented political and electoral choices, constructing a definition that is by now firmly anchored to common sense, reinforcing at the same time this journalistic narrative and stabilising these definitions with a consensus that we could define, along with many other scholars, as hegemonic.



The framework of the literature on media and migration seems stable and substantially compact along the lines just described (Bruno, Peruzzi, 2020). However, at least in our country, there still seems to be much room for studies that rigorously and systematically investigate everything that moves "at the margins" of this space of representations. Once we have ascertained the limits of generalist information, and not only of the Italian one, as well as the different ability of other formats and languages to propose counter-narratives, even if minority ones<sup>23</sup>, many other aspects remain to be studied in depth: the ability to identify not only alternative themes and areas, but a language (also in a broad sense, e.g. television language) or metaphors that "shift" the frame; the fascinating but very fluid field of the so-called multicultural media; the media spaces beyond mainstream information, the role of other media and other places and circuits of cultural production, starting from cinema (Gianturco, Peruzzi, 2015; Frisina, 2016; Pavoni, 2018) and other audiovisual productions, video clips, but also radio, social media, theatre, entertainment and educational fiction etc.<sup>24</sup>; the intersection of two important social processes, such as the emergence of generations of migrant children, and the deep and pervasive diffusion of digital media in everyday life. And finally, to return circularly to the theoretical nodes on communication, the comparison between different languages and media in the complexity of the current communication scenario: for example, in terms of multiplicity and intersection of arenas and formats, the hybridisation of languages and media logics, the role of different actors in the digital ecosystem (from information professionals to activists and social workers, from migrants themselves as content "producers" to the role of large platforms in distributing, addressing and highlighting stories, images and information flows).

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<sup>23</sup> It must be said that, often, these different trajectories of representation seem to act on "parallel" paths and therefore do not affect the compactness and apparent coherence of mainstream representations: at the moment, the prospect of an improvement of the more general perception of migrations only thanks to "other" productions seems on the whole naive.

<sup>24</sup> Think of the vast field of the study of migration literatures.

A "lesson" on the relationship between information and the (construction of) social reality

From the literature summary it emerges that the empirical effort on images of migration also has a powerful analytical impact on formats, models, practices, and languages of information as a key factor in the process of social construction of reality. Studying how migrants are represented by the information outlets means studying, and very thoroughly, information in itself.

This is what we can define as a sort of "analytical feedback" on journalism and its professional practices that, as an object of study, uses reference to the production and coverage of immigration news to deconstruct its practices, limits, institutional and political constraints; this is not to say that this cannot be done with other topics, but the challenge posed by cultural diversities, by the "naked life" of the often painful migratory journeys, by the complexity and multidimensionality of migratory phenomena, appears absolutely crucial to define the role of communication - and, specifically, of the plurality of experiences that make up the current landscape of hybrid media<sup>25</sup> - in a complex and globalised scenario, also starting from an ethical dimension (Silverstone, 2007) with respect to the processes of knowledge construction.

Global and multidimensional phenomena such as immigration directly interrogate the journalistic field (Sorrentino, 2006; Sorrentino, Bianda, 2013; Splendore, 2017). Most investigations, starting with the more classic forms of content analysis and monitoring, as well as those more focused on language within mainstream forms, show that an independent variable (albeit in a relative sense) seems to be the "nature" of the news, or more precisely, its categorisation in the routine terms of thematic sections or macro-issues (News, Politics, Foreign Affairs, Economy, but also Social issues, Solidarity, etc.). From this standpoint, the simple and usual perspective of agenda setting is still decisive for

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<sup>25</sup> On the topic, which is too broad to be discussed here, we simply refer to Couldry, 2012; Chadwick, 2013, Van Dijk et al., 2018.

the representation of migrations, which operates with an overbearing use of the image of migrants in the emergency and anxiety-provoking thematic areas of crime and arrival news. This trend continues to saturate the information space on migration and leaves a reduced margin not so much for news that do not possess these characteristics (the “good news”, on which it would perhaps be easier to offer “good information”), but for the thematic areas that could foreseeably host them (precisely the marginal pages normally dedicated to society, culture, etc.). Therefore, it is not just a matter of “demanding” more space for these portions of social reality - perhaps with a slightly naive view of the principles of media logic (Altheide and Snow, 1979) - but of a different approach to information even in the daily reporting of news or landings, or at least a greater correctness in terms of journalistic “quality” (in-depth analysis, use of specialised sources, less use of stereotypes and clichés, less dependence on the instrumental logic of the political actors, etc.).

This attention is linked to a better focus on what happens with communication and information processes. For example, within the dynamics of the intermedial agenda (Bentivegna, Boccia Artieri, 2020), the analysis of journalistic coverage of migration and related events shows the intersection of *immigration-as-topic* with its ability to activate discursive polarities that can be more effectively investigated through multidimensional perspectives: in this sense, we see again the characteristic of framing processes to build themselves on a linguistic, metaphorical or visual level and, therefore, to define stable frameworks of interpretative framing, useful to routinise newsmaking processes, but at the same time to envisage the possibility of the emergence of counter-frames or minority frames, perhaps with different formats or genres<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> For example, Binotto, Nobile and Rega (2018) noted how typical *immigration-as-issue* frames constitute well-established interpretations in media coverage (use of specific slogans and catchphrases) and in the editorial line of different newspapers; on the other hand, on social media the space for counter-narratives and forms of re-framing seems to increase.

## Notes for a summary. Images, reality and public discourse

The narrative of immigration is also the collective narration and construction of a self - a community, a space defined by material and symbolic borders, a nation as an ideological construct - in which the media play a predominant role, transforming events and themes into fragments of a specific perception of immigration and immigrants (Binotto, 2008), populated with discursive devices, also in the sense of "symbolic materials" (Thompson, 1995), which can be used to give arguments, meaning and coherence to everyday interactions. In this perspective, immigration is configured as an inexhaustible repertoire at the disposal of political entrepreneurs - of fear, insecurity, but also "common sense", good-natured conservatism, "democratic racism" (Dal Lago, 2004; Palidda, 2009; Faso, 2010) - to build and affirm that there is an *other than oneself* on whom it is possible to unload responsibility and stigma. Discursive construction is as predictable as it is effective, not least because it mobilises, feeds and re-signifies "cultural resources" (Gamson, 1992) that are always available and ready to be filled with contingent stories and images.

The selection, removal and underlining of attributes and salient elements of a phenomenon is exactly a piece of that framing process that holds together - in our discourse, but also in the more general framework of the relationship between knowledge, images, reality - the description and interpretation that the communication sphere leaves to the arenas of debate and contention.

It is worth remembering that contention takes place within a field whose symbolic coordinates define the margin of action of the various actors, the limits and the way in which they can exercise one of the most powerful devices of power, that of symbolism and signification (Hall, 1997). However, this always takes place within relations between actors defined primarily on a material level; it is not so much a question of once again contrasting in sterile way the two levels of explanation (in extreme synthesis: material structures versus symbolic dimensions), but of recognising that these levels are closely interrelated. In this sense,

relationships and capacities (material *and* symbolic) of the actors are one of the most significant keys to understanding the communicative dynamics affecting the migration phenomenon<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> For an analysis of the potential of the different actors that populate the field, conflictual or negotiated, of public representations (primarily political actors, media actors and civil society actors), see for instance Gerli and Marini, 2019; see also Pogliano and Ponzo, 2019.

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# Individuals that Matter. State Theory in the Age of the Individual

Luciano Nosetto

**Abstract:** The political reflection upon the legitimacy of state power finds in the individual not only an originating source but also a permanent limit. This tense relation between the state and the individual can be traced to the foundational approach delivered by Thomas Hobbes' political science. This approach not only identifies the individual as the matter of the state but also allows to suspect that this individualism is based on a previous selection of the human material apt to gain the status of an individual. This selection of the appropriate matter of the state implies the marginalization of female, african, and indo american population. The aim of this chapter is to give account of the way in which modern individualist-based state theory is built upon the distinction between the individuals that matter and those who don't.

**Keywords:** State, individual, patriarchalism, slavery, servitude

## The Age of the Individual

It is characteristic of our times to claim that the state is not an anthropological constant: that statehood has its own history, which is briefer and more recent than the history of humanity. Equally characteristic of our times is the claim that the individual is not an anthropological constant either: that individualism also has its own history, which is also briefer and more recent than human history. Accepting these assumptions, the aim of this chapter is to reconstruct that moment when the state and the individual forge a common history.

Our first step is to shed light on what is known as individualism. Usually, the emergence of the individual is linked to the contractualist doctrines of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, for Oxford professor, C.B. Macpherson individualism emerged in the political theories of the second half of the 1600s, ranging from Thomas Hobbes to John Locke. Now, the fact that in his book Macpherson speaks of “possessive individualism” leads us to believe that the adjective “possessive” implies a type of “individualism” that exists among others, or that this modern specimen belongs to a wider and possibly older type (Macpherson, 1968).

Something similar can be found in the works of his Cambridge counterpart, Quentin Skinner. Indeed, in his exploration of the foundations of modern political thought, Skinner cannot help but notice the renewed interest in individual personality expressed by Humanism from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on. Namely, Renaissance humanists are interested in men's capacity to use their power to transform themselves and nature. This architectonic disposition of the laborious individual constitutes, according to Skinner, one of the foundations of modern political thought, already present in the Renaissance (Skinner, 1978: 98-99).

But, why should we settle here? Oxford professor Larry Siedentop traces the invention of the individual back to the moral revolution introduced by Christianity. Namely, individualism is visible already in Christ's teachings, where he postulates the moral equality of all men, as opposed to natural inequalities, and human agency's freedom, as opposed to fate's determinism. According to Siedentop, the story of how the individual became the organizing social role in the West begins in the philosophy of Paul of Tarsus (Siedentop, 2015: 2, 66).

London School of Economics professor, Friedrich Hayek, goes even further back. He points out that the elements of individualism must be traced back not only to the Renaissance or to Christianity, but also to the philosophy of classical antiquity. For Hayek, the respect for the individual man as man is coeval with European Western civilization (2001: 14). If we go down this expanding road and immerse ourselves in the teachings of yet another eminent Oxford professor, Isaiah Berlin, we must concede that the question "Why shall an individual obey?" is in fact the "eternal question" of political philosophy (2014: 1). In this sense, the age of the individual becomes coeval with human existence, or at least, with the human zeal to wonder about political things.

Certainly, these professors use the terms individual and individualism in different senses. One thing is the ethical concern about the cultivation of Olympic individuality; another one, the religious concern for the salvation of the soul; another one, the interest in the technical wonders

that human creativity is capable of; and a totally different one, the moral grounds of the individual right to unrestricted appropriation. Certainly, all cases allude to the individual and individualism, but it is obvious that they all mean different things.

Leo Strauss can shed some light on this topic. For the German professor, the question of individuality constitutes the heart of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns (Strauss, 1965: 323). Therefore, the comparison between ancient and modern perspectives should allow us to grasp more clearly what we mean by “individualism”. Strauss affirms that ancient or classic political philosophy begins by describing a cosmic order where the place that each type or class of individual occupies within the whole is easily identified. Thus, the well-ordered city, a city consistent with natural order, is that in which each individual occupies his naturally-assigned position according to his type or class, and performs his rightful duty or task (Strauss, 1959: 27-40). In essence, ancient political teachings are not that far from Biblical teachings: here, man also has a place among all creatures. It is an exalted place, because man has been created in God’s image and likeness and is called upon to look after creation and make it bear fruit. Virtue also consists of respecting the place each of us occupies within the whole and performing the rightful task or duty (Strauss, 1989: 81-98).

Now, Strauss holds that modern political philosophy is wary of these cosmological or cosmotheological stories about the whole. However, its point of departure is not an alternative description of the whole, but rather a description of the part or of the individual. From this description of the individuals, of their passions and rights, modern political philosophy derives the rightful social order (Strauss, 1965: 183). This inversion, that is, the substitution of movement from the whole to the part in the ancients by the movement from the part to the whole in the moderns can also be described as the substitution of the “law of nature” for “human rights”. This substitution is double. On the one hand, the duty towards the law is replaced by the proclamation of the rights of the individual. On the other hand, nature as the standard or guide to action



is replaced by men as the source of legitimacy and end of all social order. Thus, the place that moderns assign to individuality can be described as a double substitution: law replaced by rights, nature replaced by man (Strauss, 1989).

After these clarifications, it is safe to say that, with the advent of modern political philosophy, the individual becomes the point of departure or basis for every reflection on the good society. The leading role that individualism plays for the moderns, in contrast with the secondary role it played for the ancients, enables the identification of the advent of modern philosophy with the onset of the age of the individual. Now, both the onset of the age of the individual and the advent of modern political philosophy have the same root: the work of Thomas Hobbes.

### Political Science

Thomas Hobbes' work constitutes the first scientific approach to political things. This is, at least, how Hobbes himself conceives it. We must bear in mind that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century "science" and "philosophy" were not regarded as two separate and distinguishable domains, but were used rather interchangeably (Oakeshott, 2000: 50). Hobbes' political science or philosophy does imply, however, a departure or distinction from ancient political philosophy or science (Strauss, 1965: 120-124). One may say that what characterizes modern science or philosophy is the scientific method: the methodical and systematical approach that Hobbes borrowed from Galileo (Oakeshott, 2000: 2).

According to Galileo's method, the study of political events must proceed by reducing or breaking down the object to its bare elements, in order to recompose it later by lucid deduction (Strauss, 1996: 1-2). This "resolute-compositive" method is similar to that of the watchmaker who is faced with a watch that does not work: the first step is to disassemble the machine, separate its parts and lay them on a working table or board. Once the whole mechanism has been disassembled, the next step is to look carefully at the individual pieces,

those that cannot be further divided, and study how they work. Following this method, one can reconstruct the whole in a lucid and reasoned manner, one that starts from the proper understanding of the workings of each individual piece (Bredekamp, 2018: 86-87). Similarly, the political scientist or philosopher who is faced with a state that does not work and seeks to understand it, must break down its different mechanisms in order to find the individual pieces.

When political scientists or philosophers disassemble or break down the state, they recreate in their minds something similar to what happens to the state during a civil war. Civil wars disassemble or break down the state machinery: hostility amongst citizens distances and separates fellow countrymen, colleagues, neighbors, relatives... As hostility intensifies within the political community, all the parts of the state begin to disassemble: civil war breaks down countries, provinces, corporations, neighborhoods, and families, to the extent that the individual remains alone and isolated (Agamben, 2015: 15).

Bearing this in mind, we may suspect that political science or philosophy is not derived from natural sciences but is founded on a first-hand experience of human life and on the attitude or moral disposition derived from it (Strauss, 1996: 7, 143). In the solitude of his threatened existence, the individual is exposed like a piece of clockwork on the working table. Well, what do these fundamental pieces look like? The first thing that Hobbes observes is that the pieces that make up the state are equal to each other. Although not identical, their differences in strength or intelligence are not as marked so as to allow for a natural hierarchizing. Given that the differences among individuals are not decisive, they can be abstracted, thereby allowing the identification of the single piece of the machinery with the abstract or generic individual. If among us there were four-meter-tall people, with colossal strength and superlative intelligent, we would be naturally inclined to obey them (Schmitt, 2010: 17-18, 25). Since this is not the case, it's far from clear who must rule and who must obey, and this lack of clarity makes all hierarchies questionable. This absence of marked natural inequalities becomes a source of quarrel.

This natural quarrel presents three forms. Individuals procure their happiness by obtaining the things they desire. Now, the same thing can be the object of desire of more than one individual, which inevitably leads to competition between them. This competition becomes distrust when individuals feels that the proximity of others is a source of threat and insecurity regarding their own possessions and life. Besides competition and mistrust there is also offense, that occurs when the behavior of others does not match the value individuals set upon themselves. By themselves, these individuals seeking gain, safety and reputation become mutually competitive, distrustful and proud. Individuals hardly get along in such a situation. Given this hostile context, it is expected that they would pursue peace. However, as long as imminent peace is not foreseeable, the more reasonable action is to prepare for war. In this state of permanent threat, what could limit the right of the individuals to do everything in their power to defend their own lives? Understandably, threatened individuals believe they have the right to everything within their reach to protect their own life, or that they are aided by the natural right to all things. However, a state where everyone has the right to everything is a state of war. Who can lead their life like that? Nobody can.

Some, seeking peace and avoiding war, will resolve to act with justice towards others. But, what is justice in such a context? Those who betray the trust of the person who they have reached an agreement with are said to be acting in an unjust way. If this is true, then justice consists in complying with pacts or covenants. However, in a setting of constant fear, even good-hearted people will be forced to break the agreement if that staves off the mortal threat hanging over them. Who is to morally reprehend those who break their word in order to save their own life? In this dreadful context, where no binding power can provide legal security, everyone will do what they can, and this is as just as it is unjust. It is also said that it is just to give each person their due. However, in such a context where everyone is watching their own back, who is to morally reprehend those who take what is not theirs, if that means the difference between life and death? In this dreadful state, there is no

“mine” nor “yours”, “just” nor “unjust” there is neither property nor justice to establish a standard of order (*Leviathan* II, 15).

What is the way out of this? How does disagreement become agreement? Civil peace can only be reached where a common power protects all individuals and guarantees a legal order that respects property and covenants. If this is achieved, the search for security would not incite mistrust, but induce obedience, the search for gain would not provoke competition, but inspire work, and the search for reputation would no longer arouse offences, but encourage industry (Machperson, 1968: 40-41). In other words, the fear of death, the desire of goods deemed necessary for a comfortable living, and the hope to obtain them through industry are the three passions that incline men to peace. There is only one way to attain civil peace: we must all take a step back. All but one. That one person that stays at the forefront is in charge of protecting the whole and guaranteeing order. To this end, all others must transfer their natural right to protect themselves and pledge obedience (*Leviathan* I, 17).

By virtue of this wonder, individuals create an artificial person or an automaton (Bredenkamp, 2018: 86; Oakeshott, 2000: 49; Schmitt, 1984: 37). This artificial person, i.e. the State, is made up of a head, i.e. the sovereign, and a body, i.e. the people. The sovereign is a natural person or an assembly that represents the people and acts in their behalf. The people are a plurality of natural persons who, as they come together, become the single author of the actions of the sovereign. Thus, the representative and the represented are constituted in the same moment: the first, as actor authorized by the people’s consent; the second, as inactive authors of the decisions of the sovereign (Duso, 2016: 85-88, 96-97; Virno, 2003, pp. 11-14). If every natural person is the author of their own acts, then the artificial person known as “state” is to bestow action upon the sovereign and authorship upon the people (*Leviathan* I, 16).

The person that takes over the representation of the whole is two things in one: on the one hand, a natural person, made up of flesh and blood,

like any other individual; on the other, the head or the face of that artificial person that constitutes the state. In a sense, the Hobbesian state somehow mimics the late medieval doctrine of the divine right of kings. According to the latter, as historian Ernst Kantorowicz famously stated, the king has two bodies: a natural body, subject to the passing of time, sickness and death, and a political body, invisible and intangible, that ensures the immortal continuity of politics and government from generation to generation (Kantorowicz, 2016: 9-11).

Saying that a true flesh and blood person is the head or face of the state reminds us of the idea of representation in theatrical or dramaturgical terms: over their natural face, actors wear the mask of the person they are to represent (Duso, 2016: 85). Indeed, etymologically, the term “person” signifies the mask that Greek actors wore to hide their faces and amplify their voices (Esposito, 2017: 167 ff.). So, what does the sovereign representative proclaim through this mask? In the first place, the content of the laws. The sovereign is the one and only legislative authority: he draws, interprets, enforces, enacts and also repeals the laws. Although he can delegate the interpretation and enforcement to others, he has the final saying. The sovereign’s nomothetic authority is absolute. And the reason behind this is clear. Before the emergence of the state, it was impossible to distinguish justice from injustice. Therefore, the intent to limit the content of the laws using a criterion of justice that precedes the existence of the state is utterly absurd. Likewise, before the emergence of the state, individuals were atomized in a solitary and dreadful existence. It is therefore absurd for any given group of individuals to intend to limit the legislative power of the sovereign by appealing to preexisting rights. The binding character of the law derives from the sanctioning authority and not from any appeal to permanent contents of justice or to freedoms and ancestral rights (Leviathan I, 26; Oakeshott, 2000: 43-46). These specifications about the civil law carry implications regarding the divine law. Which makes sense, given that, in a Christian state, civil laws could hardly be binding if they were at odds with the divine law. Surely enough, divine laws are dictated by God, not the sovereign; however, for the purposes of civil peace, only the sovereign can interpret the Scriptures. The State, then,

is responsible for laying down the principles and precepts of public faith (Oakeshott, 2000: 51-58; Schmitt, 2007).

Nevertheless, only a rather poor political anatomy would describe a state made up solely of two elements: a noisy mask and a shapeless body. In order for the state to be set in motion, its constituent parts must become specified and differentiated. It is precisely the sovereign's task to shape the whole. The wonderful creation of this political body starts when the shapeless mass gives itself a head and continues to improve as the head distributes the living matter of the body, modeling the different muscles and organs. First, the head of the state groups individuals together in order to create the different muscles and limbs: i.e., the provinces, cities, and colonies; universities, schools and churches; businesses, markets and families. Secondly, organs ought to complement the muscles. The political body must create eyes to see what happens outside of itself, and so ambassadors and diplomats are appointed. It must have a stomach to nourish the whole, and so the ministers in charge of state finances, treasury, and taxes are appointed. It must have hands to carry weapons, and so it must organize police forces to arrest criminals and curb riots. It must have tendons and nerves to move the muscles, that is, governors, deans, clergymen, and other sovereign commissioners (*Leviathan* I, 19). Given that it is the head who forms the muscles and organs, it would be absurd for one of these parts to claim that other titles or preexisting rights are higher than the sovereign's. The groups of individuals that disobey or defy the sovereign do not amount to anything other than kidney stones, tumors or worms that undermine the political body from within (*Leviathan* I, 22, 29).

Following this methodical exercise, Hobbes starts from the individuals, confirms their lonely and endangered existence, and based on this, he builds a political body where the sovereign stands as the absolute legislator, the ultimate interpreter of the Scriptures, the source of all groupings, and the creator of all authority. Given that civil war is a limit situation, the state is built on a *tabula rasa*. This discredits any justice criteria that holds itself above the civil law, any freedom or right

that claims to be previously acquired, any group that believes to be more important than the state, any title of authority that claims to precede or be independent from the sovereign. Nothing comes before the state, and therefore no one is in front of the sovereign (Duso, 2016: 88, 97).

That being said, this first idea of individualism would lead to unrestricted absolutism, were it not for one particular detail of the Hobbesian system. When he addresses the sovereign power to interpret the Scriptures, Hobbes says that, *in foro interno*, individuals can believe in what they want, as long as externally they abide by the rules of public faith established by the sovereign (Fernández Psychaux, 2018: 55 ff). Therefore, every member of the people is two things at once: on the one hand, they are citizens of the state, and, as such, must obey the sovereign; on the other, private persons who can privately believe in whatever they want. Just as the person who is the representative has two bodies, a political and a natural one, so do the represented people: they have a public and a private existence. This individualist remainder that Hobbes pinpoints in the individuals' consciences produces a separation between the profession of public faith and the confession of private faith. In this gap between both terms lie the three political processes that we will develop hereon. First, from the gap between public acceptance and private discretion arises the critique against state absolutism, which is sparked within certain low-key and discreet social circles and later gains public relevance, resulting in the Enlightenment (Koselleck, 1988: 36-40). Second, this right that the individuals keep from the state is the first seed in the future expansion of the remaining individual rights, which are understood not only as the basis of the social order but also a constant limit to the state's authority (Strauss, 1995: 100; Schmitt, 1984: 55-57). Finally, in the gap between public obedience and private reluctance the mechanism of confession intervenes, this being at first clerical and later secular, outlined as the main vehicle of individuals' disciplining (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 37-43; Foucault, 2014: 288 ff.; Foucault, 1991: 184-194).

## Individuals that Matter

Of all the pages of the *Leviathan*, there is one which is undoubtedly the most suggestive and has the most abundant number of consequences: the frontispiece that reproduces the engraving that Hobbes commissioned the French illustrator Abraham Bosse (Bredekamp, 2018: 81 ff.). Much has been written about this image, that portrays an artificial person, comprising a plurality of crammed individuals (Bredekamp, 2007: 29-60; Tralau, 2016: 61-88). Already in the introduction, he affirms that the individuals are the raw-material or the prime matter of the state. Therefore, it is clear what Hobbes means when, in the title of the work at hand, he refers to *the Matter* of the political body. The corporeal or bodily materialism present in the title, in the frontispiece and in the introduction of the *Leviathan* is hardly compatible with that equally present in Judith Butler's book *Bodies that Matter*. Nevertheless, there is something in the latter title that is particularly relevant for the purpose of my subsequent argument. In the contemporary reflections about the sex-gender standards that differentiate bodies that matter from those that do not, Butler feels the need to remind us about the material reality of the bodies and the ways in which that same matter is formed and performed by social practices. This subtlety already appears in the title of her book, *Bodies that Matter*, in two possible senses or definitions of the word "matter". The first one is matter in the sense of importance or significance, which is the most common interpretation of the title. But matter also means the material of which any physical object is composed. The original book cover also allows for this interpretation, given that there is a line break between the first and the second word. The sense of the title could then be utterly different, pointing to the singular matter constituted by bodies, or raising attention to the raw material bodies are. Keeping this in mind, we might return to Hobbes with newfound concerns: if the raw material of political bodies are merely attributeless individuals, is it not concerning that the production of this automaton might be preceded by the selection of the "appropriate" raw material, that is, by the separation between individuals that matter and those who do not? Is it not the generic individual that makes up the state a previously genderized



individual? Are women part of the political body? If so, what is their place? Let us return to the frontispiece. What first comes into view are the unmistakably masculine features of the artificial person of the state. The Leviathan is a moustached man. However, a closer view reveals that the number of women in the political body is not to be ignored. Some of them are holding children (Skinner, 2008: 191; Fang Gn, 2012: 84-85). We might then reach the conclusion that Hobbes included women in the emblem he commissioned Bosse, or that, at least, Bosse was the one who included them and Hobbes found it admissible to the extent that he did not order him to redo the drawing.

Admittedly, in his characterization of the isolated individual, Hobbes does not introduce any relevant distinction between men and women. Unlike John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hobbes believes that, in the natural state, the physical and intellectual differences between men and women are not significant enough to explain any sort of natural rule of the first over the latter (Pateman, 1988: 5-6). He even holds that the only natural rule among human beings is that between a mother and a newborn. The rule by the father is a convention, given that there is always the question of who the real father is, but there are no doubts regarding the mother (Pateman, 1988: 45-46). Nevertheless, this equality between men and women is eventually broken. When he defines the family, Hobbes does away with women and focuses on the rule of the father over the offspring and the servants. If the father, son and servant figures provide a comprehensive definition of the family, the only place left for the adult woman is that of the servant. Let us summarize these elements. The point of departure is the natural equality between men and women. The point of arrival is the institution of families as vital muscles of the political body: families made up of males who rule over their offspring and servants. There is a gap in the middle. How can we explain it? Carole Pateman makes this implicit passage clear: before the constitution of the state, women must have been reduced to servitude by men. "In the natural state all women become servants, and all women are excluded from the original pact. That is to say, all women are also excluded from becoming civil individuals" (Pateman, 1988: 50). Previously, we said that the

individual that becomes part of the state has a double existence, a public and a private one. In the case of women, whose place within the state is that of servants, their existence is one-dimensional, they are confined to the private sphere of the family (Pateman, 1988: 12; Losiggio, 2020).



Image 1.  
Leviathan's frontispiece



Image 2.  
Detail of the presence of women



Image 3.  
Detail of Leviathan's moustache

As servants or slaves, women share the fate of those who are reduced to serfdom or servitude: to be part of the state not as signatory subjects, but as dominated objects; to be part of the political body not as civil persons but as household servants. This is the same as saying that, in the making of the state, some individuals matter and others do not. This said, if the presence of women in the frontispiece may give rise to doubts, what is out of the question is that Hobbes' political body holds no place for any figures from Africa nor the Americas. The generic individual that makes up the state seems to be not only genderized, but also racialized: feminine gender and non-European *genus* are two obstacles to access the rights that stem from being an individual. Interestingly enough, Bosse also made two emblems in which the African and the American continents are personified by resorting to two female allegorical figures. Nothing remotely similar appears in the Leviathan's frontispiece. Although the question about a multiethnic composition of Hobbes' political body may seem anachronistic, the topics of non-Europeans serfdom and slavery were utterly relevant at the time, and very difficult to justify from a perspective that asserts individual's will as the one and only source of subordination.



L'AFRIQUE.  
 e de mes deserts les chaleurs indomtable. Meo villes ncantoinois fet part

Image 4. Africa.



L'AMERIQUE.  
 Isles que j'ay la Terre-est toujours verte. Aujsi depuis le temps que l'on ma des  
 point sous le Ciel en si charmant séjour. Chacun me fait la cour.

Image 5. America.

Since the previous century, the debate over indigenous serfdom marked Spanish politics. The first one to denounce the massacres and degrading treatment and to condemn the cruelty of the *encomienda* system was the Dominican Order's missionary Bartolomé de las Casas. In his *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, commissioned by King Carlos V, De las Casas chronicles the ruthless atrocities inflicted by Christian subjects upon men, women and children in America proclaiming the latter were "rebels against the Spanish Crown", and foregoing the principle that "nobody who is not a subject of a civil power in the first place can be deemed in law to be in rebellion against that power" (De las Casas, 2004: 233-234).

Distraught by De las Casas' chronicle, the Spanish King summoned him to be part of a debate with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, official chronicler of the Crown, who was in charge of keeping the historical record of the reign of Carlos V, as well as the expeditions and campaigns to the New World (De Sepúlveda, 1987). Sepúlveda is in favor of the rule over indigenous peoples of the Americas and justifies it on the basis of the differences between the natures of men and inferior creatures: "Spaniards rule rightfully over these barbarians in the New World and adjacent islands, who are so inferior to the Spaniards in prudence, inventiveness, virtue and humanity as children are to adults and women to men, and the differences between them are as wide as that between the most wild and cruel people and the most merciful, the most astonishingly intemperate and the most continent and composed, and I would even want to say, between monkeys and men" (De Sepúlveda, 2006: 305). Sepúlveda, then, justifies Spanish rule over indigenous peoples of the Americas wielding a renovated Aristotelianism which alleges irrational beings are slaves by nature (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 24-25).

A more moderate take on the indigenous peoples' question is the Dominican Order scholar, Francisco de Vitoria's, who became an utmost influential Spanish doctrinaire. Vitoria rejects the reducing of indigenous peoples to the condition of primates, children or insane people (De Vitoria, 2012: 57-84), and questions the attribution of any

spiritual or secular title in American territory by the pope or the emperor (De Vitoria, 2012: 85-125). Although he rules out both the indigenous peoples of the Americas' natural servitude and the emperor and the pope's world dominance, Vitoria argues that the Spaniard conquest is all the same duly justified. He offers two arguments in its favor: first, the law of nations which allows the natural intercommunication between men as well as the trade of goods (De Vitoria, 2012: 129-139); second, the Christian duty to preach the Gospel to all men (De Vitoria, 2012: 139-145). Europeans' freedom of communication and duty of mission then justifies the subjection of those who hinder both trade and the spreading of the Word of God (Schmitt, 2006: 101 ff.).

From what we have just said, it is clear that, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish debate over the right of conquest and the subjection of the indigenous peoples of the Americas to servitude, modern individualist coordinates did not apply. Neither in the case of Aristotelian natural right nor in the case of Christian theology is the generic individual the basis of the political order. The situation is different in the case of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English political theory: here, the will and consent of the individual is the only source of legitimate obedience (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 442; Arneil, 1996: 46, 71). Then how are we to harmonize the individualist postulate and legitimate servitude?

Hobbes' figure of the "commonwealth by acquisition" may provide a first answer. After describing how the state or commonwealth is instituted by a pact of everyone with everyone, Hobbes focuses in the case of the victory of a military leader who defeats his enemies, and the latter, out of fear implore for their lives and agree to obey him. This also applies to the defeated enemy who ceases to offer resistance, implying that they agree to submit to the rule of other in order to save their lives. Hobbes' intention is to prove that servitude does not result from the force of the victor, but from the will of the defeated to preserve their life by putting themselves at the service of others (*Leviathan* II, 20). This is the argument that justifies the individual's subjection to the power of the state in exchange for protection. This is utterly different from the submission of an individual to the dominance and enslavement

by other individuals. Javier Vázquez Prieto underlines that, in several passages of his political work, Hobbes defines freedom as the absence of dominance between individuals. Thus, the consent among individuals that gives rise to the state should, by principle, exclude all kinds of servitude and slavery between them (Vázquez Prieto, 2011: 59-94).

A more explicit, and thus more influential argument was made by John Locke regarding the despotic power. In his treatises on civil government, published by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Locke upbraids patriarchal theories for understanding political obligation as a consequence of the filial duty of children to their parents. Against the official ideology of those times, according to which the monarch is like a father with equally absolute rights over his children (Filmer, 1920; Pateman, 1988: 38), Locke rejects the existence of any natural hierarchies among men and holds that every order must be based on the consent of the subordinated. The aim of this rejection of the patriarchal power, which takes up his entire first treatise on civil government, is to replace the despotic model of filial obedience to the father with the liberal model of the contract between equal individuals. Certainly, Locke's liberal egalitarianism seeks to abolish inequalities among men. That is, he criticizes a patriarchalism in which fathers and sons are unequal yet overlooks the relationship between husband and wife. From cover to cover, in his treatise, women are regarded as inferior and are naturally and civilly subordinated to men (Pateman, 1988: 11-24, 91).

In his analysis of the despotic power, Locke distinguishes slavery from servitude or serfdom. The slave is the enemy, a survivor from a just and legitimate war, whose life depends on the will of the victor. The power of the master seems to arise from the force that keeps the slave captive, and the state of war between them still stands (Locke, 1988: § 173; Fernández Peychaux, 2015: 63). The case of the servant is different: they are free individuals who sell their services to others for a determinate period of time and, unlike the slaves, they are members of civil society (Locke, 1988: §§ 24, 85). One might say the difference between slavery and serfdom is equal to that between violence and will.

However, for Locke there is volition in slavery: it is by their own will that the slaves become wild enemies, brought to heel only by force. And it is by their own will that slaves are chained, given that suicide always remains a possibility (Fernández Peychaux, 2015: 65).

To these specifications regarding the legitimacy of slavery and serfdom, one must add those concerning the rights of industrious and rational individuals to appropriate vacant lands and useful goods through their work. According to Locke, God gives the world to all men, to possess in common so that they may cultivate the land and render creation fruitful. Within this framework, the individual right to life and freedom includes the right to appropriate what they deem necessary. This appropriation is achieved through work, which is both the origin of legitimate property and the source of the improvement and multiplication of humanity's common goods (Locke, 1988: § 27; Macpherson, 1968: 194-220). It was suggested that, in contrast with this, the peoples of the Americas were idle and unconcerned with establishing a civil order or working beyond immediate subsistence (Tully, 2003: 139). These indolent habits of the indigenous peoples then rendered the Americas a vacant land for work and appropriation (Arneil, 1996: 141-143). As Cecilia Abdo Ferez puts forth: "Locke places the criteria for defining what a man (a personality) is in industrious work, that is, the work through which men appropriate nature, because preserving it as it is not only renders it unproductive, but also constitutes an offense against the divine duty to make it fruitful". Therefore, European settlers base their right over the territory of the Americas on the double disavowal of any kind of economic property and political organization that indigenous peoples of the Americas may have had. These entitles some settlers to appropriate lands and goods in the Americas without committing any crime against indigenous peoples. These peoples are therefore excluded from possessive and civil individualism: "The territories of the Americas are then regarded as vacant, available, awaiting improvements, and only if indigenous peoples interfere in that which does not concern them (given that ultimately they could change their habits), would this constitute a crime" (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 439-440).

Thus, Locke achieves the unachievable: he provides an individualistic and liberal justification to the “Atlantic triangle” between European ambition, African slavery and American dispossession, which results in “the largest criminal scheme of the time” (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 66; Fernández Psychaux, 2015: 61-62). By keeping Africans in a state of permanent war and neglecting to acknowledge any type of industry or civility in the indigenous peoples of the Americas, European individuals have a clear path to assert their right to unrestricted appropriation. Due to his daring endeavor, Locke rightfully earned the title of “ideologue of colonial dispossession” (Abdo Ferez, 2013: 445).



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## Emigration to the United States of America in Basque Literature<sup>28</sup>

Asier Barandiaran Amarika

**Abstract:** In this study I try to show how Basque emigration to the United States is represented in Basque literature (literature written in Basque). To contextualize this study, I first review the Basque theme in the Anglo-Saxon literature of the American West. Next, I analyze how the Basques themselves tell in their language (in different literary genres, such as storytelling or *bertso*), the experience of emigration, travel and ways of life in the new continent, with its difficulties, with its dramatic situations and with their celebration of their "Basqueness" in the American continent. The self-image that they develop in Basque literature and the attitudes adopted by the authors and characters are the focus of this study, as they sometimes reflect what has been adopted in English literature (when dealing with the Basque issue) and it also reflects some essentialist tendencies seen in other world literatures when dealing with emigration.

**Keywords:** Basque diaspora, self-image, language, identity, discourse

If we want to make an approximation to how the topic of the Basque American diaspora is treated in Basque literature, it seems that it is necessary to contextualize that approach, first putting ourselves on the other side of the magic mirror that is literature. That other side of the mirror is the vision of the critic, of the analyst.

Before, a brief note about the term "Basque literature", our English translation of "euskal literatura". In this study, wherever "Basque literature" is referred to, to be more precise we would perhaps have to say, "literature in the Basque language" or "literature in Basque", as Luis Mitxelena pointed out<sup>29</sup>. For reasons of operability and economy of language, we will continue to use "Basque literature". The syntagma in Basque "euskal literatura" gives added clarity because, as Jesús María Lasagabaster points out, "the Basque adjective "*euskal*" refers to the language *-euskaldun*, *euskaltegi-* [...], while the Spanish adjective

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<sup>29</sup> Luis Mitxelena, *Historia de la Literatura Vasca* (San Sebastián, Erein, 1988), p.13.

"Vasco/a" does not necessarily have that that linguistic reference<sup>30</sup>. It is therefore clear what we mean by that phrase from now on: literature in Basque or in the Basque language.

Although we will focus on literature written in Basque, we have to make a *Status Questionis* about what has been written about Basque culture in America or about Basque emigration in other literatures, also called the "Basque diaspora", in America. We have the feeling that, to put it another way, the hypothesis, the literary approach in English literature to Basque will somehow influence the way in which Basque literature treats it, although not in a decisive way.

On the concept of "Basque diaspora", two notes should be added in this introduction. Some significant data will serve to illustrate this:

- There are about 10 million people in the world of Basque origin (outside the Basque Country of origin), and most of them are in the Americas.

- According to a census in 2000, in the United States of America there are some 57,000 people of (direct and close) Basque descent. In California, 20,868, in Idaho, 6,637, in Nevada, 6,096, in Washington 2,665 and in Oregon, 2,627. These data can be reviewed, because there was no category of "Basque" in the registries of inhabitants prior to 1980 and therefore no such data was collected. In North America, for example, there is an association that coordinates the activity of Basque centers<sup>31</sup>.

The Basques in America have been many things: mercenaries, missionaries, sailors, merchants<sup>32</sup>, and beyond America, the

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<sup>30</sup> Jesús María Lasagabaster: "Las literaturas de los vascos" and "La literatura vasca entre 1700 y 1876." In Jesús María Lasagabaster. *Las Literaturas de los vascos*, ed. Ana Toledo (San Sebastián, Universidad de Deusto, 2002), p.24.

<sup>31</sup> It is called the North American Basque Organization (NABO), and the Zuberoan researcher Argitxu Camus elaborated a doctoral thesis where she studied, among others, this association, Camus, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Chapter 2 of the work *Amerkanuak* carries the same title in English: "Mercenaries, Missionaries, Mariners, and Merchants", Douglass & Bilbao, 2005: 61-116. Very interesting chapter to learn more about the first emigrations of the Basques and their evolution.

Philippines<sup>33</sup> and other lands. Literary images have also gradually helped these archetypes to emerge, sometimes in the form of a stereotype. For this reason, the verse of José María Iparragirre "eman ta zabalzazu / munduan frutua" (grant and extend / throughout the world your fruit) of the *Gernikako Arbola* Hymn ("Gernika Tree") illustrates the tendency to migrate and spread successfully around the world.

In this short study I will focus on the Basque diaspora in North America through Basque literature. Therefore, the interaction between American Anglo-Saxon literature and Basque literature on this subject is intended to be a focus of attention. Although the establishment of the Basques in North America has precursors dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>34</sup>, it will have an impact on Anglo-Saxon (and later on Basque) literature, especially since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 1. The Basque theme in Anglo-Saxon literature up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century

This is an issue that has been progressively analyzed in recent decades. Indeed, the public image projected by the Basque theme, the Basques, their customs and their contribution to the cultural fabric of certain areas where they have settled has been considered. In addition to literary criticism and the analysis of literary discourse, we have paid attention to the collective imagination, which is a literary critical approach in which images (of individuals or groups, also ethnic) are involved<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> The first Basques who came to the Philippines did so in 1521 and since that year they have taken on the role of conquerors, explorers, missionaries (and other roles) in those islands, having become famous these Basque names: Elcano, Legazpi, Urdaneta ... In the work *Basques in the Philippines*, this influence is analyzed in the islands, in Marciano De Borja: *Basques in the Philippines* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Joseba Zulaika and William Douglas. *Basque Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. (Reno, Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> <http://compalit.blogspot.com/2014/02/imagology.html>

Although it is a concept coined by the writer Milan Kundera (Brno, 1929), it has its history and precedents, it is especially important in diasporic studies, because literature has often served to know the character of a people or nation, in Joep Leersen: "Imagology: History and Method" in Manfred Beller: *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters* (Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 2007, p.19).

A key work is that of Richard Etulain (1977): "The Basques in Western American Literature". Another is that by Jon Bilbao and W. Douglas *Amerikanuak. Basques in the New World* (1975), which has been re-edited (the 2005 edition will be used here).

Etulain takes a tour of North American literature, focusing on how the Basques appear in the culture and/or society of the (American) West, and also in short stories.

The Basques, moreover, usually give news about themselves infrequently and late. The lack of a literary system and a firm educational system (in the European Basque Country) that protected and promoted a discourse of its own seems to be the cause. There is one exception, however: Basque-language journalism in California at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

[...] the limited educational background and reading habits of the Basque immigrants crippled efforts to create a Basque-language press. There were only two 19<sup>th</sup>-century attempts to do so. The American-born lawyer Martin Biscailuz founded a newspaper entitled *Escualdun Gazeta* (Basque Gazette) in Los Angeles in 1885. [...] In 1893 José Goytino, a journalist by trade, founded the newspaper *California'ko Eskual Herria* (California Basque Land). It proved to be considerably more successful than the *Escualdun Gazeta*, since it was published until 1898. It had distributors in San Francisco, San Diego, and Mexico City.<sup>36</sup>

We will not expand on this aspect, as there are authors who have studied this contribution extensively, such as Javier Díaz Noci with his *Historia del periodismo vasco: 1600-2010* (2010), or "Historia de la prensa en lengua vasca de los Estados Unidos" (2001). But we should point out that, in the short life of those Californian publications, the various Basques who lived in America begin to publish their vision and their point of view about themselves through the written *bertsos*,<sup>37</sup> which we will deal with later.

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<sup>36</sup> William Douglas and Jon Bilbao: *Amerikanuak in the New World* (Reno, University of Nevada Press, 2005, p.368).

<sup>37</sup> Stanzas of verses written Basque language with an oral style.

The earliest mentions of what is Basque in the West are from the late nineteenth century; they are descriptive and evaluative, especially in journalistic texts. In the fiction will appear clearly from the early nineteen-twenties.

The first fiction dealing with the Basques appeared in the 1920's. Harry Sinclair Drago, a well-known writer of lively history and popular Western novels, was the first American novelist to deal extensively with the Basques of the United States. In 1922, he teamed with Joseph Noel to produce *Whispering Sage*, which pictured Basque settlements in the Paradise Valley of northern Nevada.<sup>38</sup>

In the narrations that are referenced in Etulain's work (seven authors and eleven novels), the Anglo-Saxon perspective of the Basque or the Basques begins to materialize in some stereotypes, especially through certain (stereotyped) Basque characters, where there is some (understandable) confusion about their origins and the language they speak, but we also begin to glimpse a vision of people who achieve some success (for example, owning ranches) in sheepherding and having a reputation as hard workers:

In that list (by Etulain) I would not include Mirim Isasi, because, although she writes in English, she has a Basque point of view because she is from a Basque family. It is no longer a hetero image but a self-image of the Basque although, indeed, made from outside the country of origin, from America. Isasi published *Basque Girl* in 1940, followed two years later (1942) by *White Stars of Freedom. A Basque Shepherd Boy Becomes an American*, together with Melcena Burns Denny. In the first, some aspects of her childhood appear through stories and legends that have a lot to do with the Basque Country of her ancestors.

Pero la tierra que evoca Isasi no es una tierra cualquiera; es la tierra de la lengua, de la fe (uno de los capítulos del libro se titula "To be Basque is to be faithful"), de las costumbres, de la tradición, del pasado. Sólo mediante la

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<sup>38</sup> Richard W. Etulain, "The Basque in Western American Literature" in *Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao*, William Douglas et al. (ed.) (Reno, Desert Research Institute, 1977), p.8.



preservación de este pasado puede una mantener intacta su identidad, su ser euskaldun.<sup>39</sup> [...]

However, the land evokes by Isasi is not any old land; it is the land of the language, of faith (One of the chapters of the book is titled “To be Basque is to be Faithful”, referring to customs, tradition, the past. Only by preserving this past can one maintain their identity intact, their being *euskaldun*).

A narrative by means of which not only the characters but also the author wishes to maintain her Basque identity, out of loyalty to the culture from which she comes (she and her family). It is not just any land, as Esti Ezkerra<sup>40</sup> points out: it is the seat of faith that gives meaning to life, turning its commitment to its identity into a transcendental project and shown in a narrative way so that it can be appreciated by young Americans of Basque descent.

*White Stars of Freedom* (1942) is also a novel for young people, as any reader can sense from the beginning of the book. In this case Narbik is the protagonist who travelled from the Basque Country to the United States of America. The work was published at a crucial moment: on the one hand, the Spanish Civil War had recently ended and the side that carried out the coup was beginning to govern with General Francisco Franco at the head; On the other hand, the United States had just received the strong impact of the attack on Pearl Harbor and was about to enter World War II. Many Basques hoped that the US would side with the Basques in the Spanish state.

The difficulty of feeling part of a host country and the consequences of renouncing the inherited cultural identity are also shown in this novel, something that leads to many dilemmas and doubts in the characters. Well, somehow it seems that she manages to transmit this message: necessarily feeling and being American will mean losing part of your identity and the novel is about becoming American (with the condition

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<sup>39</sup> Estibaliz Ezkerra: “Other Basque Literature”, in Marijo Olaziregi (ed.): *Basque Literary History* (Reno, Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2012, pp.329-350).

<sup>40</sup> <https://complit.illinois.edu/people/estibalitz-ezkerra-vegas>.

of being as faithful as possible to being Basque)<sup>41</sup>. It seems that it is a dilemma that will also appears in a part of Basque literature.

### 1.1. The Laxalts

An important milestone occurred in 1957, the year in which *Sweet Promised Land* by Robert Laxalt (1923-2001) was published. It is the first time that an American of Basque origin speaks directly about immigration to the US in the first person. A friend suggested that he write an epic story telling about all the elements of Basque emigration to the US. Robert Laxalt did so, but decided to offer a clear personal and autobiographical prism:

A college had suggested to him that he should take an epic approach to the Basque-American experience in the American West, so he struggled to universalize the details of one man's journey so that it would represent the odyssey of a whole people's emigration to America.<sup>42</sup>

That personal touch is materialized by describing the personality and experiences of his father Dominique, who emigrated from the French side of the Basque Country to the American West: it is a narrative that is partly biographical, partly autobiographical and partly fictional. Robert Laxalt achieved an unprecedented success with his novel, both in the American West and among the Basques who lived there:

*Sweet Promised Land* provided the Basque-Americans with their own literary spokesman. Dominique's story encapsulated a little bit of the struggle experienced by most Basque-American families, and Robert Laxalt's simple eloquence in narrating it captured the imagination of the wider public. In a sense, for Basque-Americans the book's success legitimated their own ethnic sentiments, even to themselves. Laxalt received poignant letters from

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<sup>41</sup> Some of the thoughts transmitted in the first person by the protagonist are significant. For example: "I too wanted to be American. But instead of wishing to shed everything about that was Basque, I wanted to bring all that was good as a gift to my beloved new land ", Mirim Isasi, *White Stars of Freedom: a Basque Shepherd Boy Becomes an American* (New York: Junior Literary Guild, 1942), p.29.

<sup>42</sup> William Douglas, "Foreword" in *Sweet Promised Land*, Robert Laxalt (Reno, University of Nevada, 1997), p. xviii.

Basques throughout the American West thanking him for reinforcing their pride in their heritage.<sup>43</sup>

After more than 20 years since the publication of Etulain, David Río published a chapter with the title: "Basques in the Contemporary Literature of the American West" (1999). Starting from the contribution of Etulain, he delves into this study with works from the last 20 years and advances in the assessment made by Etulain. For example, about the literature of Laxalt he says:

In fact, as a result of Laxalt's impressive achievements with his writings about the Basques, both in Europe and in the New World, he has become not only a literary spokesman for the Basque-American community, but also a major literary interpreter of Basques in general.<sup>44</sup>

According to David Río, in the works of Laxalt the Basques are presented with positive characteristics and sometimes an almost-romantic image. However, the author does not hide the situation of poverty and, sometimes, misery from which they had to flee or emigrate. His focus, however, is on the traditional way of life of the Basque diaspora.

Esti Ezkerra and Marijo Olaziregi (2009) published an article in *Erlea* with the title "Rorbert Laxalten *Sweet Promised Land*: ... eta etxea mendietan zuen". According to the authors, the main conflict of the novel has to do with identity, because there is a negotiation of such identity in history. Dominique feels Basque<sup>45</sup>, but the way of living his "Basqueness" is different from that lived by his relatives in Zuberoa, in that inner, pre-Pyrenean part of the French area of the Basque Country.

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<sup>43</sup> Douglas 1997, p. xiii.

<sup>44</sup> David Río: "Basques in the Contemporary Literature of the American West" in *The Basque Diaspora/ Diáspora Vasca*, ed. William Douglas (Reno, Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, 1999), p.276

<sup>45</sup> He has not lost in Basque, his mother tongue and that is still done by euskaldun (literally, "he who has Basque"). At the Paris airport, a worker asks if he is Basque in Basque: "[...] the clerk looked up without warning and said to my father, "Eskualduna?"

My father jumped as though he'd been prodded with a needle. He regarded the clerk for an instant, and then nodded his head and answered, "Bai, Eskualduna naiz", Laxalt 1997: 81. It is part of their identity, of course, but it is something that is leaving behind, because in his new American status, his new acquired American identity will no longer be something fundamental, or central.

Living Basqueness in an intermediate area, in a 'delocated' terrain or a non-terrain. Maybe that is why, after visiting his hometown to see his relatives, he wants to return "etxera", (home<sup>46</sup>), because his home country is not his home anymore.

Robert Laxalt left a legacy of 17 literary works, and in all of them, implicitly or explicitly, the Basque world is present: Basque characters, their cultural heritage, their customs, their joys and sorrows and almost always with narrations told from the USA. But there is one that does not have an American setting. This is the case of *A Cup of Tea in Pamplona* (1985). Warren Lerude speaks of a trilogy<sup>47</sup>, after *Sweet Promised Land*, but based on the work of documentation that the latter elaborated on Laxalt: 1. *The Child of the Holy Ghost* (1992), 2. *The Basque Hotel* (1989), 3. *The Governor's Mansion* (1994).

The influence of Laxalt had its continuation in some American authors of Basque descent. This is the case of Louis Irigaray with *A Shepherd Watches, A Shepherd Sings* (1977) and Joseph Eiguren with *Kashpar* (1988), which forms a literary corpus and a literary discursive system that begins to take shape. Robert Laxalt too, although he did not follow the political history of the Basque Country closely, had contacts with writers and people from Basque culture in his visits to the French side of Basque Country to obtain material for his literary work. For example, it has been documented that Jon Mirande<sup>48</sup> accompanied him in one of his stays in the French side of the Basque Country<sup>49</sup> and later they maintained an epistolary relationship<sup>50</sup>. It is also known that in novels after *Sweet Promised Land*, he incorporated elements of the Basque culture that he learned from Jon Mirande during those stays.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Laxalt, *Sweet Promised Land* (Reno, University of Nevada, 1997), p.170

<sup>47</sup> Warren Lerude: Lerude, *Robert Laxalt. The Story of a Storyteller*, (Reno, Center for Basques Studies, University of Nevada, 2013), pp.249-261.

<sup>48</sup> Jon Mirande Ayphasorho (Paris, 1925 - 1972) was a Basque writer of Basque roots, considered one of the most important poets of literature in Basque Language of the twentieth century.

<sup>49</sup> Amaia Serrano, "Jon Mirande (Paris, 1925 – 1972)" in *Euskal Literaturaren Hiztegia, Idazleak*, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Javier Cillero: "Jon Mirande eta Robert Laxalt: Adiskidantza baten historia (Jakín, Donostia, nº 106, 1998).

At the end of the twentieth century, American authors were attracted by the image of the Basque shepherd. *Year Walk* (1975) by Ann N. Clark and *Kinsella's Man* (1994) by Richard Stookey are two examples of this. Another work is worth mentioning is the novel *The Deep Blue Memory* (1993) by Monique Urza (daughter of Robert Laxalt<sup>51</sup>) where, in a very autobiographical way and with a certain psychological introspection, the author reveals a conflict: the dilemma between the cultural adaptation to America and the commitment to the cultural heritage received. Another face of the same coin would be the contrast between fidelity to the identity of one's ancestors and one's own identity search through the life experience. Integration into the welcoming country has its reward, but the denial (even partially) of one's cultural heritage has a price that is shown in some way in this story.

Robert Laxalt's grandson Gabriel Urza seems to close a cycle of Anglo-Saxon literature with Basque characters in his *All That Followed* (2015), but only shows the complexity of identity-political aspects of several characters in a story that takes place in a fictional town in the Basque Country, Muriga, where characters of wide-ranging expectations around the complex "Basque conflict" and some American characters co-exist in an crippling atmosphere: some are of Basque origin and the others are alien to that conflict.

In a way, a continuation of the contribution of the Laxalts is the recent literature that continues to have a presence in the theme of Basque. Estibaliz Ezkerra (2012) gives us some clues. As for novels, it is worth noting the trilogy by Frank Bergon (Ely, Nevada, 1953) where the footprint of the Basques in the West appears: *Mike Shoshone* (1987), *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother* (1993), and *Wild Game* (1995)<sup>52</sup>. Finally, there is a note of American children's literature where the characters, setting, theme or motives have to do with Basqueness, but

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<sup>51</sup> En EEUU la esposa suele adquirir el apellido del esposo, por eso no es conocida como Dominique Laxalt (pues su marido fue Carmelo Urza, también emigrante de origen vasco).

<sup>52</sup> Ezkerra, 2012: 348.

that aspect exceeds the scope and objectives of this contribution, so we will leave it for another day.

## 2. The theme of the diaspora in Basque literature

After showing the importance that the Anglo-Saxon literature of Basque-American authors can have in Basque literature, we will now fully enter the topic that concerns us, paying attention to the literary treatment of the subject in the different works and productions in the Basque language.

### 2.1. Fiction, *bertso-jarriak* (written *bertsos* [verses]) and testimonies of Basque emigrants in various publications

The work of Asun Garikano *Far Westeko Euskal Herria* (2004) is a good guide to various materials. As for the texts that show the reality of the Basques of the diaspora in a literary way, most are *bertsos* or articles and press cuttings. As for the latter, periodicals are particularly important (also called *kazetak*) *California'ko Eskual-Herria* or *Eskualduna*<sup>53</sup>, but we also have other references such as those found in the works of the Auspoa collection, or other files. In this sense, in 1984 Antonio Zavala published *Ameriketako bertsoak* (Verses from the Americas), volume 176 of a collection. In this work it is specified that there are other numbers in the same collection that also deal with Basque emigration, in seventeen volumes<sup>54</sup> to be precise. It is a gigantic corpus of, in many cases, the first references in a literary genre of Basque emigration to America and life on that continent. Finally, a reference to a work in prose: *Deunor. Euskal artzaiak Ipar-Ameriketean*, by Santos T. Rekalde (1972), a "documentary novel" as the author calls it, in which the story of Basques emigrating to Idaho is narrated, where a strong Basque community was formed<sup>55</sup>. Somehow, some aspects of

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<sup>53</sup> Asun Garikano, *Far Westeko Euskal Herria*. Iruñea: Pamiela, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Antonio Zavala, Antonio, *Ameriketako Bertsoak*, (Tolosa, Auspoa, 1984), p.13.

<sup>55</sup> Although in absolute numbers, the Basques in Idaho are less than those who emigrated, for example to California (less than half), but Idaho (along with its capital Boise) is a state with much less population than California and that makes the density and visibility of the Basque

the characters (especially the protagonist Deunor) are an *alter ego*, because the author lived that reality as a priest attending (and promoting initiatives in favor of) Basque emigrants from Idaho, especially in the vicinity of its capital, Boise.

In *Ameriketako bertsoak*, the compositions of *bertsos* are sometimes by unknown authors and the rest are mostly from the south side of the river Bidasoa. Chronologically, the first composition is dated in 1842, and in it some young people count their suffering during their stay in Montevideo, where they worked (almost in a situation of slavery) as soldiers. By then Uruguay had already achieved independence from Spain but peace was still far away, and battles and skirmishes were still happening<sup>56</sup>.

Among the testimonial texts written in Basque, in addition to the abovementioned collections, we have two weeklies that were published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in California and have been analyzed by Javier Díaz Noci<sup>57</sup>:

*Escualdun Gazeta* (1885-1886) and

*California-ko Eskual Herria* (1893-1897)

*California-ko Eskual Herria* was by far the one that lasted longer and, therefore, the one that provides a wider corpus. Taking into account that the readers and the promoters of the publication were from *Iparralde* - the French area of the Basque Country- it is understandable that most

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community there are greater, and also the possibility of creating a Basque linguistic network, where the capacity to interact is facilitated by the proximity of other speakers. In researcher Koldo San Sebastián published an article with abundant descriptions of the use of Basque in Boise, Koldo San Sebastián: “El euskera en Boise”, (Euskonews, 2016), nº 704.

<sup>56</sup> With the Basques who went to Montevideo, many problems happened. 40 years after this composition of *bertsos*, in the newspaper *El Eco de San Sebastián* they took out a supplement in Basque warning of the danger of going to Montevideo: “300 gizagaiso baña geiago joan dira engañatuak asko modutara oraindik denbora asko ez dala, vapore batean sartuaz Burdeos en [...]. Jainkoari nai dakiola ezagutu dezazutela, gizon eskolatuak ezagutzen duten bezela, zer etorkizun ikaragarria datorkion ara joaten diradenai [...] (translation: More than 300 poor men have been deceived not so long ago, having embarked on a steamboat in Bordeaux [...]. God forbid you know, as educated men often know, what terrible future awaits those who go there), Díaz Noci, 2009: 54.

<sup>57</sup> See “Ameriketako euskal prentsa, XIX. mendean” in Díaz Noci, 2009: 53-62.

of the texts are written in *Laburnum* and *Navarre* variants. Although a large part of the compositions in *bertso* were originally written in Euskal Herria for the Basques in Euskal Herria, the owners of the weekly (one of them being Jean Goytino) show an intention of bringing the culture of the Basque lands to the Basque community of California. In a September 1893 issue, for example, the famous sung composition "Ene Izar Maitia" ("My beloved star") appears, composed by Vicomte de Belzunce, which in turn also saw the light in other publications<sup>58</sup>. Another example would be the "Gernikako Arbola" by José María Iparragirre, through which they wanted to give the Basques of America a glimpse of the patriotic feeling<sup>59</sup> that was being developed at the time.

### 3.1.1. Travel to America and entry into the New World

The "trip" to the New World is usually the first subject that appears in the testimonies in *bertso* and not infrequently, the previous farewell to the land of their birth, to the customs and experiences they leave behind and, above all, saying Goodbye to loved ones. In the anonymous composition in *bertso* titled "Euskal Erria'ri agur" (Goodbye to the Basque Country) published in 1883, the last stanza or *bertso* is a farewell to the mother:

9/ Biotzaren erdiko / amatxo maitea,  
 mingarri da neretzat / zu emen uztea;  
 Jaunak gordeko nau ta / konsola zaitea,  
 Berak naiko du nik zu / berriz ikustea.

(Dear mother of the center of my heart / it is painful for me to have to leave you here / console yourself because the Lord will take care of me / He will also want me to see you again).

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<sup>58</sup>In the *Euskal-Erria* journal, for example:  
<http://meta.gipuzkoakultura.net/handle/10690/71460>

It will also appear in the weekly *California-ko Eskual Herria*, on March 3, 1894, in a new version of the same composition.

<sup>59</sup> We could have used the term "abertzale", but originally this neologism was used and created with the meaning of "patriot", precisely.



Although it was originally published in English (Jeronima Echeverria's *Home away from home. A history of Basque Boardinghouses*, 1999), in Basque (translated by Asun Garikano, 2009: 26-30) we have a story that tells us about the journey, a young Basque girl named Lentxo Echanis which narrates her journey by boat. XX. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was before the First World War. The trip was made in a transatlantic ship called La Turaine to Ellis Island (where immigrants were studied), then, together with other Basques, they went to work in Idaho.

Mattin Etchamendy, the author from Ezterenzubi (Lower Navarre), moved to America in 1961 and brought a narrative flow in impressive Basque to these lands. His work *Urruneko Mendebalean artzain* (Shepherd in the Far West, Maiatz publishing house, 2012), is a testimony about his emigration to America; it could be called “the allegory written in Basque of the Basque Diaspora in the United States”. That narrative voice mentioned above, still active, evokes the thoughts he had days before leaving for America in his hometown, where a stream that appears personified holds a conversation with him:

Xoko hartan hainbestetan ibilia nintzan nire haur denbora guzian. Beste haurride zonbaitekin abereak mendirat igortzerat etorri eta han ibiltzen ginen, xoko guzien ikertzen, artetik amarentzat hur bazterretako lori pollit zonbait biltzen gintuela, orenak konda etziren denbora hartan bizia ere aizina guziarekin gurea baitzen.

Gaur xoko huntan dena ixilik zagon. Erreka ttipi hari behatu eta iduri zitzautan hur turruxta eni elaka ari zitzautala murmurika apal batean batere prisatu gabe:

-Ai gazte! Mundu zabalean zeihar juaiten haizalarik orroituko haiz nire bazterretan pasatu dituzkan oren goxoez, orroituko haiz anaiarekin batean hemen harrapatzen hituen amurrairekin arraroez, eta bazter hauetan hainbeste aldiz entzun ditozkan xori kantariez, orroituko ere nunbaiteko leku salbai idor, hurik ez den lurraldeetan, zer xurgako goxoak egiten hintuen nire bazter hontan ahuspez jarri eta, hirea den erreka xumen huntarik. Eta nehoiz egun

batez itzultzen bahaiz, nor hemen izanen nauk egungo hurrats berean joanki, baldin eta gaurko begi berekin ikusten ahalko banauk."<sup>60</sup>

(I walked so many times in my childhood along that place. Along with other relatives I used to go to take the animals to the mountains, and there we used to walk, investigating all the bends in the stream while we gathered some flowers from the shore of the river for our mother. That was a time when we did not count the hours, when the flow of life was also ours.

Today that place is completely silent. I look at that little stream and it seems to me that the water is speaking to me, in a humble murmur, without any hurry:

-Yeah, young man! When you go around the world you will remember the sweet hours you have spent on my banks, you will remember the curious trout that, together with the others you used to grab, and the songbirds that you heard so many times here; you will also remember, in the wild, desert lands that have no water, what sweet drinks you used to enjoy in this shore, after prostrate, of this stream that is also yours. If you come back one day, I'll be flowing at this same rate here, if you can see me with the same eyes today).

Although this passage may seem rather poetical, it should be said that his literary debut distills, above all, realism when he tells of his life as an emigrant Basque shepherd to America, as one who knows well what he has lived through before. Of course, what surprises the reader in this work *Urruneko Mendebalean artzain* (Shepherd in the Wild West), among other aspects, are the timing and narrative catalysis, with certain premonitory and anticipatory brushstrokes that only someone who knows how to tell stories (written or oral) can do successfully.

Basque was not the only large-scale emigration to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, of course. The verses of Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885), fictionally in the mouth of a Galician emigrant, are not very different when she says goodbye to the places she loves in her hometown and her loved ones:

Adiós ríos, adiós fontes  
adiós, regatos pequenos;  
adiós, vista dos meus ollos,

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<sup>60</sup> Mattin Etchamendy: *Urruneko Mendebalean artzain*, (Baiona, Maiatz, 2012), pp.75-76.

non sei cándo nos veremos.

Miña terra, miña terra,  
terra donde m'eu criei,  
hortiña que quero tanto,  
figueiriñas que prantei. [...]

Adiós, adiós, que me vou,  
herbiñas do camposanto,  
donde meu pai se enterrou,  
herbiñas que biquei tanto,  
terriña que nos criou. [...]

That romantic and lyrical complaint can also be seen in the *bertsos* of Bernard Zelhabe, awarded a prize in the Basque festivities of Urruña (1854). Here are two verses:

Sor lekhuan nituen esteka guziak,  
Ez dakit handik urrun zer daukan biziak,  
Adios erraiten herri maiteari,  
Bihotza zaurthua, naiz emana nigarrari.

Diruaren goseak etxetik narama,  
Utzi behar dut aita, utzi behar loves,  
Segurantzarik gabe nihoiz bihurtzeko,  
Iragan atseginak berriz kobratzeko.<sup>61</sup>

(In the homeland I had all my ties / I do not know what life will bring me from that distance / saying goodbye to my beloved town / my heart is torn, so I give myself up to tears.

The desire for money takes me from my home, / I have to leave my father and my mother, / without certainty that I will one day return to enjoy my sweet past again.)

After the departure comes the trip, by ship in those days. The compositions that tell about this are relatively abundant, and not without certain drama at times. The Navarrese Mikaela Zarrana (also collected in Garikano 2009:20-22) describes the sad situation of having to

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<sup>61</sup> Urkizu, 1991: 335.

emigrate and her suffering during the sea voyage: smallpox, lice, and a lack of food and drink. In the trip several passengers died, and she invokes the Virgin Mary, linking once again Basqueness with the Faith.

[...] biotzetik eskatu  
Birjiña Amari,  
erremedio oberik  
ez da emen agiri "(8th stanza)  
"[...] Lagun zaiguzu arren,  
Birjiña maitea "(11th stanza)

([...] let us pray from the heart, / to the Virgin Mother / well, better remedy /  
there does not seem to be any [...] Help us, please / beloved Virgin).

Mention is also made of one of the causes of this painful situation: "kozineroa", the cook, ("Frantsez bizar gorria / dena giza txarra") red-bearded Frenchman / all of him a bad man (12<sup>th</sup> stanza) who mocked the passengers and provided them with scarce and poor quality food ("sardiñ ustel zarra", old rotten sardines).

Once in the New World, serious problems sometimes arose with the host society, and this also becomes a subject of *bertso*. Juan Cruz Arrosagaray (Valcarlos-Luzaide 1905, Pomona, California 1994)<sup>62</sup>, had serious problems with the Department of Immigration of the United States (among other reasons, after being sued by an acquaintance) and he recounted them in *bertso*:

1/ Zazpi urteren ene bizitza eman berri dut bertsutan,  
Heien eskasak emanen ditut orai hasi naizen huntan;  
Turista gisan sartu bai nintzan berritarik Amerikan,  
Sei hilabeten permisionia ukan nuen bakarrikan.

2/ Denbora hura bururatzian eskatu beste seiena,  
Erraxki eman zautaten behin bainan hartan zen azkena;

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<sup>62</sup> Born in the Navarrese border town of Luzaide - Valcarlos, he started working as a shepherd when he was very young, first in his hometown and then in California. In the so-called Center for Basque Studies of the University of Nevada (Reno campus) there is a file of his with recordings made by him. In this site there are also sound documents of Juan Cruz Arrosagaray to be heard: <http://www.fonoteka.com/en/collections/1123#.VIC1A17JJxU>  
The data of the death of Juan Cruz we have found it here:  
<http://crestleaf.com/p/50baa8d3651a69e4d4bf09d0/juan-c-arrosagaray>.

Gero ez jakin norat jokatu, gerlan zen mundu gehiena,  
Hobendun gabe urrikari zen ene hersturan zagona.<sup>63</sup>

(1 / I have given my life of the last seven years to *bersto* / its penalties I show  
now that I have started / then I entered as a tourist the first time to America /  
and I only had a six-month permit.

2 / At the end of that time I asked for another six / it was easy to give it to  
me, but being that it was the last one; / afterwards I did not know where to  
go, because almost everybody was at war, / without any guilt, it would be  
worth the pain to be like me.)

The images, metaphors and qualifiers used are not gentle, aimed at for  
those who made him go through that suffering:

8 / Batian galde, edo izkiria ehun mila kestone,  
Abaildurikan ninduten beti kriminale beat stop; [...]  
(That time they burned me with a hundred thousand questions / I was  
exhausted all the time, as if I were a criminal [...])

17/ Abokat, Juja eta jendaki, traidoren gradokoak,  
Malurra eni eginez nahi salbatu zuen buruak;  
Bainan oroitu gaizki eginak ditu ondotik doluak,  
Merexi arau gaitzala oro jujatu gure Jainkoak.<sup>64</sup>  
(Lawyers, judges and characters, those types of traitors / who want to save  
themselves by making me miserable / remember that wrong done is later  
avenged / that God judges us all as we deserve it.)

In the case of the novel *Deunor*, the main character arrives in North  
America by air, having flown from Madrid. His destination is Idaho, a  
place of emigration of Biscayan Basques. In fact, the novel is written in  
the Biscayan literary dialect, clearly reflecting the speech of these  
emigrants. The journey is not arduous, but the question is whether you  
have made a good or bad decision:

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<sup>63</sup> Juan Cruz, Arrosagaray: Juan Cruz, *California-tik kantuz*, (Tolosa, Auspoa, 1983), p. 30.

<sup>64</sup> Arrosagaray 1983: 31-33.

Bakioko itxas-egalean, lengo domekan, igarotako orduak jatorkidaz gomutara. Atx musturretan olatuak birrintzen ziran artean, ordu gozogarratzak!

Olatu areik atxartean bezalaxe, zipli-zaplaka jabilt biotza.

Neure maiteagandik aiñ urrun! Au bakartadea biotzean! Au samiña!  
A! Ze zorakeria egin dodan, lau urtetako atzerrira etortzean! Ze gau illunetan sartun naz!<sup>65</sup>

(I remember the hours I spent last Sunday on the seashore of Bakio. While the waves broke against the cliffs of the rocks, what a bittersweet hour!

Like those waves between the rocks, so splashes my heart.

So far from my beloved! What loneliness! What a disappointment! What madness I have done, coming here for four years to strange lands! What a dark night I've gotten myself into!)

Although the destination is Idaho, the first part of the flight is from Madrid to New York. The first thing he does in the big city is visit relatives and go to the 'Basque house'. He will also begin to see, experience and reflect on the New World, and the problems that exist of criminal behavior, drugs, etc., that will have a big impact on him.

### 3.1.2. The hard way of life of the emigrants

Arriving in America, getting ahead in life and adapting to that country is not usually easy. Even more difficult, if possible, when shepherding is the work that the emigrant undertakes. Shepherd life in certain literary domains has sometimes been mythologized, but those who know it at first hand know that it is full of harshness and difficulties. The life of a shepherd in Basque literature has been shown, above all, through *bertso*. There are many compositions of *bertsos* on the shepherds of America, and in them the shepherds themselves compose *bertsos* telling about their sufferings, wanting to describe the hardness

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<sup>65</sup> Santos Rekalde, *Deunor. Euskal artzainak Ipar-Ameriketean* (Zarautz: Itxaropena, 1973), p.8.

of that way of life, not so bearable as it has sometimes been described, to "recruit" immigrants.

In the specific case of the shepherds, these dangers and difficulties are described in detail. In the following *bertsos*, Paulo Yanzi (who lived a number of years in America) reminds his nephew Josetxo Yanzi (who was then working as a shepherd in America) the hardships of the job:

3 / Udan lan arraxa izanikan / neguan beti nekia,  
artzainak izaten du mendiyan / ibilli biar aundiya;  
askotan elurra azpiyan eta / gañetik berriz uriya,  
Augeriyak artua auger / bizkarra berriz bustiya  
ara nolakua den artzai gi-zajo oriyeen biziya.

(Even with summer work easier / in winter always with difficulties / because the shepherd has a need to walk a lot in the bush / often with snow on his feet / and rain on his head / feeling weak inside / and with his back wet / that's the life of the poor shepherds.)

5/ Lendabiziko, artaldiari / ondo biar zaio begitu,  
galdu eta batzuek atzera/ ez daditezen gelditu;  
bistatikan asko utzi gabe/ alde samartik segitu,  
gero beretzat jana egiñ eta/ arropa're biar garbitu...  
Nevada'ko artzai gizajuak/ lan ok denak baditu.<sup>66</sup>

(First of all, we must take care of the flock very well / so that no sheep goes astray or is left behind; / without being out of sight, following them at a distance / then also, making food and washing clothes ... / the poor Nevada shepherd, he has all those jobs.)

The fact of living in wild lands has specific problems that are mentioned with a certain dose of drama, which, in turn, are seen to be overcome. This gives the shepherd the sense of an intrepid, courageous and undaunted character, equating him with the traditional image of the Western cowboy:

4/ Pizirik txarrenak **artzak**/ eta **koioteak**,  
gauetan ezin utzi/ zabalik atearak,  
eta sarritan egiten/ diguten kalteak;  
tiro batzuek tirata/ egin bear pakeak.

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<sup>66</sup> Zavala, *Paulo Yanzi ta bere lagun bertsok* (Tolosa, Auspoa, 1968), p.129.

(The worst wild beasts, bears and coyotes / at night we can not leave the doors open / even so they do us harm; / we have to shoot at them so we can have some respite.)

5/ Argi ibilli bear/ emen dabillanak,  
ez ditu lasai edukiko beti/ beraren gibelak;  
aurrean azaltzen zaizkitzu/ pizti zatarrenak,  
**suge kaskabeleak** dira/ bildurgarrienak.<sup>67</sup>

(You will have to walk carefully, / always watching your back / and ahead you will see the most unpleasant vermin / among them the rattlesnake, the most feared.)

Pedro Juan Etxamendy also mentions coyotes in some “shepherd” *bertsos*:

Ameriketan ere beldurrez artzaingoan naiz egona,  
beti mendi ta desertuetan pastuz gau eta eguna,  
nondikan ateratuko zauntan **kuio**te edo sorgina;  
nik uste janak izanen ginan onak izatu bagina.<sup>68</sup>

(In America I have also walked with fear in the pasture / spending days and nights in the mountains and deserts, / seeing where the coyote or the witch will appear to me, / I think we would already be defeated if we had been too good.)

However, the shepherds also have other enemies like wild animals and destructive ‘entertainments’. Although many fell into that trap, there are also many who were aware of these dangers and tried to persuade others with didactic *bertsos*. This is the case of Josetxo Yanzi's advice to his nephew and his response:

3/ Osaba, zure esana oriyek/ denak dirade egiyak,  
ez duela gauz onik ekartzen/ erriko gaiztakeriyak;  
jostaketa oiek nola diraden/ ondo gaude ikasiyak,  
orreatikan zaitzen ditugu/ mendiyen irabaziyak,  
bizi gerade bide txar oiek/ alde batera utziyak.<sup>69</sup>

(Uncle, that advice of yours, it is all true / the bad things in the towns do not bring good things, / we have learned well what these “games” are, / for that

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<sup>67</sup> Zavala, 1984: 128.

<sup>68</sup> Pedro Juan, Etxamendy, *California'ko bertsolari eta musikari*, Donostia, (Donostia, Auspoa, 2004), p.70.

<sup>69</sup> Zavala, 1968: 134.



reason we are safer in the forest what we have won / to live well away from those bad roads.)

Another "enemy" of the shepherds are the innkeepers (*oteleruak*), greedy people, as some of them tried to take advantage of the situation and the earnings of the shepherds, trying at all costs to ensure that they had nowhere else to stay. In an anonymous composition of 1920 this was described as follows:

14/ Herrian diren horiek egiten dute irri  
gu bezalako artzain giza gaisoari  
sosa dugularikan gomita deneri  
gero igual mendian larrua ageri.<sup>70</sup>

(Those who are in the village laugh / at the expense of poor shepherds like us / because when we have money, they invite us to everything / and then on the mountain they skin us as well.)

Even so, in the *bertsos* not everything is complaints, laments and moaning. To avoid the dangers, as we have pointed out, an appeal is made to the supposedly hard-working attitude of the Basques, another feature also shown in Bertsolarism, of how these Basques see themselves, constructing an identity imagery<sup>71</sup>. Paulo Yanzi (1882-1955) sends this *bertso* to his nephew joking with him for an alleged slowness in repelling a lion that prowled his flock of sheep.:

5/ Leoia trankill bildotxa jaten/ ardi tartian sartuta,  
zu sendo aski, lonan azpiyan,/ kuidado oiek anztuta;  
nozpait ernatutzian igesi/ makilla ta arma artuta...  
zuk orrela galdu biar dezu/ **euskaldunaren konduta**.<sup>72</sup>

[While the lion is quietly eating the sheep / you were sleeping soundly under the canvas of the tent, forgotten about those cares / until you finally woke up sometime to grab the rifle and the staff / however you continue like this you will lose your way to be from Basque.]

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<sup>70</sup> Mallea, 2003: 56-59.

<sup>71</sup>The fact that the author does not specify what this "Basque behavior" consists in (*euskaldunaren konduta*) denotes that there are a series of values and images that are taken for granted, widely accepted, also in the Diaspora, and that the image is coherent of the Basques, helping to create a "national psychology" that can be analyzed in parameters, not only essentialists, but constructivists, Leerssen, 2007: 22.

<sup>72</sup> Zavala, 1968: 229.

In the documentary novel by Santos T. Rekalde, *Deunor*, sometimes the characters also exchange advice to do better in the hard way of life of the shepherds, in a direct style with a note of drama:

— Ea bada, mutillak, ondo ibili goietan. Zeuen buruak larregi ez estutu. Naasai artu gauzak. Ardiak baño gehiago zeuen buruak balio dabela, gogoan erabili. Ardi batzuek galduarren, ez bururik galdu. Zenbat eta gehiago estutu, gehiago galduko dituzue. Agertuko dituk ardiok. Agertzen ez ba' dituk, jaioko dozak barriak.<sup>73</sup>

(Come on, boys, walk well on the heights, do not worry too much, take things calmly, more important than the sheep, be aware, keep it in mind that even if you lose some sheep you do not lose your head. you will lose more, the sheep will appear, and if they do not appear, others will be born.)

Some nuances also appear in prose that have to be expressed in another way in *bertso*, or omitted. Continuing with the documentary novel by Santos Rekalde, the character called *Deunor* receives advice from a Basque to avoid having mental problems (which were abundant among the shepherds):

«Artzaintza ez da Euskalerriko bizitza! An ez jagok erromeririk, domekarik ez jairik. Txakurrarekin jan, txakur artean lo, abere tartean gau ta egun bizi!

Amar urtean, artzain ibilita nago... Gabon aldean, korraletara jatsiko zaree. Bi, iru illebeta egin eta mendietan gora barrero. Olan urte bat, bi, iru, amar. Olako bizikera, irurogei urtean daroenak baidira. Onena, egin bear diran urteak, pin-pin egin eta gizartera, mendian burua galdu aurretik. Txamaixuak<sup>74</sup> burua artu orduko. [...]»<sup>75</sup>

(Shepherding is not like life in the Basque Country, there are no pilgrimages, no Sundays or parties, you will eat with the dog, you will sleep between dogs, you will live day and night among animals!

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<sup>73</sup> Rekalde, 1973: 66.

<sup>74</sup> "Txamaixua": We have not found this term in dictionaries. The word "Txama", in the dictionary of Plácido Mugica appears with the meanings of "cumin, bagatelle". In any case, it is the term used by Basque shepherds to describe the madness or psychological depression of those who lived alone with livestock.

<sup>75</sup> Rekalde, 1973: 14.

I've been a shepherd for ten years ... At Christmas you'll go down to the corrals. You will be out for two or three months and then again have to go up the mountain. So, one year, two, three, ten ... There are some who live that life for 60 years.

The best thing, during the years that you have to work, is to do your best and socialize, before losing your mind out in the bush, before you get dementia.)

Among the dangers, one is wasting money saved on eccentricities and examples are given with tragic elements:

—Emakumeekin, kontu emen, mutillak—, esan euskun Kepa'k. —Mendian urteetan aurreratutako diruak, errira jetsi ta lau egunean enbra zantarrekin, narru ta guzti galdu zituen euskaldunak, parra-parra dira inguruetan.<sup>76</sup>

("Careful with the women, boys," Kepa told us. "Well, going down to the town and losing the money you have saved for years in the bush, with dishonest women, is something that has happened to many Basques in these parts.)

Although it should be noted that the female characters in *Deunor* are archetypal, starting with the protagonist's fiancée and following the Basque-Americans that appear in the novel, among which is the "new" pretender of the main character. They are working women, discreet, hard on themselves, with a great heart for others. An essentialist Basque image that comes from the archetypal characters that Basque nationalism of the early twentieth century made visible. An example would be the poem by Esteban Urkiaga, *Lauaxeta* (1905-1937) "Maitale kuttuna" (1931), which shows the traits of that Basque ideal woman in the context of a Basque national project.

Within the ethical tone that they give to their *bertsos*, there is a clear tendency to assert that what the *bertsolaris* tell and express in their compositions is true, real, with sometimes pathetic resources, sentences and hyperboles:

6/ Ni baño ere gaizkigo dauden/ asko dira Amerika'n

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<sup>76</sup> Rekalde, 1973: 56.

erdi jantzirik, gosiak eta/ dirurik gabe patrikan;  
nai arren ezin dute topatu/ iñola ere lanikan,  
askori esan ta ez sinistatzen/ danik orrelakorikan,  
neronek ere ez nuben uste/ oinbesterañokorikan.<sup>77</sup>

(There are many who are worse off and in America / half dressed, hungry and without money in their pockets, even if they want, they cannot find work / you tell this to many and they do not believe you, / even I thought it was so.)

Often, the origin of the ethical rectitude that they try to show is shown in their Christian faith.

10/ Euskalerritik etorri giñan/ geren etxetik urruna,  
ardi zaitzera gure Jainkua/ daukagularik laguna;  
ondo gerade Berak ematen/ digularik osasuna,  
bere languntzarekiñ egiten/ badegu nozpait fortuna,  
iritxiko da zuek ikustera/ juango geraden eguna.<sup>78</sup>

(We came from the Basque Country very far from home / to look after sheep having as our only companion God / we are happy when He gives us health / if with his help we sometimes make a lot of money / the day will come when we can return.)

As a contribution in a positive tone, and again mentioning Juan Cruz Arrosagaray, there are several *bertsos* where the author praises the studies that are being carried out on the Basques in the USA. In the 1960s, the so-called Basque Studies Program (in 1967, in particular<sup>79</sup>) and Juan Cruz, who had a great interest in Basque things in general ("eskualdunen mintzaira", the Basque language), Basque identity and Basque history, as he mentioned in many verses, he shows the almost more positive side of his speech as a *bertsolari*. These *bertsos*, therefore, have a more positive tone and should also be in the corpus of the "American" *bertsos*:

9/Esker emaiten diot Doctor Douglass-eri  
Bai eta haren lagun diren guzieri;  
Eskualdun ixtoria jalgi zaten garbi,  
Erakusteko zuzen ez dakiteneri.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Zavala, 1984: 111.

<sup>78</sup> Zavala, 1968: 136.

<sup>79</sup> [https://basque.unr.edu/information-mission\\_history.html](https://basque.unr.edu/information-mission_history.html).

<sup>80</sup> Arrosagaray, 1983: 150-151.

(I thank Dr. Douglass / and all those who are his friends; / because the history of the Basques has been brought to light / to teach it correctly to those who do not know.)

### 3.1.3. Self-images of the Basques and images of the Basque Country

Over time, the Basques who have emigrated from the Basque Country to America realize that a key element of their identity is their mother tongue, which appeals to heart of themselves and their character in a decisive way, which is why they praise the Basque language. Is it an essentialist vision of the Basque person? Maybe yes. In the Basque culture it is something that has been developed, with ups and downs since the nineteenth century<sup>81</sup> and has permeated Basque popular culture, because for many centuries there has been a certain tendency to wonder what being Basque means and being *euskaldun* (literally “the one with the Basque language”). It is almost instinctive, and is very present in the cultural discourse of many diasporas<sup>82</sup>.

Juan Cruz Arrosagaray, highlights the importance of the Basque language in compositions for various occasions, such as those dedicated to newlyweds, those who live in America. He also has some strings of *bertsos* with Basque as a monographic theme: "Irakurleak mintzo. Gure mintzairaz zombait gogoeta", "Gure mintzaira" edo "Euskarari mintzo Kaliforniatik". They show their intention to continue being *euskaldunak* (Basque speakers), although they foresee that the next generation will find it more difficult. However, as long as they live, they will try to hold on to the awareness that they are creating a "little Basque Country" in distant lands.

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<sup>81</sup> “It was during nineteenth century that linguistic and anthropological discourses practically reinvented “Basqueness.” As we have seen, a convergence of archeology, paleontology, folklore studies, linguistics, and physical and cultural anthropology constituted Basques into an intriguing peculiarity.” Zulaika, Douglas, 2007: 380.

<sup>82</sup> In a successful study by Stuart Hall (1932-2014) on the Jamaican diaspora, he comes to the conclusion (applicable to other diasporas) of two types of diasporic cultural identities: one, the "true one" of essentialist tendency and the second, "What we really are", postcolonial and maybe postmodern, Hall, 1990.

Pedro Juan Etxamendy (1914-2002) from Lower Navarre (although he lived most of his life in the USA) saw himself as an *euskaldun*, without a doubt, and as a consequence of this he shows his desire to protect Basque traditions<sup>83</sup>, without forgetting that Basque is undoubtedly at the center of the Basque "soul", in the most precious place<sup>84</sup>:

Baliosa duguna ere da gure mintzaira,  
bazter guzietan euskaraz jeloskoak dira;  
euskara mintzatu gostuan ta atxiki gora,  
euskaltasunaren arima hura da euskara.<sup>85</sup>

(We have our language as something very valuable / people from all over are jealous of Euskera / that is why we speak with pleasure and keep the Basque language going / because the soul of the Basques is in their language)

Another Etxamendy (Ezterenzubi, 1939), Mattin, also from Lower Navarre, along with the desire to return, sometimes also shows the joy of going to America and the satisfaction gained from forming a family and a living way of life in a host country, despite the obstacles. It seems an echo of what happened to Robert Laxalt's father, told in *Sweet Promised Land*:

[...] so egitea aski dut nihauren biziari ikusteko nola bizi naizen naturalezarekin arras hurbil, izan dadin artzaingoa edo ihiza, biak ere lehenbiziko jenden bizi moldearen zati haundi batzu dira, beti hala izan da! Nik Euskal Herrian Ezterenzubiko mendi eta oihanetan ezagutu dudana bizia. Beti eremu zabaletan egiazko **libertatea** gozatuz!... Bixtan da, Ameriketaran etorri eta bizi molde bera bilatu dutala. Nahiz ez den beti iduri duen bezain errex izan! [...]

[...] ezin esplikatzeko zoriona emaiten zautan berriz Kaliforniako bazterretan ardiekin ibiltzeak. Euskal Herria eta hango xokoak agurtuak nituen biziki plazerrekin, hango familieri gure haurrak ezagutaraziak gindezkeien, baina neure egiazko bizia hemen zagon.

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<sup>83</sup> Etxamendy, 2004: 33.

<sup>84</sup> As Joxe Mallea says: "Bertso hauetan ageri zaio Etxamendy'ri bere euskaldun odolaren sendoa ta kulturaren eta ohitura zaharren aldeko bere garra. Ageri zaizkio ere bere ideia maiteenak, bertso hauetan baitaude errepikatuak", (*In these bertsos Etxamendy is noted his Basque blood and his fervor for the culture and the old Basque customs*), Mallea 2004:17.

<sup>85</sup> Etxamendy, 2004: 33.

Kaliforniako iruzki ederraren azpian artzaintzan ibiltzea arras ene gogoko aments bat zen. Eta hartarat heldua nintzan. Ez nuen beste nihun ere izan nahi.<sup>86</sup>

([...] I just have to look at my life to see that I live very close to nature, which has gone hand in hand with herding and hunting, a way of life very similar to that of the first human beings. I have found this in the mountains and forests of the Ezterenzubi of the Basque Country, always in open fields and enjoying the true freedom!... It is clear that, to reach America, I have chosen the same way of life. It has not been as easy as it seemed!

(...) It gave me special joy to walk again with the sheep in the remote parts of California. I visited Euskal Herria and its beautiful spots with pleasure and it was wonderful that the family there could get to know our children, although our real place was here. Under the beautiful sun of California, it was a long-awaited dream to dedicate myself to herding, and once I returned there, I did not want to be anywhere else.)

Therefore, many Basques also speak of putting down roots in America after having achieved some success in their jobs or professions, and also having formed a family.

The case of Joan Errea (Ely, Nevada, 1934 - Winnemucca, Nevada, 2016) is significant. Daughter of Basque parents, she grew up in the countryside, on a ranch of Nevada where her father worked as a shepherd and her mother as a cook for the ranch workers. She wrote several texts in English about her relatives, especially about her father and mother, but also about her uncle. Asun Garikano (2009: 324-326) translated the latter, about her uncle, into Basque with great skill (converting this text into a repertoire of Basque literature). In 2016 Pello Salaburu published in the Pamiela publishing house a text (edited by him) by the author Joan Errea in Basque. It was a manuscript in which she, Joan Errea, focuses on the figure of her father.

When it comes to her family, a parallel can be drawn between her life and that of Robert Laxalt, despite the different contexts. Both were born in America of immigrant parents from the French side of the Basque Country and the relationship with his / her parents is from respect,

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<sup>86</sup> Etchamendy, 2012: 215, 220.

admiration and affection; this is how it is shown and represented, at least, in her literary works. It is an example of how the Anglo-Saxon literary system of the American West, thanks to a piece of work that gains access to the centrality of the system (*Sweet Promised Land*), can permeate production in a language so different as Basque. This family attachment also makes the hardships of life in places like Nevada sweeten with the memory of affection for family members. In *Aita deitzen zen gizona* (A man called 'Aita'), originally written in Basque, the American Joan Errea makes a portrait of her childhood, creating a tribute to her father, Arnaud París, with warm evocations, perfumed with longing (her father died when the author was still young) and admiration, identifying with his values and her father's Basqueness (Errea 2016:35):

Ardi kanpo batian, Nevadako desertian,  
ene haurño memoriak ditut bihotzian.

[...] Frantziatik jina zen arras gaztia,  
amets berri, indarrez egiteko bizia.

Horrek izkiriatu du Nevadako historian,  
ardi kanpoko bizia nola zen desertian.

Eguna luze, anitz xangrin, harek pasaturik,  
Jainkoak lagundurik, egon zen bizirik.

(In a sheep camp, in the desert of Nevada, / I have drawn in my heart the memories of my childhood / [...] come from the French part very young, / full of dreams, to make them come true with effort. in the history of Nevada, / what life is like in a sheep camp in the desert. / On long days, many are the hardships he went through / with the help of God, he stayed alive.)

This piece of *bertso* by this Basque-American author, a second-generation Basque, raised among shepherds and sheep in Nevada (without being "formally" taught how to write in the Basque language and without any exposure to the Basque language beyond her parents and close relatives), helps us to bring this study to a close that shows how America is also a Basque literary place, where fictional characters and real people fight, negotiate and forge the features of their identity, connected to the Basque Motherland through the umbilical cord of the Basque language, the mother tongue, and through the branches of the virtues and deficiencies that spring from that trunk. Over time, however,



that identity effectively ceases to be immobile, it is in continuous progress, adapting and forging itself in an almost unexpected way (for the people involved), in a new land, in a new society. It is reformulating -or taking new form- also functionally and in contrast to the view that the Americans have (as a mirror) of the Basques, reaching a negotiation... And, thanks to the Basque literature of the Basques in America, that negotiation aspires to be on equal terms.

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# The Representation of Immigration in Contemporary Spanish Literature and Film

María Marcos Ramos y Javier Sánchez Zapatero<sup>87</sup>

**Abstract:** Human migration, both internal and external, is not a recent phenomenon, and although it is very present in the media, it has not been so in the field of cultural and artistic creations since it continues to be a tangential issue due, among others reasons, to the absence of non-national creators. This absence of works starring immigrant characters means that the representation does not conform to reality and that, in addition, it is usually biased and stereotyped. Cinema, television, radio, literature, etc. They have the enormous power to convey relevant issues that deeply affect life, and are, among other things, capable of creating images that survive in us, constructing portraits, ideas, judgments, reflections or beliefs that last longer than we can imagine. This article analyzes some of the literary and cinematographic works that do have immigrant characters according to the main ways in which the representation of the phenomenon of immigration is approached, following the classification of Castiello (2006).

**Keywords:** Cinema, literature, immigration, Spain

## 1. Introduction

The immigration in Spain is converted into an important phenomenon both from qualitative and quantitative perspectives. According to the data of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), in 2020 the number of foreigners in the country is more than five million, constituting more than 11% of total population. Despite the fact that, in general terms, the social importance of immigration is not still in accord with its increasing weight in Spanish demographic structure, during last years special attention is demonstrated by different disciplines of Social Sciences – and, in particular, by Sociology, – to this question, thus founded in the very centre of different studies, which grosso modo have displayed that the perception of resident migrants in Spain by its citizens is far from their complex reality and, at the same time, is simplified, stereotyped and negative by nature.

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In cultural and literary studies, the immigration continues to be a tangential topic which neither has converted into a creative and recurrent theme nor has received an excessive attention from the part of academic press, despite the valuable individual contributions, such as Andrés Suárez, Kunz and D'Ors (2002) or Zovko (2019) in literary studies or Santaolalla (2005) or Castiello (2006) in film. The mentioned absence may be due to different reasons among which special attention should be paid to the fact that both fictional and film panorama are dominated by authors of national origin – being the topic especially complicated in case of theatre or film due to the minor number of interpreter migrants – that leads to the loss of the representations of social life, and to the external view on the nature of immigration. In this way, its habitual that “the type of immigrant described in most of the novels (...) does not describes in details the prejudice of the citizens of the recipient country and is reduced, in most of cases, to a polarized image oscillated between a victim and an abuser devoted to delinquency” (Zovko, 2009: 171), or that is observed in film: “the reiteration of archetypical humans and social and cultural situations that confirm stereotypes and, sometimes, are damaging for the represented minorities” (Castiello, 2006: 27).

Taking into consideration the gnoseological dimension of fictional narrative and its capacity to configure receivers' collective imagination, it is evident that the importance of novels and films dedicated to the topic seems to have only aesthetic effects up to a point that they can be converted into a discourse which, as Basu put it, permits to “think about the ramification of phenomenon inside the variable panorama of society in the modern world” (2011). In the same way, up to a point that the distortion and reductionism in the representation of the immigration can condition the transmittion of the discourses of hate, xenophobia or marginalization, it seems fundamental to pay an attention to the forms of artistic expression which represent the above-mentioned phenomenon, especially taking into consideration the power of fiction on our ability to interpret reality, which in case of the diffusion of the image of immigrant promotes the features of conflicting, violence, delinquency, inadaptation or an exploitation to system, to readers, to

spectators – including those who never had contacts with immigrants or those who had satisfactory and friendly relations, – have to identify the immigration with the stereotyped characteristics reflected in novels and films through the so-called “para-social contact.” The existence of such prejudicial visions is complemented by the already mentioned scarcity of the works which leads to invisibility of immigrants in literature and film, makes problematic their scarce appearance that converts the immigration into a “place of the redefinition of confines of social conflict” (Maneri, 1998: 266).

Starting from this introduction and assuming the possibility of finding some evidences of immigration in literature and film from the decade of 1990 – thinking about emblematic cases of the narrative of immigration as the novel *Los novios búlgaros* (Eduardo Mendicutti, 1993) or the film *Las cartas de Alou* (Montxo Arméndariz, 1990) – in what follows, we shall try to offer the view which gathers the basic forms of the representation of immigration in Spanish novel and film, created during the last decades, without any feeling of being exhaustive and with the only intention of creating a compilation. Beyond of the different nature of artistic and narrative expressive possibilities and of different social repercussion –, literature and film have a mutual interest of describing the life of Latin American minorities, as well as of magrabies, subsaharianas and those coming from East Europe in front of other collectives, and of identifying the immigration with marginality and misery. As a result, in a habitual form are represented “the life conditions of poor foreigners: their precarious situation induced by the lack of documents, their working marginalization and, frequently, the hostile social ambience which they face” (Zovko, 2009: 163).

As it was analysed by Castiello (2006) in the study restricted to the film studies but susceptible to be applied to literature, this general situation was approached using three different forms: in the first case, describing the trajectory of immigrants and their evolution in the new life, insisting on the traumatic aspects which conditioned leaving the country of origin, as well as the difficulties which accompany the process of adaptation in the new country, frequently marked by difficulties of



subsistence; in the second case, the emphasis was made on social rejection, intolerance and violence which was suffered and directly linked with racism and aporophobia; and, in the third case, of positive character, and, therefore, different from previous ones, describing the situations of meeting and living together as a result of relation between immigrants of different cultures or cases of solidarity established between immigrants of different cultures and origins, as well as between immigrants and natives of the new country. These three typologies, as well as the content developed in this paper, – are covered by so-called “narrative of immigration”, defined as “a representation of the phenomenon of immigration to think about the ramification of the phenomenon in variable panorama of society in the modern world” (Basu, 2001: 29).

Despite of methodological pertinence of establishing of the same category which represents novels and films with similar thematic and plot characteristics, its use may result problematic due to blurring contour of collective of immigrants and reduces the complexity of its members and their circumstances to the pure condition of foreigners in the foreign country, as if the immigrants could only be described from this perspective, without performing the chief role in the plot expressing their personality or function in society. In other words, representing in this category all literary and film narrative which discusses the results of immigration, in most of the cases, in the appearance of immigrant protagonist in the fiction that is absolutely determined by his/her origin, as if the characters could not be more than determined by the nature of immigration.

## 2. Panoramic representations

Within the group of literary narratives aiming to demonstrate the life conditions of the immigrants are the works *La aventura de Said* (1996) by Josep Lorman; *Las voces del Estrecho* (2000), by Andrés Sorel; *Ucrania* (2006), by Pablo Aranda; *Los príncipes nubos* (2003), by Juan Bonilla; *Nunca pasa de nada* (2007), by José Ovejero or *Saber perder*

(2008), by David Trueba. The formal and thematic heterogeneity of these novels synthesizes perfectly the plural phenomenon of migration, as well as the perspectives from which they may be discussed from. In this way, for instance, the novels of Larman and Sorel are centred in the reality of African migration, insisting on the difficulties of the arrival in Spain through illegal conduct, taking a risk for the life. Situated in the framework of the social novel, both narratives have clearly defined burden of denunciation once they try to humanize the immigrants coming in Spain, escaping from the desperation of the situation in the country of origin, reconstructing personal histories – in case of Sorel being an arduous work – and trying to escape from a stereotyped image frequently created for immigrants coming from Africa in Spain by boats.

Different is the case of *Ucrania* and *Nunca pasa de nada*, dedicated to the creation of an image of East Europe and Latin America: if in the first case, Pablo Aranda recounts the love affair between the Spanish young man and Ukrainian girl, who wish to run away from the country to set up in Spain and to improve the life conditions, representing the basic theme of the story in which other characters also appear; in the second case José Ovejero relates the story of an Equatorial woman working as a home servant to maintain the family. In both cases, the difficulties of immigration are demonstrated, which are not marked with desperation and misery but with poverty and difficult conditions for survival. As a consequence, it is shown how a day of immigrant is composed by sadness and resignation, forced to carry less qualified work, far from the professional formation, in order to survive in a context with no other way out. In fact, in both novels the poor life conditions and material scarcity are demonstrated, for instance, describing apartments with multiple beds to shelter and to make profitable an increased number of possible tenants.

The social denunciation and questioning observable in the above-mentioned novels are also visible in *Los principios nubios*. In it, Juan Bonilla, using the plot different from the critical realism which frequently is related with the representation of immigration, denounces

the cosification by which the immigrants are represented in the networks of high-level prostitution, repeating in this way the theme discussed previously in the novel by Mendicutti, recreating Madrid's homosexual prostitution ambience.

Perhaps, the most outstanding demonstration in the mentioned corpus of works is *Saber perder*, an example of collective novel in which different types of immigrant characters appear: the group of Equatorials, Nigerian prostitute and an Argentine footballer. In this case, the representation has more characteristics of Costumbrism than of social denunciation, it seems that Trueba is more interested in the component of human drama in immigration, exposed, for instance, in loneliness and in permanent melancholy of footballer which does not suffer from economic difficulties or marginalization of other immigrants thanks to his economic or social reasons but is subjected like others to the uprooting and lack of referents.

In Spanish film, according to Cruzado Rodríguez (2015), the immigration starts to be represented from the 60s, centred in the Latin American and Arab characters and based on the relation Spain has with those territories due to historical and economic reasons from the period of colonies, and introducing later the characters from other nationalities, such as from the North Europe. In 90s, *Las cartas de Alou* was premiered, narrating the adventures of Alou, Senegalian, arrived illegally to Spain and earned his living: from the first steps on the coasts of Almeria he lost his identity and was converted into a person "without papers", the fact that conditioned his future, as the fact of not being accepted by the system condemns him to precarious and roving work, lacking home, means, and wandering from one place into another, looking for better place and knowing about similar realities of other immigrants of other origins and belonging to different cultures. Besides its foundational value, the film is important from two perspectives: on the one hand, the story is told from Alou's point of view, that is not usual for film, and that converts immigrants into characters, using not invented, simple and schematic plots permitting to national spectators, to whom the film is addressed, to view their proper reality from

different perspective; on the other hand, the film was widely recognized by critics – it won the Golden Shell on the film International Festival of San Sebastian as the best film and Silver Shell for Mulie Jarju, which was the protagonist – the immigrant who came to Spain also illegally, – the fact that created new possibilities for other film-makers working on the same topic, noting how Spain was converted from country of emigration in country of immigration.

Some other films also demonstrate the difficulties suffered by immigrants after arriving in Spain. Thus, *Saïd* (Llorenç Soler, 1998) – the adaptation of the already cited novel of Lorman –, narrates in a documental style the adventures of a young Moroccan entering Spain in an illegal way by boat and living in Catalonia, meeting at first hand the difficulties related with racism and xenophobia. On the other hand, *El sudor de los ruiseñores* (Juan Manuel Cotelo, 1998) tells the story of Rumanian violoncellist which left his wife and daughter to come to Spain and to triumph in a grand orchestra. His idea of travelling did not coincide with what he met later, and the film is finished centred on the difficulties of a man who decided to find a look for a better life, making emphasis on the necessity of solidarity, frequently needed for immigrants to survive. Meanwhile, *Illegal* (Ignacio Villar, 2002) and *Retorno a Hansala* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2008) base their plots on the story of the arrival of illegal immigrants on the coasts, from different perspectives: in the first case, like thriller, the journalist investigates the case of traffic of slaves inside the network in Galicia; in the second, the voyage of immigrants from the beaches of Galicia is recreated, after the appearance of eleven cadavers of young Moroccan people who tried to cross in a boat the Straits of Gibraltar. Through the voyage that undertakes Leila, one of the young man's sister, and Martín, the businessman funeral quite avaricious to return home the cadaver, the film describes to spectators the motives which led to young people to take a risk to find something better. Despite the fact that films are so different, it is possible to observe in all of them the view of directors to describe and to explain the reality of a contemporary world.

Not less curious is the film *En la puta calle* (Enrique Gabriel, 1997), in which the immersion of papers is produced, because of an immigrant character which has to help to Spanish worker which lost a job and lives in a street, to continue living. The view offered by film is very relevant, due to its director being himself an immigrant, the fact that lets him to offer a privileged view on the phenomenon. The relation between two characters develops from the initial rebuff with which the Spanish receives the generosity of Cuban immigrant without papers to the fraternal living together at the end. The film finishes with an “apparent reconstruction of the normality: Cuban is sent off the country and Juan finds a job. But Juan is another man, and with certainty will not repeat ‘you came to take our job’. He has discovered a dignity” (Castiello, 2006: 68).

### 3. Representations of exclusion

The rebuff of immigration was expressed more frequently by audio-visual means than by literary technics. Though being also presented in the already analysed films, as it happens in *Saïd* (Llorenç Soler, 1998), or in *Ilegal* (Ignacio Villar, 2002), the rebuff of migrants due to nationality is a central point in other films. Thus, *Bwana* (Imanol Uribe, 1996) which is based on the work *La mirada del hombre oscuro* of the scriptwriter Ignacio del Moral, narrates the meeting of two national characters, Antonio and Dori, with the black immigrant Ombasi, on the coast of Andalusia. After they lost the car keys, a couple spent a night with a stranger which does not speak Spanish. However, on the same beach they meet couple of neo-Nazis which thanks to the cowardice of Antonio and Dori manage to capture Ombasi. The sequence of the film in which the meeting of an immigrant with a couple is narrated, has been used many times for its high iconic value: it is an image of a very strong black man running naked to the car with the couple inside of it and afraid of him striking the glasses. This image describes the strangeness towards other, ignorance, fear – of all characters, of an immigrant who is frightened and asks for help as he does not know what

will happen next, of a couple who is waiting to be attacked by someone which is according to stereotype a “savage” –... Finally, the sequence exposes an enormous power of means and cultural creations at the moment of the creation of cliché regarding the immigration, because the couple does not think that a man is in danger, rather that they themselves are in danger, because an immigrant is usually painted by media as violent, conflictive, delinquent, etc.

Though in *Bwana* neo-Nazis play a secondary role, in films like *Taxi* (Carlos Saura, 1996) or *Alcarán enamorado* (Santiago A. Zannou, 2013) they have a protagonist role. A picture of Saura narrates the actions of an extreme rightist band through a view of a young man which due to his bad marks is punished to drive a taxi during summer time. He finds out that his father is a member of a “family” of a group of fascists which during the night “clean” Madrid by attacking immigrants, drug addicted persons, prostitutes, homosexuals... He falls in love with one of them, though disapproves what they do. The film, tremendously violent, gathers the actions experimented day by day by people living outside of the social boundaries, either for forming part of another culture, or being of another race, sexuality, etc. In the film of Zannou, which is based on the namesake novel of Carlos Bardem – also participating in the film as an actor –, it is narrated how the young man which is a member of a neo-Nazis band starts thinking about his behaviour and the validity of his actions, when he starts boxing and falls in love with a young mulatto which will change his perception of the world. However, it is not easy to leave the group of neo-Nazis to which he belongs. Like in the already mentioned case of an Argentinian Enrique Gabriel, Zannou comes from the immigrant family and, for this reason, is perfectly familiarized with a phenomenon and with its everyday characteristics.

In *Salvajes* (Carlos Molinero, 2001), which is based on the namesake play written by José Luis Alonso Santos, the bands of neo-Nazis are intermingled with a traffic of immigrants. In the film, the racism presented in the society, is denounced via a character who believes that all the evil in Spain is the fault of immigrants, as it is stated in the

film: “if not come here all the shit, Moorish, black and like them...” In *Poniente* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2002), the same topic of migration is questioned at the moment when someone blames an immigrant for all the evil of Spanish society, in the concrete case, in the industrial world and in particular in case of greenhouses in the south of Spain, presented as places where violence and racism rule. The film “demonstrates the world deprived from moral values where everything is justified in the name of benefit: the scrawny exploitation on which the enrichment of the whole people is approved, based on the deprivation of rights, discrimination and marginalization of working immigrants” (Castiello, 2006: 68).

In all mentioned films, the portrait of an immigrant is diluted from the protagonist to the secondary one, which is a pure resource aiming to construct the plot in which a central character which acts and sustains the narrative, is a national character, being besides “the stereotypes and prejudgments of Spaniard submitted to investigation” (Castiello, 2006: 26).

In front of this importance and further on already mentioned novel of Barden, in literature it has appeared in a tangential form. It is habitual that in novels appear allusions to more and less explicit discriminations, and including to acts of violence against the immigrants, but in most of cases it is done in a tangential manner, without forming a central part of an argument. In an already mentioned novel by Sorel, for instance, the scenes of manifestations of xenophobia towards the immigrants are described but their appearance is more part of the general description of the immigration, pretending to denunciate these situations, though are hardly questioned and rebuffed.

#### 4. Representations of coexistence

With its social character that usually has any narrative about immigration, sometimes it is possible to see films or novels which transmit a positive view, insisting on the good look of an intercultural

coexistence and solidarity of immigration. A paradigmatic example in literature is the series of novels written by Jon Arretxe and with Touré in a chief role, portraying the investigator from Burkina Faso who set up in Bilbao's district in San Francisco, known as "small Africa" for the number of immigrants living there, and consisting of *19 cámaras* (2012), *612 euros* (2013), *Sombras de la nada* (2014), *Juegos de cloaca* (2015), *Piel de topo* (2017), and *No me digas nada* (2019). After the realization of some work that proofs the precariousness of an immigrant collective, from *gigolo* to the fortune-teller, he starts to resolve the cases that raise from day to day, in an everyday context marked by poverty. One of the biggest newness to which contributes the social image realized by Arretxe is the form, human and veristic, used to picture the phenomenon of immigration, which achieves in these novels to arrange the voice habitually denied. Touré is not a professional detective in a strict sense of a word but is one who uses his abilities to solve the cases which he takes charge of, and little by little obtains in his environment the reputation of a "detective amateur" to whom appeal those who do not possess recourses for contracting other types of services, proving that his work is fundamental and tremendously useful for the community in which he lives.

In case of films, many of them with the immigrant characters in the plot start with the initial rebuff from the part of society and end with the priority of living together between "ones" and "others". This is the case of films like *Susanna* (Antonio Chavarrías, 1996), *Cosas que dejé en La Habana* (Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, 1997), *Flores de otro mundo* (Iciar Bollain, 1999), *Tomándote* (Isabel Gardela, 2000), *El traje* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2002), *Princesas* (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2005) or of the already mentioned *Saïd*. The views on the phenomenon of migration are especially pointed out in *Cosas que dejé en La Habana*, *Flores de otro mundo*, *Extranjeras* or *Princesas*, that supposes the appearance of woman immigrant, being unusual so far.

Special attention should be paid to the film by Gutiérrez Aragón for the treatment of immigration in which the comedy dominates, and also for offering the view on the immigrant collective not pictured in the film



so far, like Cuban actors which have to exile, influencing the immigration in which economic and political are weighed. For his part, Icíar Bolláin – which in a certain way also broaches the phenomenon of immigration from different perspectives in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* (1995), *También la lluvia* (2010) and *Yuli* (2018) – narrates in *Flores de otro mundo* the life of the immigrants being one Dominican and other Cuban, which decide to participate in a caravan of women attending a small village to find a husband, and integrate into a society which at the beginning rebuffs them. *Princesas* narrates the evolution of the relation between two prostitutes, Cayetana and Zulema, being one Spanish and another immigrant, which for the reason of competition come from enmity to the understanding that they are the best support for each other and that both of them, definitely, are marginalized by the system. In the films of Bolláin and León de Aranoa, despite the fact that the immigrant women have a main role, they are represented as feminized individuals: being more hyper sexualized individuals, wives, procreators and mothers than persons (Gregorio, 2004).

## 5. Representations from the crime fiction

To the mentioned three trilogies should be added the fourth, especially linked with crime fiction subgenre, in which the phenomenon of migration is described in the contexts of an organized delinquency, criminal ambiances, gangster gangs, networks of blackmail, gang of traders, etc. Without any intention to exhaustivity, the novels where the chief roles are played by African immigrants, such as Maghrebi or Sub-Saharanans can be placed in this group, which frequently represent “fleeting appearances and almost always connected to the world of drugs, prostitution, crime or human failure” (Gier, 2000: 10). It happens, for instance, in novels linked to the subgenre of black and police novel, such as..., which demonstrate how the delinquency is converted into one of the unique forms of the subsistence in which these collectives are found, demonstrating their capacity of an integration in social structures and in the professional market of the country. The

same vision is exposed in a paradigmatic form, for instance, in the novel of Reverte, being starting point of a plot a robbery of documents perpetrated by a young Moroccan. In the same way, it is quite symptomatic that the works of Lozano, of one of the famous Spanish writers who in depth knows the history and the situation of the African continent to which he has dedicated various novels, have as a main character, in the first case, a Maghrebi which due to circumstances is related with a network of an illegal traffic of persons and drugs, and in the second case, represent the series of characters, which, in one way or another, are related to the assassination of an African prostitute, that is the main part of the novel's plot. Being far from the habitual relation between emigration and delinquency, *Hárraga* makes clear the character of human drama of the process of migration, whereas *Donde miran los ríos* symbolizes through the character of a victim of a Senegal woman, permitting, at the same time, to broach the theme of sexual exploitation to which many immigrant women are subjected, – the silent and dominant position which is usual for people forced to go to other country.

In general, in all novels appears what Raúl Diego Rivera identifies as the “anxiety of frontier”, namely, “the symptomatic response of the local population in a form of rebuff, exclusion” (2013: 38), that is demonstrated picturing the migration in geographical zones marked by mixing, as in the district of Lavapiés of Madrid or in the locations nearness to Straits to Gibraltar of Lozano, where the concept of social, economic and cultural frontier is observable, thus complicating the living together of immigrants with national population. In the same way, in some of them, as in *Zanón*, is perceptible the intent to describe in a panoramic form the nihilist reality of many immigrant collectives, forced to subsist in a precarious form in a society which does not let them to adapt and condemns to live in ghettos, determined by ethnic, economic and social forms. In fact, in *Tarde, mal y nunca* which in some way may be defined as a novel between police and social, the assassination that forms the central part of an argument should be understood more than a simple, premeditated criminal act, as a brutal

and heartrending explosion of hate conditioned by discomfort in which permanently live the characters.

Other novels close to the police genre in which the migration as a theme is developed, are, for instance, *Sociedad negra* (2013), by Andreu Martín, which narrates in a fragmentary manner the story of the Chinese mafias, and, among other topics, discusses the expansion of organized groups in Spain from orient, with delictual practices of blackmailing, laundering of capitals and, even, assassination. One of the basic values of the novel is the better visibility of the collective, and its importance in the economical ambience of the country, but about which, however, nor a literature nor a film has occupied enough, with an exception of, for instance, the films like *La fuente amarilla* (Miguel Santesteban, 1999) or *Tapas* (José Corbacho y Juan Cruz, 2005). However, despite the fact of penetration in a traditionally hermetic ambience of the Chinese immigration, the novel finishes with the projection of a stereotyped and deeply negative image, which in a certain way contributes to promote the idea that the ignorance and lack of adaptation of certain foreign collectives in the country is due to its relation with crime. The foreign mafias, associated with East Europe in this case, are in the centre of the novels, though being treated in many cases of tangential form, in the novels like *El alquimista impaciente* (Lorenzo Silva, 2000, with an homonym film adaptation realized by Patricia Ferreira in 2002), *Cien años de perdón* (Claudio Cerdán, 2012) or *Un millón de gotas* (Víctor del Árbol, 2014).

Film adaptations of the mentioned novels, such as of Patricia Ferreira, have repeated the same clichés and made deeper the image of the figure of immigrant related with the delinquency. This vision is very relevant for its use and abuse, in case of black genre in which the figure of delinquent and criminal goes to a foreigner, with characters of different nationalities. The same happens in the films *Días contados* (Imanol Uribe, 1994), *Nadie hablará de nosotras cuando hayamos muerto* (Agustín Díaz Yañez, 1995), *La caja 507* (Enrique Urbizu, 2002), *25 kilates* (Patxi Amezcua, 2008), *Celda 211* (Daniel Monzón, 2009), *No habrá paz para los malvados* (Enrique Urbizu, 2011), *Grupo 7* (Alberto

Rodríguez, 2012), *El niño* (Daniel Monzón, 2014), *Cien años de perdón* (Daniel Calparsoro, 2016) – without any relation, despite the title, with the early mentioned novel by Cerdán –, etc. in which immigrant characters are characterized as traders, assassins, thieves, gangsters, terrorists, etc., with the opposites roles for national characters.

On the line of an analysis of these films, it is possible to see the image of an immigrant man, which hold positions related with delinquency in front of a women, who are more related with prostitution. Therefore, men are those who realize violent behaviour in front of women to which it is addressed. To similar conclusions have come the investigators which have analysed the role of immigrants in the fiction (Marcos Ramos et al, 2014; Marcos Ramos y González de Garay, 2019). It is also possible to speak about how certain origins mark the role of the emigrant characters, as natives from East Europe are related with the most violent crimes, like Italians with mafia, in front of Latin Americans, which are more associated with general delinquency and narco-traffic in case of men and with prostitution, in case of women.

## 6. Conclusion

Arjun Appadurai (1996) indicates that despite the fact the migrations are not a new phenomenon, new is their treatment in media, as they originate different instability in the production of modern subjectivities. In this revision, without any intention of exhaustivity in mind, it is possible to observe that the representation which film and literature make in contemporary Spain of phenomenon of migration is not fully positive, taking into consideration a big amount of stories which describe exclusion, racism, incomprehension, delinquency, etc. more than living together and integration. This is not a pure isolated estimation of the Centre of Sociological Investigations of Spain (2014), as 42% of inquiries indicate that the communication media offers the “more negative” vision of immigrants. It is evident that the intention of many creators is to focus on the situation of immigrants and report it, but also it should be noted that those views of marginalism can be

counterproductive, as it consolidates the stereotypes which are to be fought. Not in vain, in the four established categories of this article – including those which demonstrate the positive attitudes of living together and of solidarity – continuously appear topics similar to those which form the stereotyped image, which, in *grosso modo*, tend to demonstrate an immigrant as someone different.

In this sense, it should be remembered that film and literature are used to narrate the stories of immigrants without making emphasis on their status of immigrants, but on stories which describe their love histories, suffering, enjoying, working, making efforts that is not determined by their condition. Film and literature offer the views of different worlds and it should be obviated that part of our knowledge is based on cultural stories. Some people do not meet immigrants during everyday life and their understanding of the phenomenon is mostly based on media and cultural facilities. In case of an increased number of narratives which do not demonstrate the conflictive behaviour of immigrants and show their integration possibilities in the society as an equal member of it, the discriminated and biased activities towards immigrants will be decreased in the real world. That is why it is necessary the existence of narrations which foster the idea that we were, are and still be like them.

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**Books:**

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Eco, U. (2000), *Semiótica y filosofía del lenguaje*, Barcelona, Lumen.

- *in case of more than one author:*

Lacoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980), *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

- *chapter of book:*

Cortés-Ramírez, E., Gómez Alonso, J.C. (2020), “Edward W. Said (1935-2003) or the Critic towards the Orient: The Art of Refurbishing the Conflict through Cultural Rhetoric”, in Vladimer Luarsabishvili (ed.), *Out of the Prison of Memory. Nations and Future*, Tbilisi, New Vision University Press, pp. 84-124.

- *edition of book:*

Rodríguez López, B., Sánchez Madrid, N., Zaharijević, A. (eds.) (2021), *Rethinking vulnerability and exclusión. Historical and critical essays*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

**Articles:**

Albaladejo, T. (2019), “European crisis, fragmentation and cohesion: The contribution of ectopic literature to Europeaness”, *Journal of European Studies*, 49, pp. 394-409.