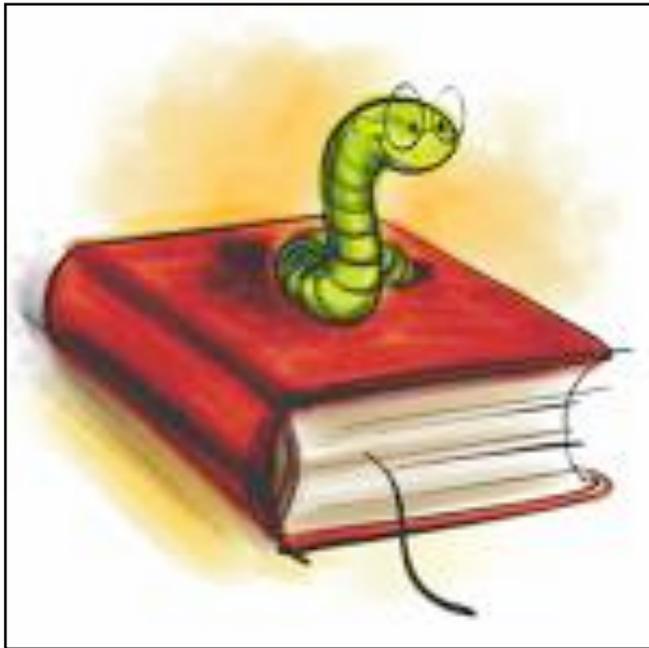


Basque Writing 1

Literature for Children and Teenagers

In recent years it has been abundant, attractive and of high quality



Children's literature is the main theme of this issue of *Basque Writing*. These pages feature **Mariasun Landa** and Xabier Etxaniz-Erle. Mariasun Landa is a writer, has produced 33 books and has received numerous literary prizes at home and abroad. Her works have been translated into many languages.

Xabier Etxaniz is a critic and expert in Children's Literature. He very briefly explains the situation regarding children's literature in Basque.

The **Galtzagorri Association**, which has been going for the past 18 years, aims to promote and spread literature for children and teenagers.

Hello Everyone!

The first book in Basque was published in 1545 under the Latin name *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae*. Its author Beñat Etxepare pointed out that Basque did not have its rightful place in the world because, despite being a very old language, it was not written down.

*Heuskaldunak mundu orotan-
preziatu ziraden.*

*Bana baien len-
goajiaz bertze oro
burlatzen. Zeren-
ezein eskripturan-
erideiten ezpait-
zen. Orai dute
ikasiren nola
gauza hona zen.*

LINGVAE VASCONVM PRIMI-
tia per Dominum Bernartum Delepere
Hebreum facta anno d. m. cccc. lxxv.



(The Basques were appreciated all over the world. But everyone used to mock their language. This was because it wasn't written down anywhere. Now people will find out how wonderful it was.)

Write, because what has a name exists. Write, because what exists needs a name. This is what we have learnt from our very first writer.

Laura Mintegi
President of the Basque PEN

KURDISH WRITERS RECEIVE THE SOLIDARITY OF THE BASQUE PUBLIC

The last page is devoted to the campaign run in June 2008 in support of Adnan Hassanpour and Hiwa Butimar.

Iran's Supreme Court handed down death sentences on these two Kurdish journalists. They were arrested in January 2007 and were sentenced in July.



Since then, they have received the support of many PEN centres and have been made Honorary Members of the Basque PEN.

Layla Hassanpour (Adnan's sister) and Hadi Butimar (Hiwa's brother) came to the Basque Country as part of this broad campaign.

MARIASUN LANDA, THE MOST TRANSLATED BASQUE WRITER

Is the world-view of children the same here as in the antipodes?

I don't think so. As I see, it the words *child* and *teenager* are linked to culture and social classes, and all these things in first world are different from those in the third world. However, shared themes do exist depending on the cultures: childhood emotions, fear, the need for fantasy, the appeal of animals, humour and adventure, for example. It's difficult to believe, but as many as 345 different versions of Cinderella have been handed down so far in different cultures.

What can a book of literature offer a child of today?

In my view, the experience of literature, the private encounter between the book and the reader and its influence goes on being one of the most interesting experiences in life. But that experience of literature, that passionate reading that moves us does not take place as often as we would like, whenever we read. There are all kinds of different reasons why a book pleases some people and not others. It is not an experience that we can influence, predict or programme. All we adults can do is try and create the right circumstances for children to enable certain conditions to come together: a suitable text, the right moment, similar sensitivity, etc.

When you embark on a new piece of work, is your creativity influenced if you know in advance that the chances are that your book is going to be translated?

When I start on a new story I have enough work dealing with the literary difficulties that arise that I don't give any thought to the translation or, if I do think about it, I leave it for later on... I concern myself with the narrative voice of the story, the rhythm, the internal consistency or the credibility of the dialogues.



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, IMPRISONED BY SCHOOL

In the past, grandmother's stories were written, but today we are seeing realist stories, ones that constitute "self help" for children. How do you view that?



I would present today's situation differently... It is a question of how far the intermediaries of children's literature (teachers, parents, librarians, psychologists, etc.) exert an influence on literature written for children. Let's take a look at the influence of school, for example.

You see, when I was young a clear distinction was drawn between school books, on the one hand, and the ones we enjoyed reading, on the other.

School books were established by literary canons —*El lazarrillo, La Celestina, Don Quixote...*—; but the ones we read, *Tom Sawyer, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan*, comics, etc., were also read as if they were something forbidden. Around 1975 progressive teachers began to demand that children's literature be allowed into school, and that led to a profound change. Now we say that children and teenagers don't read outside school, and maybe that is the case to a certain extent, because literature no longer has that forbidden aspect. What they read now at school is imaginative, fresh, light literature. And one has the suspicion nowadays that children's literature may have become too closely identified with school and that we should take it out of school to keep it separate from school subjects.

And how can literature be taken out of school?

New spaces need to be created, places for reading for pleasure, at school itself, for example. I would propose free reading to get children used to going to libraries to read what they want. That is what taking it out of school means. But today in the audiovisual age... We all know that reading a book is more difficult than seeing a film. It requires internal work, silence, tranquillity, things that society does not develop very much nowadays.

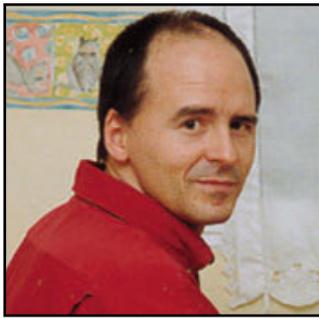


Landa's work has been recognised by the IBBY-ek (International Board on Books for Young People)

Mariasun Landa has written 33 books, which have been translated into about 20 languages in all. Two books have been included in the IBBY Honour List: *Iholdi* (1992) and *Krokodilo bat ohe azpian* (2002); and the story *Elefante txoribibotza* is in the 2001 White Raven collection of the Munich International Youth Library.



XABIER ETXANIZ ERLE



Small and Prolific

The work done in the children's sphere stands out among the efforts made to improve the situation of the Basque language. In education, in the mass media (in television or the Basque press, for example) and, in general, a great deal of effort has been



made in all fields to give children the opportunity of living in Basque. This is the context in which we have to understand the evolution that has taken place in literature in Basque for children and teenagers. And in this context, too, we have to understand the importance of Basque literature in our society –for children as well as adults. On the other hand, it is in literature that the Basque speech community has found a unique opportunity to develop its identity.

Children's literature is a fairly new phenomenon in the world, and even more so in Basque. The first

books for children were written two centuries ago, but it was not until forty years ago that books that gave priority to aesthetic aims appeared.

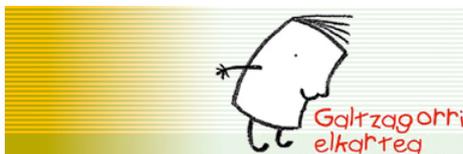
In our smallness we have tried to produce texts that meet the needs of children. Bernardo Atxaga, Mariasun Landa or Anjel Lertxundi opened the door by using fantasy and imagination, but the aim of getting the reader to reflect was also present. In the 1990s critical realism came to the fore and, with the advancement of society as a goal, we saw the emergence of works that dealt with immigration, the right to be different, feminism, multiculturalism, etc. We can find a clear example of this in the work of Patxi Zubizarreta, whose prolific works bring together Africa, Muslim culture and the Basque Country.

Right now there is great abundance in Basque with respect to themes and styles. However, children's literature is heavily dependent on school, because a large percentage of what is produced is consumed by school. That can lead to self-censorship, which is more relaxed due to the limited size of the market, and this gives both the author and the publisher greater freedom.

However, the main challenge facing children's literature in Basque is that these readers should go on being readers right into adulthood. But that is not a problem facing small literatures alone!

Basque Children's Literature can be read in the following languages:

- Albanian
- Arabic
- Aragonese
- Aranese
- Aranera
- Armerian
- Braille
- Breton
- Catalan
- Croatian
- Czech
- Danish
- Dutch
- English
- Esperanto
- Finnish
- French
- Friesian
- Galician
- German
- Greek
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Italian
- Japanese
- Norwegian
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Slovenian
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Welsh



Galtzagorri Association, vital support

The Galtzagorri Association was set up in 1990 to promote a love of reading among children and teenagers, and to support and make known literature in Basque for children and teenagers. The association is made up of authors and illustrators, story tellers, teachers, librarians, translators and book sellers.

The Galtzagorri Association is also represented in the OEPLI and IBBY organisations.

Every year it organises literary rooms, a reading seminar, courses and meetings and campaigns to promote a love of reading. These include Liburu Gaztea (Young Book), Libururen Altxorra (Book Treasure), Liburu Ibil-tariak (Travelling Books) and Idazle Gaztea (Young Writer).

Twice a year it publishes *Bebinola*, the only publication in Basque devoted to Literature for Children and Teenagers, and it also produces a Catalogue of Writers of Literature in Basque for Children and Teenagers.

A BROAD-BASED CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN RUN FOR ADNAN HASSANPOUR AND HIWA BUTIMAR



To the sound of Kurdish music, Basques danced with Layla and Hadi

Layla Hassanpour and Hadi Butimar were accompanied by the translator Rahim Kaderi, the musicians Zinar Ala and Asier Serrano, the writers Miren Agur Meabe, Asel Luzarraga and Fernando Morillo, the Basque extempore verse makers Fredi Paya and Arkaitz Estiballes, and the poems of Nazand Begikhani. The aim was to express solidarity.



In Gernika, in front of the wall depicting

They also participated in other events: accompanied by Amnesty International members, they explained the situation of the Kurds in Iran; they visited the Oak Tree of Gernika (a symbol of the Basque Country, its own laws and its freedom), and the historic Assembly Chamber; a reception was held for them by the mayor of Mundaka at the town hall; and finally they were taken on a tour of the Urdaibai biosphere.

Layla Hassanpour and Hadi Butimar, Adnan's sister and Hiwa's brother, respectively, were in the Basque Country from June 15 to 20, 2008.



During a ceremony in which relatives of Adnan and Hiwa received the Basque PEN Idazluma (Quill) award.

They gave their testimonies in the Parliaments of Gasteiz (Vitoria) and Iruñea (Pamplona), they received the Basque PEN Idazluma (Quill) Award and took part in cultural events.

THEY GAVE THEIR TESTIMONIES IN THE BASQUE PARLIAMENTS

Rahim Kaderi, the Kurdish translator and intellectual, who has been living in Madrid for the last 23 years.



Layla Hassanpour, Adnan's sister, lived in Iraq before she came to the Basque Country. She has now applied for asylum in a European country.

Hadi Butimar, Hiwa's brother, who has been living in England for the last five years.

Hassanpour and Butimar gave their testimonies in the Parliament of the Basque Autonomous Community and in the Parliament of Navarre, on July 17 and 18, 2008, respectively.

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