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# Basque Language Revival and Popular Culture

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# Basque Cultural Studies

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## Basque Language Revival and Popular Culture

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There can be little doubt that the revitalization of the Basque language constitutes one of the central issues on the agenda of Basque cultural studies. The attempts to normalize or increase the usage and status of Euskara constitute a social movement of enormous proportion involving people of many walks of life and an investment of human energy, time, and resources that is truly remarkable. While the protests and street demonstrations in favor of Basque normalization may have turned into peaceful processions over the years, the popular commitment to language revival remains quite high. We have only to point to the four football stadiums that filled with thousands of people for the twentieth anniversary of the *Bai Euskarari* campaign organized by *Euskararen Kontseilua*. Add to this a count of the literally thousands of people who are members of *ikastolak*, who have taught or attended AEK classes, participated in *Korrika* (a biennial fund-raising marathon for Basque language schools), work for Basque Radio and Television and *Egunkaria* (the Basque language newspaper), or have become dues-paying members of their local *euskararen taldea* (Basque language association), and we find ourselves before a movement that engages a wide array of people—from professionals and artists, to parents, students, musicians, and poets—in varying degrees of commitment and very diverse activities.

It is precisely this diversity that makes the Basque-language movement rich and unusual among contemporary language-revival movements. Language revival in Euskal Herria, at least in the southern part located within Spain, is by no means the sole province of government planners and professionals. It involves both governmental and nongovernmental organizations, national as well as resolutely local

activities. And it is a movement that is experienced and enacted in very different ways across the diverse sociolinguistic landscape of Euskal Herria.

This entity we call “the Basque-language movement” is far from monolithic in its strategies and its sites. Yet our studies of Basque language revival—its discourse and activities—have perhaps not done enough to explore the significance of this diversity. As scholars we might be tempted to focus our attention on those high-profile planning efforts directed to education, mass media, and public administration. Funds are more available to study these aspects, and there is simply more literature with which to work. In this paper, however, I want to show the relevance of expanding our scope to explore other informal spheres of language activity contained in popular culture. I have chosen for my analysis *Napartheid*, a comic book produced by radical *euskaldun* youth—youth that are in solidarity with the *abertzale* (patriotic) left and language revitalization. I have chosen this comic for several reasons. First, because it is exemplary of language play I found in other arenas of *euskaldun* youth culture (Urla 1995). Secondly because young people’s language tastes, habits, and attitudes are of critical concern to the language movement. We have a generation of youth who have come of age during a decade of increasing language normalization and who have acquired varying degrees of literacy in Basque. It makes sense to pay attention to what they are doing with it and how they articulate their understanding of the language struggle. Whether and how this generation will speak and use Basque remains an unknown that preoccupies many language activists.

I do not propose that the language play of *Napartheid* cartoonists examined here can help us to directly answer this question of future usage. As Vered Amit-Talai (1995) points out in her study of youth cultures, there is often the temptation “to view the engagement of youths with new cultural forms, both as producers and consumers, as prefiguring, however fitfully and unevenly, more comprehensive cultural transformations” (1995, 230). But we would be ill advised to do so. Youthful cultural expressions, like all cultural productions, are situational activities that emerge from, and are addressed to, the situations in which youths find themselves and the constraints that their

age and experience place upon them. They cannot be seen as predicting in any simple way the cultural activities of adults. I put forward the activities of *Napartheid* cartoonists as a means of gaining some partial insight into what at least one sector of avowedly oppositional young people—certainly not all—like to do with Basque and how they articulate their understanding of language domination. To gain a broader understanding of youth and language, we would want to add to this an examination of other youthful sectors of society, for example, non-Basque-speaking youth, more conservative youth, girls,<sup>1</sup> and so on, to better grasp how youth in Euskal Herria interact with Euskara and the language revival movement.

Secondly, my choice of this genre stems from a desire to bring to light not only an interesting and creative sphere of Basque-language expression, but also a means of language resistance that is formally different from what we find in other spheres—education or the mass media, for example. The tools and tactics of language revival, I argue, do much more than challenge the marginalization of Euskara. They also contain within them ideologies of language—that is, they offer up alternative ways of understanding Euskara, its value, its relationship to Castilian and/or other languages, and how Basque can, should, or may be used. The genre of joking I examine here is especially interesting in offering up a strategy of resisting Castilian dominance based upon carnivalesque inversion that works to challenge Castilian domination through humor and parody of Spanish, rather than direct confrontation. While a good part of the Basque-language revival has worked compensatorily to improve the status of Basque by modeling good, proper, or literate Euskara, this lowbrow humor embraces precisely stigmatized qualities of anarchic variability and illiteracy as a means of rejecting Spanish domination. Let me develop this idea by way of contrast.

From the very start of the language movement, which we might mark formally with the creation of the Basque Language Academy in 1918, it was felt that creating a standard Basque was key to ensuring the survival of the language. With at least seven major dialectal variants and great variation in pronunciation and vocabulary across a relatively small geographic space, the first task of the academicians was to create a single literary norm. They were well aware that the absence of that norm, and the strongly oral nature of Basque culture,

was often used as an invective against Euskara and evidence of its backwardness and inability to take its place among the modern languages of Europe. Having linguistic uniformity—a single norm, a single orthography, a single set of grammatical rules—was seen as a self-evident necessity to claiming for Basque the status of a modern language capable of fulfilling all the functions performed by Castilian or French: to be a language of government, of science, of literature, education, and so forth. Standard Basque was simultaneously a sign and an instrument for contesting the hegemony of Castilian. It was the variant that could compete with Castilian as a language of authority, rationality, and modernity (Urla 1993).

However, if we look *outside* the domains of formal language planning, outside the academies, and the schools, to that of popular culture, and youth culture in particular, we see other kinds of efforts aimed at language revival, ones that are not aimed at creating norms, that are not attempts to invest Basque with the signs of rationality, but quite the opposite. We find strategies based on language play that exploit the dialectal variability of Basque, that use debased slang and colloquialisms, and that embrace precisely the backward stereotypes of Basques to parodic effect.

### *Napartheid*

This intentionally outrageous comic zine was created in 1988 by two young cartoonists from Iruña (Pamplona). Free-radio programmers first told me about this comic, which shares a great deal, both ideologically and practically, with the radical youth culture scene of these illegal low-power radio stations, as well as with the broader radical youth culture that blossomed in the 1980s (including *gaztetxes* and the vibrant and highly politicized radical rock music scene).<sup>2</sup> These are the cultural expressions of a sector of youth that is often sympathetic to the abertzale left, but not necessarily a part of *Jarrai*, and that in the course of the 1980s began to look to other arenas and modes of political expression through which to voice their criticisms of the Basque and Spanish governments, police repression, military service, and a host of other social issues, including language domination.

In 1994 I interviewed Asisko Urmeneta, a part-time Basque lan-

guage teacher and cofounder of the comic book. He explained its origins in the following way:

We felt something had to be done for Basque. . . . [T]he *Ley del Vascuence* (of Navarra) had just been passed, and for us that represents a rigid kind of apartheid. It created language reserves, like you have in the United States for Native Americans, or in South Africa. Now, we were also very clear that as young people we weren't interested in just shedding tears, crying about this. We wanted to have some fun and get the attention of young people. So, since we were both cartoonists, we thought about doing something like a fanzine.

The *Ley del Vascuence* that Asisko refers to instituted (controversial) language zoning, dividing up the province into Basque-speaking, mixed, and non-Basque-speaking zones. Services in Basque and language profiles for civil service positions vary according to the zoning. Many language activists like Asisko dislike this approach to language planning, preferring what is called a territorial approach to language rights that would provide equal language services independent of the percentage of speakers in one's "zone." It is this zoning that Asisko is referring to as "reserves" or "apartheid." With the South-African antiapartheid movement gaining in international support during this same period, these young activists found a useful and high-profile media image for their struggle. *Napartheid* is born, a play on the words *Naparra*, the Basque name of the province of Navarra, and *apartheid*.

*Napartheid's* cartoonists organized themselves as a collective, incorporating artists from all seven Basque provinces, thereby signaling its advocacy of a Navarra that is part of a wider Euskal Herria. Improvising along the way, the comic zine has gone from a few mimeographed pages stapled together to a glossy, magazine-sized quarterly with subsidies from the Ministry of Culture of the Basque Government, as well as with additional support from the Navarrese and Gipuzkoan provincial governments. It is important to note that, as a Basque language teacher, Asisko is an active member of the formal language movement and spends a good part of his day teaching literacy and the standardized Basque grammar. In the comic, he and his collaborators fight the language battle with different weapons. Begin-

ning with its name, *Napartheid*, we see an inclination for neologisms, orthographic riot, and a sophisticated command of slang. There is no attempt to create a unified drawing style or language. All of the contributing artists work in their own drawing style and often use their dialectal forms of Basque. Heteroglossia prevails.

Despite its deliberately lowbrow pretensions, these cartoonists are very conscious that the comic is a medium for spreading knowledge about Basque variation. Indeed, Asisko describes it as meeting a responsibility to the next generation.

Our language is in a very critical moment . . . for example, the language we received from our parents, or from the *euskaltegi*, or *ikastola* [Basque language schools]. . . . We have to begin to enrich that language, live it more naturally. That is how we can pass on to the next generation a richer language.

We don't want Basque to be the language that we use only for something that is boring, for tomes and books, and highly academic or elite things. And then use *Erdera* (other languages) when we want to say something that is really fresh, natural—to provoke laughter. What kind of confused, broken language will the next generation face if we don't look after this?

Asisko has a clear sense of having an historic responsibility to ensure the vitality of the language. He and many of his cartoonist friends see themselves as language militants. But their militancy takes the form of subversive humor and parody. Let's take a look.

### "Kastilano"

The full-page comic entitled "Kastilano" (*Napartheid* No. 5, summer 1991) is a biting parodic play on the marginalization and folkloric treatment of Euskara in the mass media (see Figure 1). The page is littered with the stereotypical images of *baserri* life: the farmhouse, the *etxeoandre*, farmwife, and farmer both in traditional rustic costume. The statement in the box on the left makes the main point. Roughly translated, it goes something like this:



for Basque nationalists. The reference to multiple Basque Countries—the “French” “Pei Bask” (Pays Basque) and two “Spanish” “Paises Baskos” (Paises Vascos)—or the term “region” instead of Euskal Herria, are common ways that the status of the Basque territory as a singular nation is negated. Similarly, the Castilian term, *vascuence*, is used in this parodic text, evoking a way of referring to Euskara that recalls a time when philologists questioned the legitimate status of Basque as a modern language. Interestingly, the word *vascuence* still is listed in many dictionaries as a synonym for gibberish. Each one of these terms points to ubiquitous and, for Basque activists, easily recognizable ways in which the legitimacy of Basque nationality, self-determination, and Euskara itself are routinely undermined through bits of language that are otherwise presented in mainstream discourse as “neutral.” The parodic mode works to reveal the perspectival nature of these turns of phrase and “respectful homages” by subjecting them to indecorous representation.

This is most notable in the orthography—a fact that underscores that textuality itself, literacy, and written language are central objects being parodied. Basque, as we know, has been ridiculed as a “spoken” language, an oral culture that lacked in literary production and hence in “civilization.” The text mocks the language of empire and the written form itself through its own orthographic disorder. The great language of Cervantes is full of exaggerated misspellings (the use of K and Z, for example, in *imitazion*, or *publikaziones*, *ke* for *que*, and *errebista* for *revista*), and incorrect gender usages (e.g., *la lector*). This is not merely, then, a reversal of the often sloppy and incorrect uses of Basque that appear in the mainstream Castilian media, though it is that.<sup>3</sup> The text deploys an aesthetic of mistakes, or what Rabelais called the *grammatica jocosa* (laughing grammar) of carnival for its subterfuge. In this context—the context of rude comics—we encounter a carnival-like space in which errors become a weapon for disrupting the monologic order of official language and for pointing to a resistant alternative voice—that of the Basque language militant. Their “mistakes” erupt into the Castilian language, disrupting it from within and exposing the mythos of the Spanish nationalist worldview that still pervades so many liberal-minded attempts to accommodate the Basque language in the post-transition period.

### “Eta Euskaraz Hitz Eging?”

Let us look at a second cartoon, “Eta Euskaraz Hitz Eging?” appearing in *Napartheid* (No. 13) in 1994, that was similarly addressing language issues, but in this case pointed to a different source of linguistic domination: English as the language of global commodity culture, rather than the state (see Figure 2). The small figure in the baseball cap is dressed in clothing all with labels—Coke, Marlboro, Nike, and his tennis shoes have the words “OK.” He is standing in front of a chalkboard full of new words—*zapping*, *drinking*, *surfing*, *puenting*—that have become a part of the slang of the young, hip, leisured class. A caveman figure is exiting the frame on the right. Carrying a paintbrush and grunting, we presume he is responsible for having painted over the anglicized words with a double E, the symbol meaning Basque in the Basqueland (*Euskal Herrian Euskaraz*), and for writing on the board, “Eta Euskaraz Hitz Eging?” (“And speak in Basque?”). The joke comes from the fact that the letter g has been added to the auxiliary verb *egin* (of *hitz egin* ‘to speak’), making it look like the English gerund marker /ing/. The caveman’s message to the audience is conveyed by the phrase just below the chalkboard, “Etorkizuna Euskaraz Joño!!” (“The future in Basque, dammit!!”).

This cartoon is somewhat unusual in the world of Basque language activism, which, for the most part, has directed its attention to domination by the language of the state. In pointing to the infiltration of anglicisms in colloquial hip speech, this cartoon addresses a form of cultural power that derives not from the state and its institutions, but from the imaginary created by commodity culture and advertising. As any traveler to Europe can observe, words in English, like the tag on Levi jeans, designer labels, and logos, are an integral part of the marketing strategies of many multinationals. In the increasingly globalized world of consumer culture, English, in the Basque Country, as in many other parts of the world, functions metonymically as a sign of being modern, hip, worldly.

The cartoon is lighthearted in its depiction of this language conflict. Both figures are exaggerated spoofs: the grunting caveman is a joking reference to the prehistoric origins of Euskara and the Basques.<sup>4</sup> Language-conscious cartoonists of *Napartheid* have put this linkage of



Figure 2 ["Euskaraz Hitz Eging?"]. *Napartheid* 13: 1994 Winter. Pg. 26.

Basques and Cro-Magnons to work as an oppositional tactic. The caveman, named Niko Kabernika, a figure that recurs in *Napartheid* comics, is always outwitting the forces of the state and defending Basque culture. In this particular cartoon, Niko is the guardian of the language, contrasting with the short overweight man, a victim of advertising hype who forgets his language in his desire to ape an American lifestyle.

This latter cartoon speaks to the concerns articulated by Asisko that consumer culture sells to youth the idea that Erdera, whether it be Castilian or English, are the sources of cool, hip, or inventive wordplay. In the pages of *Napartheid*, Basque is revealed as a highly creative and flexible source language, capable of changing shape and nativizing bits of other languages into its own morphological and phonetic system. But not without tension. My talks with Asisko, and the content of some of the cartoons, revealed a concern with the dangers of youth borrowing from Castilian. Such concern is, I think, a characteristic feature of Basque language activism even here in its most irreverent sites of production. Nevertheless, in practice the magazine frequently adopts and transforms Spanish and English words. There are many examples of Basque spellings of Castilian words, and a good deal of the humor comes from this orthographic play. In the comic strip of *Super Zazpi* (*Super Seven*), which features a kind of superman figure who flies around reminding people to use Basque, one finds words like: *Ke Txoiioo*; *Kuidao!* *Biene Super Ziete!* Common Castilian cursing forms, like *me cago en . . .* ("I shit on . . .") in *Napartheid* acquire a Basque orthographic shape as *mekaguen*. English words are also subject to Basque incorporation and play. We find a comic strip called *Guar in de Gulf* and another called *Realiti Txou* (*Reality Show*) and many neologisms like *Zybertsolari*.

Bakhtin's notion of the carnival aesthetic provides a useful frame for understanding the political nature of the "irreverent speech" and parodic play, or *jolas*, of Basque radical youth. In contrast to classical aesthetics, carnival favors the oxymoronic, the asymmetrical, the heterogeneous, the miscegenated. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, in the carnival aesthetic "everything is pregnant with its opposite, within an alternative logic of permanent contradiction and non-exclusive opposites that transgresses the monologic true-or-false thinking typical of a certain kind of positive rationalism" (Shohat and

Stam 1994, 302). It is fundamentally blasphemous and anticanonical: "it deconstructs not only the canon, but also the generating matrix that creates canons and grammaticality" (303). Shohat and Stam identify the carnivalesque as a potentially counterhegemonic tradition that can be found in many vernacular cultures from Roman saturnalia to Hopi tricksterism, as well as in the parodic humor found in the work of many contemporary artists of color. This is an aesthetic based on the principle of what Lucy Lippard, well-known feminist art critic, has called "turning around." Lippard points to Native American performance artists like James Luna, who set himself on display in a museum box, as exemplifying the strategy of parodic inversion. "Those who are 'always turning around on purpose' are deliberately moving targets, subverting and 'making light of' the ponderous mechanism set up to 'keep them in their place'" (Lippard 1990, 199–200).

*Napartheid* cartoonists can be seen as working similarly to these Native American artists, "turning around, on purpose" the power of Castilian and more generally the logic of verbal hygiene itself. These alternative media spaces of radical youth culture expose and encourage youth to play with, invent, and even "abuse" language norms. We encounter here a strategy quite different from that of language standardization, which, following a logic of *homologismo* (similitude), offers up a single language, a single set of linguistic forms, which often get popularly confused with "correct" or good Basque.

Another way to understand the contrast of strategies and language ideologies described here is through the lens of *joko/jolas*. As described by Joseba Zulaika (1988), *joko* (literally "game") refers to the cultural schema of competitive gaming—*haizkolari* competitions, *soka tira*, *harri jasotzaile*—that have typically accompanied festivities in rural Basque baserri culture. *Joko* is understood as *borroka*, a competitive game or conflict. *Joko* or *borroka* contrast with *jolas*, or play. When a situation is understood as that of *borroka*, it is a zero-sum, win-lose type of contest. It is a polarized confrontation that is male gendered and admits no negotiation, no ambiguity. *Jolas*, by contrast, refers to the harmless play of children and make-believe. It involves riddles told by mothers to their children, laughter, and the play of the imagination. Humor, by contrast, has no place in the context of *borroka*. For in the *borroka* of *joko* competitions, words must be said in earnest, *egitan* (in truth). As Zulaika explains, the word, *hitza*, in *joko*

must be serious; whereas "nothing is really serious in *jolas*; that is the whole point" (Zulaika 1988, 181).

*Napartheid* would seem to be using a strategy of *jolas*, while a good deal of the language movement is caught up in a resistance framework of *borroka*. This is evidenced by the titles of books—*Conflicto Lingüístico en Euskadi* (1979) or *Euskararen Borroka* (1983)—and, more importantly, by a discourse that often represents Basque and Castilian in a competitive struggle for territory and power. Many of the efforts of language revivalists, such as standardization, aimed at establishing Euskara on a par with other official languages, operate within and sustain the competitive, *borroka* model. By contrast, the oppositional media of this group of radical euskaldun youth use subversive humor and parody to challenge dominant culture rather than try to create a counterauthoritative language. They resemble what Latino performance artist and self-proclaimed cyber-vato Guillermo Gomez-Peña might call "experiments in trouble making" (Fusco and Gomez Peña 1994).

In setting up this contrast I do not aim to establish one strategy as better than another. Let us remember that Asisko engages in both and does not see them as exclusionary. And the latter strategy has, in fact, been enabled in many ways by the former. The struggle to enact protective legislation and education in Basque has provided subsidies to support *Napartheid* and made it possible for there to be more young people who can read Euskara. My point is not to adjudicate, but rather to signal the presence of multiple sites and modes of acting upon symbolic domination and to contemplate the differences between them. The consequences are worthy of contemplation. The jokes are trivial, inane, and foolish. But perhaps they are not without value. Modes of popular culture like these may incite a different feeling or affect towards Basque: one of enjoyment, pleasure, and irreverence, not just revindication of equality. While I do not deny that standardization has a valuable role to play, the *jolas* model makes some significant shifts in language ideology that merit attention. The *borroka* model has tended to downplay internal differences that both divide and enrich the Basque community. In contrast, the orthographic riot and linguistic heterogeneity expressed in this "minor" mode of language revival contain an incipient model for conceptualizing political affinity—community or nation, if you will—and lan-

guage that is assimilative, not homogenizing. Difference is embraced, not smoothed out. This is an idea graphically represented on the back cover of one issue of *Napartheid* that has several butterflies flying across the page in bright colors, each one saying the word for draft resistance in a different Basque dialect: *insumisiñue*, *intsumisioa*, *insumisionea*, *insumisiyue*.

In conclusion, we might note that the political moment with regard to language normalization in southern Euskal Herria seems ripe for parodic strategies. As many theorists have argued, parody achieves its political effect by offering a way of saying that which is otherwise deniable. As Hill notes, mock Spanish allows the denigration of Latinos and the Spanish language as a legitimate language of the United States precisely at a time when overt racist commentary would not be permissible (1993). In the post-Franco era, the realities of Spanish nationalism and continued Castilian normativity have become increasingly denied in public political discourse. In the mainstream press we hear increasingly about reverse discrimination toward Castilian speakers and the excesses of Basque language zealots who wish to "impose" their language in public. It can be difficult, as Juan Mari Torrealdai has noted in his recent book *El libro negro del euskara*, to discuss the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that anti-Euskara sentiment persists in a political climate where activists are told to "desdramatizar. No hay que producir más crispación" (Torrealdai 1998, 5)—that is, to avoid amplifying the conflict. As the Basque-language movement becomes increasingly normalized, and as "official bilingualism" becomes institutionalized, the parodies of Basque radical youth serve both as a reminder of the persistence of Basque marginalization and as a testament to the creative wit required for surviving as a minority-language speaker in the soon-to-be twenty-first century.

Looking to the future, it is my hope that this brief foray into the world of comics may serve as encouragement for others to analyze apparently minor forms of popular culture that often fail to make it into the headlines or our academic treatises. As Basque studies heads for the next millennium, I hope that we will give greater recognition to popular culture—not just folklore—but popular music, youth culture, and so on, as a domain of expressive culture where political imaginaries of language, nation, and self are forged and expressed.<sup>5</sup> In this endeavor, we will want to not limit ourselves to analyzing con-

tent or lyrics, but to also look at formal features, modes of production, and circulation of the materials we examine; for, as we have seen, form as well as content may carry important political messages. We will want to look at forms of popular culture not to measure their "contamination" by other cultures and languages, but as expressive of newly forged social experiences and identities. The point is not to evaluate what is being "lost" or "retained" in Basque culture, but what Basque culture and identity is coming to mean to young people.

Additionally, this exploration may ask scholars of language revival to rethink the assumption prevalent in language-planning literature that the acquisition of high language functions is the priority for normalization and critical for assuring the future viability of the minority language. Such an assumption presumes that high registers have greater social impact on speakers than those of popular culture. Yet countries across the globe would not be regulating the language of pop music if they did not sense the enormous power of popular culture on language attitudes. If we agree that the language tastes and pleasures of youth are of concern to the future of a language, then we need to know more about the registers of popular culture that they consume and enjoy. This domain, whether it be music, radio, television, or comics, is a critical one not only for native speakers, but also for the integration of quasi-speakers of Basque. We may not want to "plan" popular culture, but we certainly may want to know more about the language play that goes on in it.

Finally, the greater attention to popular culture suggests to us that we need to enlarge our understanding of the political functions of culture. For too long in Basque studies, the study of "politics" and the study of "culture" have been conceptualized as very separate fields. Where cultural activities have been recognized as having political roles, it has been in terms of fostering a nationalist organizing and collective identity. Alfonso Pérez-Agote's work (1984; 1987) has significantly advanced our appreciation of this. With the creation of political parties in the transition, Pérez-Agote tells us, cultural associations became depoliticized and more explicitly "cultural." But we may need to recognize a more complex story than simple depoliticization. We should not mistake the formal distancing of cultural associations from political parties as an end to the political significance of these cultural activities. If we understand politics to be a terrain of

addressing relations of power of various sorts, then our analyses will need to adjust to understand how "politics" is taking place in new domains and via different methods. Greater attention to popular culture can deepen our appreciation of the political nature of cultural expression and assist us in recognizing the existence of alternative ways of imagining the Basque nation and cultural projects that are emerging outside the self-replicating domain of "politics as usual."

### Notes

1. The gendered nature of these genres of popular culture (fanzines, radical rock, free radio) is a topic that merits greater attention. At least one young woman works as a cartoonist for *Napartheid*, but the overwhelmingly male orientation of comics was commented on to me by cartoonists.

2. This radical youth culture has been described by numerous journalists in the Basque Country, as well as scholars working in English. Among the latter, see MacClancy 1988, Lahusen 1993, Urla 1995, and Kasmir (in this volume).

3. It is not only cartoonists who have pointed this out. In a 1993 op-ed article, Xabier Kintana, a member of the Basque Language Academy, comments on some advertisements in Basque placed on the public buses of Bilbao. Apparently the ads were so poorly written that they were unintelligible, the most notable error being the failure to use the ergative marker. How, asks Kintana, could an error that would be obvious to any elementary school child have made it into such an expensive advertising campaign? Apparently, he writes, for some people, Basque continues to be a "lingua incognita" in its own territory. He wonders if a similar mistake in Castilian would have been regarded as insignificant as this one was by officials.

But Kintana's riposte is not limited to complaint. Like *Napartheid*, he resorts to some wordplay to turn the tables on Castilian monolingualism. The Basque poet Gabriel Aresti, well known for his interest in etymologies, says Kintana, argued that the words *idiota* 'idiot' and *idioma* 'language' derive from the same root, *idio*, meaning 'of oneself'. Aresti attributed the origins of this common root to the fact that the Greeks, a mercantile and sailing people who lived alongside the Phoenicians, Jews, Armenians, Persians, Arabs, Egyptians, and Romans, considered that persons of one culture should know some language other than their own.

A person who did not know more than their own language was, then, someone who held on only to their own, bereft of the possibility of exchange and cultural or commercial enrichment. That person, that monolingual, was called an idiot. Kintana concludes, "while I do not know Greek, that is exactly the word I would use to describe the author of the advertisements" (*Egin*, 5 February 1993).

4. Teresa del Valle describes a similar use of the prehistoric caveman figure in Korrika celebrations (1993, 3).

5. See Urla, in press. "'We are all Malcolm X!' Negu Gorriak, Hip Hop and the Basque Political Imaginary," in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the U.S.A.*, edited by Tony Mitchell (Hanover, NJ: Wesleyan University Press).

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