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ESTUDIOS

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PENSAMIENTO POÉTICO Y CLAVES
INTERPRETATIVAS EN «MORTAL
Y ROSA» DE FRANCISCO UMBRAL

POESÍA

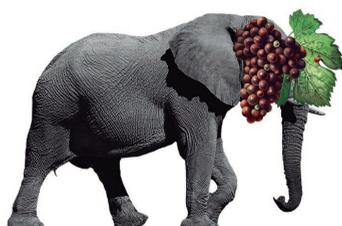
Rita Dove
POEMAS
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ENTREVISTA

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THE DISINTEGRATING CONCEPT OF HOMELAND (“PATRIA”) IN TWO POEMS BY JON JUARISTI

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EL DESINTEGRADOR CONCEPTO DE «PATRIA»
EN DOS POEMAS DE JON JUARISTI
—

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A B S T R A C T

KEYWORDS { Jon Juaristi, Basque nationalism, poetry, xx century }

In 1966, at the age of 16, the essayist and poet Jon Juaristi (Bilbao, 1951) joined Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Basque nationalist terrorist organization, which over the course of two decades would become one of the most infamous political antagonists in Europe. As an adult, Juaristi eventually became part of a select group of Basque intellectuals that openly repudiated the fervent nationalism of their homeland. What factor(s) created such a vast rupture between the ideology of the young Juaristi and that of his mature self? The present study seeks to answer these questions through an analysis of two of Juaristi’s poems: “Patria mía”, published in *Suma de varia intención* (1987) and “Patria”, published in *Renta antigua* (2012). Both employ classical forms, the sonnet and the *silva*, and feature almost identical titles. Yet a close study of their ostensi-

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bly analogous structures finds that the 2012 composition, “Patria”, challenges and rejects the form of the Petrarchan sonnet used in the 1987 “Patria mía”. A careful analysis of the two poems finds a literal disintegration of the traditional Petrarchan form between the earlier sonnet and the later silva which parallels a symbolic deterioration of the author’s concept of homeland. This deterioration reflects the author’s political dynamism over the course of twenty-five years, where Juaristi’s experience as a budding Basque nationalist catalyzed an inexorable, if gradual ideological shift from the left to center that rendered the mature Juaristi the antithesis of the young ETA member he once was.

RESUMEN

PALABRAS CLAVE { Jon Juaristi, Nacionalismo vasco, Poesía, Siglo xx }

En 1966, a los 16 años, el ensayista y poeta Jon Juaristi (Bilbao, 1951) se unió a Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), la organización terrorista nacionalista vasca que en el transcurso de dos décadas se convertiría en uno de los antagonistas políticos más infames de Europa. Como adulto, Juaristi se convirtió en parte de un grupo selecto de intelectuales vascos que repudiaron abiertamente el ferviente nacionalismo de su tierra natal. ¿Qué factor(es) creó/ crearon esta ruptura tan vasta entre la ideología del joven Juaristi y la de su ser maduro? El presente estudio busca responder estas preguntas a través de un análisis de dos de los poemas de Juaristi: «Patria mía», publicado en *Suma de varia intención* (1987) y «Patria», publicado en *Renta antigua* (2012). Ambos emplean formas clásicas, el soneto y la silva, y presentan títulos casi idénticos. Sin embargo, un estudio de sus estructuras aparentemente análogas revela que la composición de 2012, «Patria», desafía y rechaza la forma del soneto petrarquista utilizado en «Patria mía» de 1987. Un análisis de los dos poemas encuentra una desintegración literal de la forma tradicional petrarquista entre el soneto anterior y la silva posterior, lo que paralela un deterioro simbólico del concepto de patria del autor. Este deterioro refleja el dinamismo político del autor en el transcurso de veinticinco años, donde la experiencia de Juaristi como un nacionalista vasco incipiente catalizó un cambio ideológico gradual e inexorable de la izquierda al centro que convertía al Juaristi maduro en la antítesis del joven miembro de ETA que antes era.

«Si no un destino, sí creo haber compartido con los nacionalistas de mis historias una peligrosa exposición a las mismas voces ancestrales, una educación en la melancolía patriótica, y por qué no decirlo, cierta estupidez.»

JON JUARISTI, *El bucle melancólico*

JON JUARISTI: POLITICAL DYNAMISM AND BASQUE NATIONALISM

In 1966, at the age of 16, the essayist and poet Jon Juaristi (Bilbao, 1951) joined Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Basque nationalist terrorist organization, which over the course of two decades would become one of the most infamous political antagonists in Europe. From its inception in 1958 until its dissolution in 2011, ETA was responsible for the deaths of 829 victims in its goal of establishing an independent Basque nation. In a 2006 interview with the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, Juaristi recalled his reasons for joining the group as a teenager. He was encouraged by a cousin, a Jesuit novice, who too had become ensnared by the nationalist fervor of the Basque religious community. Furthermore, he was reacting against the deplorable reality of the Francoist dictatorship and felt inspired by the recent publication of Federico Krutwig's polemic *Vasconia* in 1963. That Krutwig's nationalist call-to-arms was a catalyst for Juaristi is deeply ironic; he recounts that "entré en ETA después de leer el libro" and that in doing so, he was considered a "gilipollas" by other members of the organization, such as the esteemed Mario Onaindía (Esteban 1).

Juaristi later responded to criticism of his participation in ETA in his semi-autobiographical collection of historical essays on the Basque condition, *El bucle melancólico* (1997). In the 2006 interview, he summarizes this remarkable experience as a member of ETA: "No me arrepiento de mi paso por ETA, si acaso deploro haber perdido el tiempo y no haberlo aprovechado para otras cosas" (1). What factor(s) created such a vast rupture between the

ideology of the young Juaristi and that of his mature self? How did Juaristi, once a young nationalist, eventually become part of a select group of Basque intellectuals that, as Paul Julian Smith argues: “sought to disentangle nationality from the land (and language) with which it is so frequently fused, viewing the mirage of independence as an ‘act of termination’ rather than a new beginning for the Basque people” (150)?

The present study seeks to answer these questions through an analysis of two of Juaristi’s poems: “Patria mía”, published in *Suma de varia intención* (1987) and “Patria”, published in *Renta antigua* (2012). Despite the poems’ temporal separation of twenty-five years and the unique socio-political circumstances in which Juaristi wrote them, upon first reading the two selected works would appear highly similar. Both employ classical forms, the sonnet and the silva, and feature almost identical titles whose only discernable difference is the former’s use of the possessive article. Yet a close study of their ostensibly analogous structures finds that the 2012 composition, “Patria”, challenges and rejects the form of the Petrarchan sonnet used in the 1987 “Patria mía” in favor of a curiously sonnet-like, yet metrically variable, 14-line silva. A careful analysis of the two poems finds a literal disintegration of the traditional Petrarchan form between the earlier sonnet and the later silva which parallels a symbolic deterioration of the author’s concept of homeland. This deterioration reflects the author’s political dynamism over the course of twenty-five years, where Juaristi’s experience with as a budding Basque nationalist catalyzed an inexorable, if gradual ideological shift from the left to center that rendered the mature Juaristi the antithesis of the young ETA member he once was.

Given the harsh reality of País Vasco under Francoist rule, Juaristi’s beginnings as a 16-year-old nationalist militant was hardly unique. His decision to join ETA, like many young people of the 60s and early 70s, can be broadly interpreted as a reaction against the severe repression of Basque autonomy, culture, and language that was law under the Francoist autocracy. The same development occurs likewise in the lives of members of the 1977-80 Van-

guard literary movement, Pott, of which Juaristi and other Basque literary scions such as Bernardo Atxaga and Joseba Sarrionandia were founding members.¹ As the author explains:

Mi evolución... es similar a la de otros muchos de mi generación. Gente que fue nacionalista por su tradición familiar, que estuvo en ETA en los años 60, en los 70 en la extrema izquierda, en los 80 fue socialdemócrata y, después, derivamos a un liberalismo convencional. Soy una persona conservadora, pero no de una derecha extrema, y no volveré a militar en ningún otro partido político. Contra eso ya estoy inmunizado. (1)

Speaking of his ideological development in the 2001 prologue to *El bucle melancólico*, Juaristi expands:

La mayoría de los de mi generación etarra dejamos de ser nacionalistas hace más de treinta años. Nos equivocamos en la forma de combatir contra la dictadura, no en el hecho de combatirla. Los nacionalistas sostienen que nuestro pasado comprometido con la violencia nos desautoriza para defender la democracia. Al contrario. Creo que precisamente porque la hemos conocido desde dentro, nuestras denuncias de la estupidez patrioterica pueden tener una inusitada eficacia. (28)

Juaristi's personal development follows the general evolution of young Basques of his generation—made patent by the similar trajectories of Pott's members—which in turn reflects ETA's ontogeny in País Vasco during the second half of the twentieth century. By the late 1960s, the ETA to which Juaristi had belonged since 1966 found itself debilitated. Its armed faction was very nearly dismantled as a result of the Francoist government's severe repression and detention of a vast number of its members, which took place after ETA's killings of José Pardines and Melitón Manzanos in June and August of 1968, respectively. One of its key leaders, the young, beloved Txabi Etxebarrieta, had been killed by the Guar-

1. Other founding members were Jose Mari Iturralde, Manu Ertzilla and Ruper Ordorika.

dia Civil in a shooting in June that same year. Manzanás' death in August was, in part, a reprisal for this killing. In ETA's Assembly VI of 1970, the organization splintered, and Juaristi took the side that, in his words, "se desliga del nacionalismo y toma distancia con el terrorismo"; he became a Trotskyist and later a Communist (1). By 1974, at the age of 23, appalled by ETA's 1973 assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, the author abandoned political militancy outright, and ceased to follow the powerful ideological current of militant Basque nationalist that would lead ETA into the bloody *Años de Plomo* of the late 1970s and 80s.

After 1974, and throughout the rest of the 70s and 80s, Juaristi experienced several ideological metamorphoses, moving ever more towards the center, from extreme leftist to Communist, and, since 1987, as a member of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). Juaristi's membership in the PSOE is significant in the scheme of his personal development; as he explains: "...me afilié a ese partido en lo que siempre consideré como un acto simbólico para denunciar el acoso a los no nacionalistas en el País Vasco" (1). He did so after a 1987 terrorist attack by Mendeku led to the death of two female socialist militants in front of PSOE headquarters in Portugaleta.² In this politically symbolic act, then, Juaristi establishes outright the anti-nationalist ideology which will inform his writing, particularly his poetry, throughout his later life. Two years later, in 1989, he continues this trend, arguing in favor of a postnationalist identity based on the political concept theorized by Jürgen Habermas. Jon Kortazar summarizes Juaristi's of concept postnationalist identity as one that, above all, seeks "the depoliticization of nationalism", inasmuch as it recognizes that "[w]ithin nationalism there exist the basic premises for its dissolution. Nationalism creates its own gravediggers" (168). Juaristi's contention that nationalism is inherently untenable will continue

2. Mendeku, meaning "revenge" in Euskera, formed part of the armed terrorist organization Comandos Autónomos Anticapitalistas. CAA originated as part of ETA-pm, from which it split to form a new organization based on Marxist-anarchist ideologies.

to explicitly criticize this ideology with the publication of *El bucle meláncolico* nine years later.

Juaristi's semi-autobiographical collection of historical essays provides key insight into its author's most significant ideological metamorphosis: that of a young nationalist militant's transformation into an avowed antinationalist. This transformation, initially catalyzed by the death of the PSOE militants, is clearly referenced in Juaristi's introduction to *El bucle meláncolico*. In this work, the author takes to task Basque nationalism's historiographical revisionism and offers an alternative historiography of Basque nationalism founded in fact, rather than ideological fervor. Juaristi simultaneously examines the perennially popular Basque nationalist discourse of rebellion, sacrifice, and defeat at enemy hands as he confronts nationalist (re)visions of Basque history. Stephanie A. Muller summarizes Juaristi's perspective in this era as such:

Juaristi's constitutes one voice in a chorus of Basque voices that emerged in the 1990s in opposition to the sub-state nationalism that has for the most part enjoyed widespread popular support in the region following Spain's democratic transition. Intellectuals such as Fernando Savater, Juan Pablo Fusi, Juan Aranzadi, Carlos Martínez Gomarán, Antonio Elorza, Mikel Azurmendi, and Patxo Unzueta—often identified as 'non-nationalists', 'post-nationalists', or 'constitutional patriots'—have all famously spoken out against nationalism, which they view, to a large degree like Juaristi, as a pernicious phenomenon limited to Spain's peripheries, namely Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. (2)

Juaristi accuses Basque nationalism of reappropriating communal historical narrative to propagate an ideological dogma which he refers to as "victimismo infinito" that disdains historical fact in favor of "mantener vivo el agravio para que el sacrificio de las sucesivas generaciones resulte políticamente rentable" (19-20). For Juaristi, the nationalist tactic of rendering the Basques eternal victims of Spanish crimes against their sovereignty directly promotes the tired dialectic of victim versus victor, which in turn encoura-

ges (im)moral outrage and implausible historical revisionism in its audience. Their hands bound by such fervent emotional ties provoked the narratives of nationalist politicians, in which the Basques *do* indeed become victims of their own making.

“PATRIA MÍA” (1987) AND “PATRIA” (2012):
THE BASQUE NATIONALIST DISCOURSE COLLAPSES

The decade of 1980s marked a period of political instability for Juaristi and País Vasco, and 1987 figured as a particularly divisive year in both the poet’s life and his homeland’s history. In April, the Mendeku attack on Socialist militants took place, leading to Juaristi’s subsequent socialist conversion and with it, an implied repudiation of Basque nationalism, given that the PSOE was a favorite enemy of ETA. Two months later, in June, ETA would commit its deadliest attack to date: the bombing of Barcelona’s Hipercor shopping center, which killed twenty-one civilians and injured scores more. Before the year’s end, ETA would commit several other deadly attacks, leaving multiple victims —civilians and civil servants alike— in Oñate, Vitoria, and Guernica. In December, ETA attacked the barracks of the Guardia Civil in Zaragoza, leaving another eleven dead and eighty-eight injured. The awareness of mounting toll of extremist political belief appears in Juaristi’s second poetry collection, *Suma de varia intención*, which was published in this same year.³

The violence of 1987 appeared to catalyze Juaristi’s literary production. With the publication of *Suma de varia intención*, the author amplified the initial political discourse established in *Diario de un poeta recién cansado*, published a year prior. In this poetry collection, the author’s first, Juaristi in no uncertain terms disavows the use of

3. In true Juaristi fashion, the title of this collection riffs on poetic tradition. In this case, the title alludes to *Silva de varia lección*, published in 1540 by the 16th century Spanish poet Pedro Mejía.

Euskera in his artistic production as a consequence of what he perceives as a nationalist corruption of his homeland, a sentiment that will crystalize in the publication of *El bucle melancólico* a decade later (47).⁴⁵ In accordance with this 1986 declaration, Juaristi's published work, including both his creative and critical production in verse and prose, is written in Castilian Spanish rather than Euskera.

In the poems of *Suma de varia intención*, Juaristi continues his repudiation of Basque nationalism, deploying his lyric voice against what he perceived as the inherently flawed nature of the Basque nationalist cause. The collection manifests the author's divestment from prevailing ideological dogma of País Vasco at this time; notably, the political machinations of independence-minded Herri Batasuna as well as the PNV. The collection also responds to the extreme violence provoked by ETA's ideologies, such as the 1973 assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. This attack marked a turning point for Juaristi, severing any lingering ties to political militancy that he had abandoned with ETA three years earlier:

...el atentado sí produjo divisiones entre nosotros. A los de ETA V Asamblea, es decir, a los nacionalistas, les pareció estupendo. La izquierda más radical, tras un momento de terror, pasó al éxtasis de pensar que ETA había desbloqueado el camino hacia la democracia. Pero a la mayoría de nosotros nos pareció una barbaridad desde el punto de vista tanto moral como político. (1)

In spite of this violence, or perhaps because of it, Juaristi embraces the Basque element in this collection, situating his poetry within a deeply Basque cultural framework, reappropriating narratives co-opted by antagonistic diegesis. "Patria mía", then, may be

4. In accordance with the RAE, I will use the accepted spelling of "Euskera" here to refer to the Basque language. Juaristi himself switches between various spellings throughout his literary production.

5. I refer to the concluding sextet of the classic Petrarchan sonnet "Euskadi, 1984", which reads: "Juanito, José Luis, oíd mis vanos / propósitos para esta primavera: / escogeré desde ahora a mis hermanos, / defenderé la casa que yo quiera. / Jamás, sobre esta tierra de cristianos / volveré a hablar en vuestro ingrato euskera" (47).

situated as a response to this overarching framework of political instability and acute nationalist dogmatism that was plaguing the País Vasco towards the end of the 1980s. The sonnet, classical Petrarchan in form, reads as follows:

Llamarla mía y nada todo es uno
aunque naciera en ella y siga a oscuras
fatigando sus tristes espesuras
y ofrendándole un canto inoportuno.
Juré sus fueros en Guernica y Luno
como mandan sus santas escrituras,
y esta tierra feroz, feraz en curas,
me dio un roble, un otero y una muno.
Y una mano —perdón—, mano de hielo,
de nieve no, que crispa y atiranta
yo no sé si el rencor o el desconsuelo.
Y una raza me dio que reza y santa
ante el cántabro mar Cantos de Lelo.
No merecía yo ventura tanta. (Juaristi 54)

In the first quatrain, the authorial, first-person poetic voice addresses the patria, Juaristi's metonymic conceptualization of País Vasco. An antithetical structure, established in this quatrain, will dominate throughout as Juaristi carefully constructs this sonnet upon foundational oppositions. In the first verse, homeland is simultaneously "mía" and "nada" in relationship with the poetic voice. This initial metonymic disparity will expand over the course of the sonnet, and is clearly identifiable in subsequent verses in the first quatrain. In the following verse, the voice evokes its innate, carnal knowledge of his homeland —"naciera en ella"— but counters that this knowledge is cloaked in darkness, inaccessible as the voice "siga a oscuras/fatigando sus tristes espesuras". This is a bleak vision of reality in which the voice stumbles along paths unknown in the dark demonstrates its profound alienation from the homeland. This speaks to Juaristi's repudiation of certain native elements, namely, Basque nationalism, which the author blames for many of his homeland's

ills, and in particular, the aforementioned victimization of the Basques and the subsequent political violence this ideology engenders.

In the final verse of the quatrain, the poetic voice, that unlucky balladeer, can only offer the personified homeland its "canto inoportuno". This is a certain reference to the Juaristi's antinationalist ideology, clearly expressed in both this and the preceding poetry collections, as well as his political conversion to socialism. Thus, despite this humanlike rendering through personification, which should bring the poetic voice closer to the homeland, the voice is instead distanced from it, due to the tension created by its critical, rather than adulatory, balladry.

Unhappy with this present reality, the poetic voice looks to the past, and finds in the second quatrain profound consolation. The imaginary Golden Age of Basque history evoked in this stanza combines an extensive range of historical events connected through their mythologized nature and resulting symbolic importance in Basque culture. It is their cultural significance, rather than any specific temporal relationship, that joins these images.⁶ The poetic voice invokes the signing of the *Fueros* in Guernica and Luno as the origin of the Basque Golden Age and follows this with a veiled allusion to the Jesuit order, whose autochthonous origins in the Guipuzcoan district of Loyola are made explicit through the intentional use of the near homophones "feroz" and "feraz".

The millennial oak of Guernica is likewise named by the poetic voice, as are two native luminaries of modern literature, Blas de Otero and Miguel de Unamuno. Unamuno, Otero, and Loyola serve the symbolic function of patriarchs in this sonnet; they are the fathers of this idealized Basque Golden Age. The foundational nature of these ancestral figures is further intensified through the image of the oak, which serves as a fundamental symbol of Basque

6. The earliest *Fueros* on record for Basque territories (including Navarra) date to the 11th and 12th centuries. A span of nearly seven hundred years separates their inception from the lives of Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) and Blas de Otero (1916-1979). The life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuits, roughly bridges this gap.

identity and refers to the famed oak of Guernica under which the ancient lords of Biscay and later kings of Castile swore to respect the liberties of the Biscayan people, as indicated in the *Fueros*. The *patria* of the second quatrain, then, is one that offered to its own the great gifts of the modern Humanist tradition; its founders inaugurated a millenary line of artistic and philosophical genius carried in the genes of the poetic voice.

Yet the shining Basque Golden Age so praised by the poetic voice for its gifts to future generations suffers from the antithetical structure of this sonnet when, in the *volta*, it is again forced to confront the bleak present reality initially alluded to in the first quatrain. Nationalist antagonism has deformed the famed patriarch, Unamuno, into “una mano —perdón—, mano de hielo”. The poetic voice witnesses a literal and symbolic disfiguration of the great author from foundational figure into an emblem of brutal power in Basque nationalist ideology, with the “icy hand” functioning as a symbolic parallel to an iron fist. This rhetorical deformation echoes Juaristi’s frustration at the Basque nationalists’ appropriation of traditional figures to serve their ideological extremism, as he will later make explicit in *El bucle melancólico*.

Continuing the *volta*’s central theme of anamorphosis, the iron fist of nationalist ideology tightens its grip on the poetic voice’s esteemed patriarchs, further fracturing them. Under its control, the Basque Golden Age suffers as nationalism “crispa y atiranta” these foundational narratives, leaving the poetic voice to lament with uncertainty, if the nationalists’ motives are “el rencor o el desconsuelo”. These sentiments reiterate how the propagation of nationalist ideologies has destabilized the concept of homeland, perverting it for the extreme political purposes of separatism.

The only manner in which the poetic voice is able to recuperate the idealized Basque Golden Age is to return to the past and disavow the present. In the final tercet, the poetic voice circles back to the gifts bestowed by the homeland, again evoking the literary and religious traditions of a glorious race: “Y una raza me dio que reza y santa / ante el cántabro mar Cantos de Lelo”. Fa-

ced with the disconsolate present reality in which this millenary history is deformed for political gain, the poetic voice concludes that "[n]o merecía yo ventura tanta". The use of the imperfect in verse fourteen is significant, as it places the poetic voice at the antithetical crossroads upon which the sonnet is constructed. Although unable to return to the storied, if imaginary past, the poetic voice refuses to embrace what it perceives as the intentional deformation of Basque identity. Thus, the voice denounces the present reality of País Vasco through a reappropriation of traditional narratives, contrasting their mythologized glory with present reality. In this manner, the poetic voice promotes a vision of the homeland which divests its foundational narratives from the extreme nationalist political ideologies present in País Vasco in the late 1980s.

Twenty-five years later, in 2012, a significant shift in the political landscape of the region occurred: a year previously, in 2011, ETA had officially announced its disbandment and dissolution. Five decades of politically motivated terrorism in Spain had passed, and with them an interminable cycle of truces and negotiations between ETA and the Spanish state that invariably devolved into violence. With the dissolution of ETA came a moment of hope for the nation; at last, Spain could embrace a pacific political pluralism. Yet Juaristi's 2012 poetry collection, *Renta antigua*, reflects little of the post-ETA era's optimism; perhaps in spite of it, the author continues the anti-nationalist rhetoric initiated in his earliest poetry collection twenty-six years prior. In this collection, Juaristi offers a deeply pessimistic vision of his homeland and its present situation in which he intensifies the scathing political criticism begun in his earlier collections, including in the collection's title. While the meaning of the title of Juaristi's *Suma de varia intención* itself is apparent at first glance, the title of *Renta antigua* evokes a deeper analysis that can be read in direct reference to "Patria".⁷ With this

7. This is to say the collection itself represents the sum of the various authorial intentions referenced in the title.

reference to the polemical Francoist rent-control policy, Juaristi alludes to the meager return on something, once of great value, that has been rendered worthless by the inexorable forward movement of time. Here, the *renta antigua* collected by the author is his Basque inheritance, which will pay him endless, meager dividends on behalf of a once-storied, once-glorious race.

The central theme of decay will be made clear in “Patria”, a poem which directly reflects the transformation of Juaristi’s beliefs since the publication of “Patria mía” twenty-five years before. The authorial poetic voice will directly address the homeland and by way of this confrontation lament the decadence of a once great people whose fall has reduced its inheritance to nil. The fourteen-line *silva*, which opens with an epigraph in Euskera, reads as follows:

Un ciego agrimensor triangulaba
las heredades turbias a este lado
del río. Te fue dado
un estéril quiñón de arena y grava
para sembrar avena olvidadiza
donde no medra el pan. Por eso acechas
las ajenas cosechas,
tu corazón haciéndose ceniza.
Eres la desdichada, la avarienta,
la viuda que maldice en la ventana,
negro copo de lana
y un rayo de rencor en la tormenta.
Raíz desde el principio ensimismada
en el duelo, en la pérdida, en la nada.⁸ (Juaristi, 61)

The first quatrain demonstrates Juaristi’s use of irony that establishes the framework within which the authorial poetic voice

8. The epigraph, “...artoa hauzoan...”, can be alternately translated in Castilian as “maíz en el pueblo” or “maíz en el barrio”. To my knowledge, it is neither a common Basque refrain nor a literary verse; therefore, I am forced to conclude it portends the central agricultural metaphor of the poem. Many thanks are in order to Luis de Gueza-la at the Archive of Basque Nationalism for his assistance with this translation.

will decry the desolate present reality of its homeland. The poem opens with a paradoxical image: "[u]n ciego agrimensor triangulaba / las heredades turbias a este lado / del río". This absurd figure finds himself in a double bind, unable to perform his duty; his professional skill is lost to both his blindness and the murky waters of the river that hide the lands. This initial irony gives way to the idea of these flooded lands as useless both in literal and symbolic sense. No crops can grow upon them; even more, lacking a fixed position, they have no permanence and can be washed away, erased. The infertile, indefinable lands of this poem will come to serve as the metonymic Basque homeland throughout, while polysemic "heredades" will exemplify the Basques' figurative, meager inheritance from them.

In the following quatrain, the poetic voice engages with a personified vision of the homeland, whose depiction subsequently bolsters its initial infecundity and sterility. Through addressing this personification, the authorial poetic voice is able to confront the past that has caused the present landscape of desolation in the Basque homeland. The voice establishes a historical narrative of suffering through the use of the preterit: "[t]e fue dado / un estéril quiñón de arena y grava". The passive construction insinuates that this act of giving was unwanted, perhaps even forced. Even more, such a barren land of sand and gravel—as the Basque homeland is depicted—is understood by the reader as anathema to prosperity; and for those who lived upon it and their heirs, then, there is little hope of survival, much less an inheritance to be passed down through generations.

This idea continues through enjambment into the second quatrain as the lands' deficiencies are made explicit; it serves only "para sembrar avena olvidadiza / donde no medra el pan". The land significantly lacks the resources to cultivate even the most basic subsistence, the bread of life. Its only harvest is "avena olvidadiza". In essence, the land only serves to sow the seeds of forgetfulness, meaning its history will be forgotten by those who inhabit it. This state of affairs only worsens as the personified homeland,

already condemned to sterility, is accused by the poetic voice of another sin, avarice: “acechas / las ajenas cosechas, / tu corazón haciéndose ceniza”. The final image of this quatrain “ceniza” reiterates the utter desolation of both the homeland and its metonymic personification.

The desolation established in the quatrains takes on a gendered element when, in the volta, the personified homeland is feminized. This feminization further destabilizes the already problematic issue of inheritance. Traditional Basque culture permitted matrilineal inheritance. Yet in this tercet, the personified female homeland inherits nothing: “[e]res la desdichada”, whose lack of gain, material or otherwise, provokes the epithet of “la avariencita”. This epithet is strengthened by another image of frustrated inheritance, that of “la viuda que maldice en la ventana”. With this image of widowhood comes an implied sterility; the female homeland is the end of the genealogical line, the last of the Basques, with nothing and no one left to inherit. The following two descriptive verses solidify the repercussions of this reality, associating the feminized personification with two enjambed images of widowhood and emotional torment: “negro copo de lana / y un rayo de rencor en la tormenta”. In this deliberate gendering of the homeland as female, the authorial poetic voice emphasizes the deeply ironic nature of the Basque homeland’s present situation as one of sterility and disinheritance. The final verses of the second tercet concludes this poetic lament in a clear reference to the end of the millenary Basque race: “[r]aíz desde el principio ensimismada”. The inherent self-absorption of the race, identified through its root—a simultaneous reference to a family tree as well as the famous oak of Guernica— suffers from an obvious deformation that cuts short its existence.

The following and final verse, an obvious allusion to Luis de Góngora’s “Soneto CLXVI,” makes this disfiguration explicit: “en el duelo, en la pérdida, en la nada”. This reference intensifies the perversion suffered by the feminized homeland, relating her to the female subject of Góngora’s *culteranista* sonnet whose fleeting

beauty will deteriorate into "la nada" with the inexorable machinations of time. The homeland has descended into full Baroque allegorical decadence, its atrophy a direct result of a troubled history that has left nothing to its presence or future. This decadence is reflected not only in the formal allusion to the Baroque, but also within the disintegration of the poem's semantic field. Unlike "Patria mía", in "Patria" Juaristi alludes to, but chooses not to fully realize, the classic form of the Petrarchan sonnet, despite the poem's length, fourteen verses, and its grouping of these verses into two quatrains and two tercets. A *silva*, "Patria" even imitates the sonnet in its rhyme scheme –the enclosed rhyme of Petrarchan sonnets–but falls short of this form with its dual hepta- and hendecasyllabic verses. This combination of verses of *arte menor* and *arte mayor* breaks with the appearance of the *silva* as a cohesive poetic unit. In the comparison of these two poems, I find that in the latter exists a strong, almost caligramatic, parallel of the visual and the ideological, where the concept of homeland referred to in the title has broken down and disintegrated into the nothing mentioned in the final verse.

Further expanding this comparison of "Patria" and "Patria mía", I argue that there is a definitive tonal shift between the two poems that elucidate the dynamic political transformation of Jon Juaristi over the course of this twenty-five-year span. One may consider the theme of inheritance as presented in both poems, for example. In the earlier sonnet, Juaristi establishes a fruitful Humanist tradition, marked as patrilineal through its inclusion of male figures of historical and socio-cultural significance: Miguel de Unamuno, Blas de Otero, and Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Their contributions to their Basque homeland engender the creation of this imaginary Basque Golden Age, with these figures presumed to be its metaphorical founding fathers. The authorial poetic voice of "Patria mía" disavows the appropriate and subsequent disfigurement of these traditional narratives by Basque nationalist ideologues. At the same time, however, it is the voice's reflection on this idealized, golden past is the catalyst for its criticism of the pre-

sent reality, where a denunciation of the present reality of País Vasco is rooted with its sharp contrast from this mythologized history.

The later “Patria” marks a significant departure from Juaristi’s earlier technique of referring to an idealized past to criticize the present; in this fourteen-line *silva*, the inheritance owed to the feminized homeland has been rendered sterile, worthless, by the past. The central agricultural metaphor of infertility that dominates this poem carries with it a symbolic frustration and annulment of the glorious patrilineal line established in the previous sonnet. With a sharply pessimistic vision of the Basque reality, the authorial poetic voice of “Patria” divests itself of its inheritance; indeed, the poem’s title abandons the possessive. The later poetry of Juaristi reflects the decay—simultaneously structural and ideological—of the author’s concept of homeland at the hands of detrimental, fatalistic determinism propagated by the nationalist narratives of País Vasco. In critical comparison with the earlier sonnet, “Patria” demonstrates the collapse of Juaristi’s concept of homeland under the weight of the nationalist discourses that pervade the contemporary Basque political reality.

In conclusion, although perhaps less openly explicit than the previous “Patria mía”, “Patria” contains a strong, if subtle ideological condemnation of the devastating effects of politically minded sectarian violence. In this case, what has reduced the inheritance to such meager desolation is none other than the violent nationalist ideologies that have, for Juaristi, burnt the fruitful bounty of his homeland to ash. Like the titular *renta antigua*, the Basque inheritance—inarguably Juaristi’s reference to the decades of separatist violence—has rendered his homeland worthless, of little value to present and future generations, as it is unable to sustain life. Yet, as the title of *El bucle melancólico* implies, the Basque people will be forced to collect this meager sum indefinitely as their history—one rife with forgetfulness—repeats itself in an infinite, tragic loop. As Juaristi remarks in a recent 2017 interview with *El Mundo*, “[s]er español y ser vasco es muy cansado, un coñazo” (1). For the author, there is only one natural consequence to the devastation wrought

by nationalists upon his homeland, one that he himself has experienced: "[e]n fin, el País Vasco siempre ha bombeado población hacia afuera. Pero no me he sentido en el exilio, ¿eh?, yo en España no me siento exiliado". With nothing left in his homeland, Juaristi has abandoned his claim to it. Basque nationalism has forced Juaristi to embrace the very country of the its enemies: Spain.

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