Xabier Paya

Anthology of Basque Oral Literature
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NOT GONE WITH THE WIND

Joxerra Garzia

The question of the origin of things is often as appetising as it is unreachable; and the orality of human nature follows this very pattern. According to experts, the human species, denominated ‘homo sapiens’, has lived for some 200,000 years from its origins until now.

In which exact moment did our primitive ancestors stop being primates and become the first human beings? The question is a trick, I well know; it is not a matter of now yes, now no, but rather a constant and continuous process. We human beings, however, need milestones, which in reality do not exist, if we are to understand something (and if we do not wish to lose our minds in the whirlwind between desire and the impossibility of understanding). Stanley Kubrick, in his famous film, 2001 Space Odyssey, has a monolith fall from the sky in a representation of the metaphorical source of human intelligence. One primate becomes human through the simple act of touching the monolith, subtly realising the value of tree branches as weapons. Although we know that the evolution from ape to man did not happen like this in reality, that scene is fixed in my mind (although, I should state, the music of Richard Strauss is also partially to blame).

With reference to the book in your hands, however, the most interesting moment is that second after the mutation from ape to man, given that the human primate immediately begins relating his discovery to the other members of the clan, insisting on beginning by persuading the others to use tree branches as weapons. In Kubrick’s film, the human primates principally communicate through corporeal expression: visual, practical gestures, expressions, and signs. Voice is merely auxiliary throughout the film: a sort of soundtrack to the corporeal exposition, composed of a series of roars.
In the widest sense, these inarticulate roars could be the first oral expressions of mankind. It is worth noting that the first articulated system of oral sounds worthy of the denomination ‘language’ was created much later, but it is impossible to know how long man has possessed language for. What we do know, as the great professor John Foley states, is that human beings have lived immersed in orality for the majority of their long history (see the epilogue to this text in which Xabier Paya mentions this theme and Foley). As such, even being cautious, we might affirm that at least 100,000 years have passed since man began to talk. Think of all the time our species has had to tell, sing, and say things! Before this, we also created oral sounds, but it does not make sense to include these sounds prior to the moment of the creation of language in the system of orality (and this decision is not as easy and obvious as it seems; for instance, how could the Gomeran whistle [a whistled language spoken by inhabitants of La Gomera in the Canary Islands] and the like be classified?).

In this case, everything that has been said, told, or sung by the speakers of a language forms a part of the system of its orality. In this anthology various terms are employed to designate that which has been said, told, or sung at one time or another: (oral) expression, piece, manifestation, and so on. Any attempt to complete an anthology of the orality of a language would be a long hard task, given that it would imply dealing with such an extensive and constantly growing field. Oral pieces or manifestations are many and diverse, with as many classifications as are desired. However, for the task in hand, let us distinguish between two large groups:

1) Pieces which are simple oral expressions; and

2) Pieces which possess superior characteristics to the previous group (technically speaking, those which possess the minimal traits required to be considered a genre, which are not only oral expressions but also works belonging to ‘oral literature’).

This anthology, as the title indicates, is limited to oral expressions that form a part of this second group. If truth be told, those excluded are not a minor relevance: quotidian speech, for instance, is currently a very interesting subject for study, but it does not seem reasonable classifying it as a genre of oral literature. Not everything written down
is considered literature, although literature can appropriate any text at a later date. In orality, something similar occurs. Some oral expressions present characteristics which clearly confer upon them the status of a genre (bertsolaritza, balladry, ancient couplets, and so on), but others (jokes, sayings and replies, and so forth) border on common quotidian speech and it is not so easy to differentiate them.

What characteristics should an oral expression possess in order for it to be considered a part of a genre of oral literature? If the objective is to investigate oral literature, it is essential to respond precisely to this question, given that the answer provides the criteria which indicate what the critic should study and what s/he should leave to one side. As such, it is unsurprising that the majority of experts on orality have attempted to answer this question. In the Basque case, Juan Mari Lekuona, following Mircea Eliade, highlights longevity as the principal criterion (everything which has been said once and has later been conserved by the Basque community in its memory can be considered a genre of oral literature). This criterion excludes a consideration of contemporary oral expressions developing within current society as a genre, given that we cannot know if they have been conserved in collective memory until the period of their creation is in the past. For this reason and for others, John Foley’s perspective seems more useful: it is the possession of a special register which converts a simple oral expression into a genre of oral literature whenever that register has a codification that is more precise than common language.

Xabier Paya provides a very fitting summary of all these issues at the start of this anthology. However, the need to limit the genres of oral literature archived is not a decision that the author has expressly taken for this text; rather, it is the common practice in this field.

Even limiting ourselves solely to the genres of oral literature, the field remains very large, perhaps too large for the author of this anthology and, as such, Paya has had to make a series of strict decisions which, I dare to say, are on the mark throughout.

In the first instance, he has decided to exclude contemporary modern genres (amongst others, those emerging and developing on the radio, the television, and the internet). This is not because they lack importance, of course, but rather because they unbalance and
disfigure the anthology. Secondly, he has used as a starting point a provisional classification which I coined for the journal *Oral Tradition*, as the author graciously recognises. Fortunately, Paya has made various, significant modifications to the classification which I proposed and I at least feel that all of these changes have been made for the better.

Briefly put, the author has taken eight genres as axes, or sections, for his anthology: *bertsolaritza* (improvised verses, with a subsection about championship *bertsos*, and written verses), couplets (ancient, dance, and couplets in the rounds), the lyric-epic (popular lyric, fables, stories, and legends, epic songs, and ballads), popular theatre (pastoral, masquerade, and burlesque theatre), the didactic genre (children's games, lullabies, and warnings), the quotidian genre (jokes, proverbs, sayings and replies), the ritual genre (with various examples), and the applied genre (sermons).

Paya's proposal, evidently, is provisional, and, I would say it is not only debatable, but, moreover, its very objective is to incite debate. We might consider whether some of those genres excluded should be included within this classification, for instance. On the other hand, the criteria to define and designate genres are still not well established, given that some of these are based on criteria which are too textual.

In any case, this proposal indicates a great step forward in comparison with other classifications. Its potential shortcomings, without a doubt, even serve to highlight the direction for research which should be carried out in the future. Conversely, this classification offers a solid base for necessary debate within the field.

Despite excluding oral expressions which are not considered a genre, or new and emerging genres, the author of this anthology must have examined a very extensive field. In spite of the fact that written literature has been late in arriving, scarce, and almost monotonous, oral literature in Basque has been, and still is, prolific, abundant, and varied. The author has aimed to highlight this from the start and to do so he has procured the support of experts of great renown.

The abundance of the object of study is not bad news in itself (it is difficult to compile a good anthology in deserted fields); however, it requires great quality on the part of the anthologist, above all in a text like this. Although it is evident throughout the work, the
excellent work of classification carried out by Paya is terrible, particularly in the more developed genres. I say terrible bearing in mind the original meaning of the word: capable of terrorising. Without going further, and staying with the genre I know best, which is to say bert-
solaritza, I do not believe that I would dare to construct an anthology like this one, even if I were to dedicate the entire text to bert-
solaritza. Paya, however, has had to include the anthology of bert-
solaritza in a single chapter: in total, the anthology contains 25 performances (per-
formances of improvised bert-
sos or collections of written stanzas), 111 verses, and 20 bert-
solaris (basque oral improvisers). Would other selections have been possible? Without a doubt. The most admirable quality, however, is how well it reflects the character of bert-
solaritza within a selection of so few pieces.

In my opinion, Paya has also achieved this in the other genres, although each one presents distinct difficulties. In the case of bert-
solaritza, the difficulty lies in demonstrating its immense abundance through a minimum demonstration; in the case of popular theatre, however, the problem is the definition and distinction of the genres; in the quotidian genre, that confirming the characteristics which surpass simple quotidian speech and finding suitable examples, and so on.

With all this in mind, I believe that we have a masterful work in our hands. In this sense, it may be the case that the drastic selection process carried out might have been unpleasant for the author, however, without a doubt it has favoured the anthology itself, and, as a result, the reader.

In effect, dear reader, until now, we have not had acces to any text like that which is now in our hands. Perhaps many of the names, genres, and pieces mentioned will be familiar to you, but they have never been presented together in such a clear, concise, and coherent form as they are presented here. Although it has been costly, now we can say that Basque, finally, has an anthology of its oral literature, created in accordance with the criteria used by leading critics throughout the world.

There might be those who consider that writing an anthology is a mechanical labour. It is clear to me that nobody, aside from Xabier Paya, could have written this anthology. He is one of the few people
with the two indispensable conditions for this task: a great knowledge of our oral traditions, and first-hand experience studying the methodologies for research on orality. It was a difficult task; the result, however, is excellent.

In essence, research is no more than the search for solutions responding to the necessities of every period. Some years ago, when orality was condemned to live marginalised within the private sphere, the priorities were archiving and fieldwork. I remember how the late Antonio Zabala became enraged, with reason, with those who refused to acknowledge just how laborious archiving was. Although they surfaced quite late, our culture has also celebrated great archivists, and it is thanks to them that now we can advance our research. As noted Basque physicist Pedro Miguel Etxenike often says when speaking of science, research can only make progress by standing of the shoulders of the giants of the past. For this reason, Paya’s mention of the great archivists of our culture seems worthy of applause.

However, as the author says, "unfortunately, many of these thoughts and experiences have gone with the wind", but without the labour of those pioneers, nowadays we would have nothing to investigate. Developing this metaphor, I believe that this anthology can be an inestimable effort to ‘understand the wind’, as well as being an enjoyable text for the reader. Citing the words of Paya himself: “this anthology aims to reflect the diversity and abundance of Basque orality, given that these two values are those which best demonstrate how the secrets of the survival and life of Basque culture reside in oral literature”.

Here and now we must publish what our predecessors skilfully archived. However, it is clear that, if we wish to do so duly, firstly we most evaluate, understand, and classify that which we intend to disclose. Put another way: one cannot craft a piece worthy of publication if one has not previously, conscientiously researched the subject. In this case, I am certain that Paya has invested a greater amount of time in the research for this text than in the redaction of the material in this anthology, which is clearly noted (and appreciated). On the other hand, the very concept of publication has suffered a radical change, thanks in great part to the internet. Not too long ago, this consisted of providing information about a determined field. For this, an expert in
this material was required, and texts would often be an accumulation of facts, given that the audience did not have any other way to access this information. Nowadays, however, the problem is not the lack, but rather the excess of information. Previously, one attempted to relieve the human thirst for information by accumulating facts; now one aims to offer criteria and keys in order that people may orient themselves and face the avalanche of information that threatens to drown our ability to process it. In this sense, this anthology seems to me to be a great example.

In the preamble to this text, the author thanks various people, including myself, for their collaboration, and this is appreciated, but we should be the ones to thank Xabier Paya for having provided us with such a useful and delightful book. Whilst we are giving thanks, how can I not once again mention the professor, master, and friend, John Foley. I met Foley ten years ago in Reno. And, as things go, I also met Xabier Paya then. I do not know when we would have met had we not known Foley. But often I have thought that we met too late; if we had met him earlier, I think we would have advanced much more easily, and we would have avoided a great number of doubts, stumbles, and trip-ups.

Foley passed away last year, in May 2012, and, in his last volumes he clearly states that of all the young researchers he had met throughout his work, he particularly appreciated Xabier Paya, whom he considers one of the most adequate people to develop research in the field of orality. I know it is not usual to do so in the foreword to someone else’s text prologue of an outside text, but I am sure that Xabier will readily accept that his text be utilised to pay homage to the great maestro from the both of us. Without further preamble, dear reader, enjoy this lively and exhilarating anthology of Basque oral literature that Xabier Paya has elaborated with the real-life and virtual collaboration of John Foley.
Introductory Note

The transcription of the texts in Basque has been carried out maintaining the spelling corresponding to the period of each one. A standardised orthography in Basque is a relatively recent phenomenon, since Euskara Batua or Unified Basque was developed by the Basque Language Academy in the late 1960s, even if nowadays it is the most broadly and commonly spoken Basque-language version.

Many of the pieces included in this anthology are small fragments of more extensive works. Those pieces which have been partially modified or extracted from their context are marked with ‘adapted’ at the end of each text.

The translations of the selected pieces are merely explanatory and adhere to the content; it is recommended that the reader study the determined aesthetic characteristics of the texts in their original Basque.

Faced with the indetermination of gender in Basque grammar, those texts in which the gender of a character is not duly explained, the translations have been carried out using the masculine genre in its generic sense. Similarly, the same criterion has been used in the translations of the texts in the anthology. As the translation of place or people names is concerned, in general, the majority of them are spelt in Basque, excepting those whose Spanish or French names are more common in English.

Acknowledgements

This anthology has been made possible through the inestimable collaboration of the following experts and institutions: Belen Altuna, Kike Amonarriz, John Miles Foley, Joxerra Garzia, Jabier Kaltzakorta and Zornotzako Barnetegia.
"Taking into consideration the limited number of inhabitants in the Basque territory, as well as its small area, if we examine and value the corpus of well-known popular literature, it is possible to state that it is as rich as that of neighbouring countries".


"In contrast to written literature, oral literature is prolific and diverse. We can affirm that without doubt, without the need for comparison with other populations."


"The fact that the ancestors of Basque society were illiterate does not imply that they did not have their own literature. In contrast, despite the fact that its oral tradition is not as prolific as that of the neighbouring romance languages, it is as interesting as theirs."


**Basque Oral Literature**

The first book written in Basque was *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae* (1545), a series of poems and *bertsos* published by Bernart Etxepare, parish priest of Saint Michel (in Basque, Eiheralarre, in Lower Navarre). Until 1879, only 101 books would be published in Basque, of which only four can really be considered literature. Luckily, Bernardo Atxaga’s hedgehog, the metaphor for written Basque literature, after existing in a long state of lethargy, awoke at the start of the twentieth century and, since then, has cultivated authors and works of great fame.
The Tale of the Hedgehog

The hedgehog wakes up in his nest of dry leaves
his mind suddenly filled with all the words he knows.
Counting the words, including the verbs, more or less, they come to twenty-seven.

Later he thinks: the winter is over,
I'm a hedgehog, up fly two eagles, high up,
Snail, Worm, Insect, Spider, Frog,
which ponds or holes are you hiding in?
There is the river, this is my kingdom, I am hungry.

And he repeats: this is my kingdom, I am hungry,
Snail, Worm, insect, Spider, Frog,
which ponds or holes are you hiding in?

But he remains still like a dry leaf,
because it's just midday and an old law
forbids him sun, sky and eagles.

But when night comes, gone are the eagles; and the hedgehog,
Snail, Worm, Insect, Spider, Frog,
disregards the river, attends to the steepness of the mountain,
as sure of his spines as a warrior
in Sparta or Corinth could have been of his shield;
suddenly, he crosses the boundary
between the meadow and the new road
with a single step that takes him right into my and your time.
And given that his universal vocabulary has not been renewed
in the last seven thousand years,
he doesn't understand our car lights
or see his death coming.

Trikuarena [The Tale of the Hedgehog].

However, Basque has only had official status for a few decades;
the Basque Language Academy began the unification of the language

in 1968 and, until relatively recently, the use of Basque was limited to the private sphere. In which case, what is the secret of the survival of Basque? This secret invokes mystery, and although Basque can be considered one of the oldest languages in Europe, the greatest mystery of the language of Etxepare is not its origin, but rather its very survival. And the secret of its survival cannot but lie in its incessant use, from the very moment of the existence of diverse dialects suggesting the abundance of the language. Following Atxaga’s metaphor, whilst the hedgehog slept, the parrot sang songs or told stories, amongst other possibilities. The presence of diverse oral genres today continues to be of great significance in the Basque Country; as such, the hedgehog and the parrot are symbols of the excellent health of its literary production.

The aim of this anthology is to present oral literary expressions of Basque culture as a whole. The term ‘literature’ is predominantly associated with the written genre, given that this has been the object of study in most cases. Thus historically literature has been linked to a cultural elite, whilst orality has always belonged to the common people. In either case, leaving aside the historical perspective, both genres complement one another.

Even so, oral literature has been so little studied that terminological diversity reflects the lack of unity within the field. Oral literature, according to the definition of Mircea Eliade provided by Juan Mari Lekuona, is “that which has come out of someone’s mouth at some point and has been maintained by collective memory” (Urkizu, 2013: 22). However, alongside this term, which has been chosen for this anthology, there are many others that designate the same concept: ‘popular literature’, which highlights the creation and transmission of poems, stories, and proverbs; ‘folklore’, which defines the sum total of oral expressions as popular knowledge; ‘traditional literature’, which reflects the intergenerational, oral transmission of the ballads, sayings, and riddles of yesteryear; or ‘oral traditions’, the term that suggests the absence of ‘literarity’ in the knowledge passed from generation to generation.

Romanticism, which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, sought to emphasise the very value of individual nations; the first step was to bring together the singularities of each one based on
scrupulous field work and databases. In Germany and Britain during
the nineteenth century there was a great effort to archive songs and
stories preserved through oral transmission. In the Basque Country,
the value of the work *Erriko Yakintza* (translated from the term ‘folk-
lore’) carried out by Miguel de Unamuno, Vicente Arana, and Camilo
Villabaso at the end of the same century, is similar to those works
compiled in northern Europe; the president of the Basque Language
Academy, Resurreccion Maria de Azkue, used a similar term for his
text *Euskalerriaren Yakintza*.

Reviewing the list of compilations that proliferated in Europe,
the songs, stories, and other pieces gathered represent endless diverse
characteristics. The pieces can be situated in one common context:
that which is expressed by the speaker must be received by a receptor
or an audience. This moment and place of the communicative act is
denominated ‘performance’. The performance consists of the actual
act of singing a *bertso*, reciting a poem, or telling a story; to sum up,
this culminating moment or expression constitutes oral literature. In

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<td>1 Through memory</td>
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<td>2 Written</td>
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<td>3 Other</td>
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<td>2) EMISSION</td>
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<td>1 Oral</td>
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<td>2 Oral and gestural</td>
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<td>3 Written</td>
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<td>4 Others</td>
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<td>3) RECEPTION</td>
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<td>1 Auditory</td>
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<td>3 Through reading</td>
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<td>4) PRESERVATION</td>
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<td>2 Written</td>
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<td>4 Audiovisual recording</td>
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<td>5 Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) REPRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Oral</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Written</td>
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<td>3 Playing recorded audio</td>
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<td>4 Audiovisual projection</td>
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<td>5 Others</td>
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contrast to written literature, the emission and reception of the message is simultaneously produced; it is the significance of this moment which conditions the trajectory of the *bertsos*, poems, or stories within the cycle of orality.

Belonging to the genre of oral literature does not imply that a *bertso*, ballad, or story has been created, transmitted, preserved, and reproduced solely through oral and auditory means. Rather, it is thought that the indispensable condition lies in the oral communication between speaker and receptor; however, even that condition is not imperative given that studies by Milman Parry about the Odyssey and the works of Homer (Parry, 1987) have discovered that characteristics from oral literature can also exist in written form (the principle researchers of these characteristics are Ong, Parry, Lord, and Foley). In accordance with the table above, each piece considered oral literature undergoes a cycle which consists of five stages:

1) **Production**: as the speaker can improvise or prepare beforehand something that will be sung, recited, or told, the piece can be elaborated by memory, written notes, or produced through some other medium.

2) **Emission**: this section consists of the options for the speaker.

3) **Reception**: the third stage demonstrates the different options for receiving the message in a performance.

4) **Preservation**: the fourth stage refers to the method utilised by the receptor to remember the information. Until the start of the twentieth century, the manner for preserving oral literature was by oral or written means; nowadays, the most common method is recordings. The emergence of recording equipment has been employed to the detriment of the selective function of memory, given that, until now, memory only remembered the pieces that the speaker created that were memorable and considered significant by the receptor.

5) **Reproduction**: Much like the previous point, the most common option for reproduction nowadays is the projection of recordings, although until relatively recently this was oral or written reproduction.
Even though this cycle contains five steps, not all genres of oral literature adhere to all steps: traditional genres adhere to all the steps, whilst non-traditional genres only follow the first three. The traditional genres are those whose objective consists of maintaining a work created by an author, or a series of authors, for generations; non-traditional literatures, in contrast, are born and die in the very performance itself, and do not seek to maintain anything. However, the border between these two types is not so clear, and experts such as Juan Mari Lekuona (Lekuona, 1982) have recognised the need to mention literature with combined, or hybrid, transmission. The professor from Oiartzun, in his text Ahozko Euskal Literatura [Basque Oral Literature], includes bertsolaritza (Basque oral improvisation) in this hybrid group. If improvised bertsos are born and die in the performance, in that relationship of simultaneous emission and reception, there exist versifications that the audience have preserved in their memory and have passed from generation to generation. In any case, it must not be forgotten that one of the characteristics of oral transmission of traditional genres is homeostasis and, in accordance with this, the piece will be transformed in the memory of the receptor, and adapted to specific moments in time.

This introduction cannot be concluded without mentioning the work that has been carried out in the Basque Country to compile autochthonous oral literature. The oldest antecedents of Basque oral literature emerged in the fourteenth century, despite the fact that they were not recognised in a written form until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. All those ballads and narratives that were passed from mouth to mouth have reached us principally due to the work of Gipuzkoan historian Esteban de Garibay, even if incomplete. Some examples are ‘The Song of the Battle of Beotibar’, ‘The Lament of Milia of Lastur’, or ‘The Song of Bereterretxe’, together with many others compiled by Koldo Mitxelena in the 1964 work Textos Arcaicos vascos [Basque Archaic Texts].

2. It may be interesting for English-speaking readers to know that some pages of this work have been translated into English: “History and Prehistory of the Language,” chapter 4, in Koldo Mitxelena: Selected Writings of a Basque Scholar, compiled with an introduction by Pello Salaburu, translated by Linda White and M. Dean Johnson (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno, 2008), pp. 125-134.
Amongst the most significant pioneer compilers, I must inevitably mention the German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, given that he compiled many traditional songs during the nineteenth century. The first Basque researchers, Humboldt’s contemporaries, were Augustin Xaho, Francisque Michel (Le Pays Basque, sa population, ses mœurs, sa littérature et sa musique [The Basque Country, its People, Customs, Literature, and Music]), and Souletines, from Zuberoa, Jean Dominique and Julien Sallaberry (Chants populaires du Pays Basque [Popular Songs from the Basque Country]) who archived the majority of popular songs from the period. As regards archiving stories and legends, however, the main researchers have predominantly been foreigners: Jean François Cerquand (Legendes et récits populaires du pays basque [Popular Legends and Sayings from the Basque Country]), Wentworth Webster, and Julien Vinson (Le folk-lore du pays basque [Folklore from the Basque Country]), amongst others.

In a field comprised of so many genres, there exist many people who have contributed to some extent to the compilation of patrimony. Juan Antonio Moguel archived proverbs, stories, and songs from the start of the nineteenth century; Juan Ignacio Iztueta compiled couplets and songs used in popular dances; Jean Barbier, Mayi Ariztia and Piarres Lafitte were the most important archivists of the twentieth century within the Northern Basque Country. Resurreccion Maria de Azkue wrote two reference-works of Basque popular literature, Cancionero Popular Vasco [Popular Basque Songs] and Euskalerriaren Yakintza [Basque Folklore]; similarly, Jose Miguel Barandiaran wrote Obras Completas [Complete Works] and Eusko-Folklore [Basque Folklore]; Jorge Riezú published Obras Completas del Padre Donostia [Complete Works of Father Donostia] during the 1960s; Manuel Lekuona established the basis for the classification of oral literature in his work Literatura Oral Vasca [Basque Oral Literature] at the start of the twentieth century; Jose Maria Satrustegi was the prominent critic of Navarre folklore during the same century; Juan Mari Lekuona continued the work of his uncle in the text Ahozko Euskal Literatura [Basque Oral Literature]; the anthology Refranes y Sentencias [Proverbs and Sayings] of the sixteenth century is an interesting anonymous document; Antonio Zavala is one of the more prolific compilers and publishers of oral literature due to the volume Auspoa;
the texts *Flor de baladas vascas* [Flower of Basque Ballads] and *El linaje de Aitor* [Aitor’s Lineage] by Jon Juaristi are excellent studies about Basque ballads, which form a selection of essential works along with the volumes of *Euskal baladak* [Basque Ballads] published by seminar “Maria Goyri” from Vitoria-Gasteiz; the work *Naparroako erran zarrak* [Old Sayings from Navarre] by Damaso Intza is unforgettable; the seminar “Mikel Zarate” from the Labayru Institute has carried out a admirable work publishing volumes of oral literature in the series “Ahorik aho” [“From Mouth to Mouth”] in its magazine *Idatz & Mintz* [Writing and Speaking], as well as publishing various texts and monographical works; the collection and classification of proverbs carried out by Gotzon Garate is a work without comparison; the work by Patri Urkizu regarding poems, ballads, and popular theatre is not to be overlooked, neither is that by Xabier Amuriza in the field of theorization and compiling of information about *bertsolaritza*; works such as *Gure Herria* [Our Country], *Euskalerriaren alde* [The Basque Area], *Euzkadi* [Basque Country], *Fontes Linguae Vasconum* and other collections are all the result of the arduous labour of many critics, the names of whom have been mentioned above; however, given the sheer volume of contributors archiving Basque oral literature it is possible that some critic is missing.

**Basque Oral Literature: Classification of Genres**

The classification of Basque oral literature has always followed the following standard: traditional literature refers to archaic couplets, ballads, epic and lyric chants, stories, proverbs, and theatrical representations of Carnival and Christmas. Non-traditional literature is made up of *bertsolaritza* and pastoral texts. The traditional genres tend to overlook the authors’ names for the pieces; non-traditional genres openly celebrate the authors and texts which are well-known due to history and chronology. When it comes to analysing texts, it makes no sense mixing the cyclical or repetitive sense of the tradition with the traditional character: the former is present in all oral genres, whilst the latter makes reference to the method of preserving oral songs, stories, and sayings. Despite the fact that the typical custom of classifying the literary corpus follows strict rules, the limits between oral genres are
not so clear cut given that one piece can be utilised in more than one type of performance. Until relatively recently, alongside the division between traditional and non-traditional genres, researchers have also classified genres according to their textual characteristics: this classification has led them to establish separate denominations, such as the 'decorative genre', although the pieces compiled in this epigraph can have very different functions.

In this sense, the most logical classification is that proposed by Joxerra Garzia in his article “Basque Oral Ecology” (Garzia, 2007): rather than using textual criteria, Garzia suggests an analysis of the emission, transmission, reception, and social function of every piece (see Table 1). Unfortunately, all systems have their complexities, and Garzia himself recognises the possible shortcomings of his suggestion: the first lies in identifying which performances or works can be termed oral tradition and which cannot (that said, Garzia can glimpse a solution in the criticism by John Foley and Juan Mari Lekuona). The second is evident in the combination of diverse evolutions and situations in which different genres are found, given that whilst some genres are rife, many others are little known or celebrated within contemporary Basque society; although vestiges from genres lost long ago remain, these are not sufficient to affirm that the said genre is still alive.

In his article, Garzia highlights the eventuality of his proposal: he does not underrate the methods and systems employed up till now, rather, he uses these to stress that his proposal seeks to reflect oral literature from the past and the present. In contrast to this, many systems are focussed on methodologies which are specific to oral genres from the past. Without underestimating the use of traditional classifications, this anthology is based on Joxerra Garzia’s proposal; however, it does not serve to simply replicate his classification; instead, this has been adapted in the following manner:

Table 2. Genres of Basque Oral Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Subgenres</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bertsolaritza</td>
<td>Improvised Bertsolaritza</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written Bertsos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Couplets</td>
<td>Ancient Couplets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dance Couplets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processional Couplets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epic and Lyric Genre</td>
<td>Popular Lyricism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fables, Stories and Legends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epic Songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Theatre</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masquerade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burlesque Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactic Genre</td>
<td>Childrens’ Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lullabies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Genre</td>
<td>Jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sayings and Replies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual Genre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Genre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sermons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This anthology is based on the eight genres and their respective subgenres mentioned above. In comparison to Garzia’s classification, there are five predominant differences:

– Firstly, this anthology does not distinguish between improvised and written bertsos given that, although they do not share the same characteristics with regard to the cycle of orality, the
anthology’s aim is that of internalising Basque oral literature. Each subgenre shall be clearly defined with reference to singular characteristics at the start of each section, yet both shall be included under the remit of bertsolaritza with the aim that those interested in oral literature from the Basque Country realise that both improvised and written bertsos are two variants of one genre.

- In second place, the section dealing with applied genres is not as complex as that proposed by Garzia, whose aim is to highlight the importance of contemporary, more modern and global genres. Despite the fact that radio or televisual expressions can provide important subjects for study, this anthology does not aim to examine new research, but rather highlight the past and present of Basque oral literature.

- Thirdly, the genre concerned with couplets will be comprised of two subgenres: ancient couplets and dance couplets.

- In fourth place, the tobera (popular theatre on festive occasions or in mockery) or xaribari and the ‘asto-laster’ (donkey race) will only be included alongside other expressions of burlesque theatre.

- Finally, the proposal to divide up the ritual genre is not reflected in the use of subgenres; rather it shall be represented together in one section.
Bertsolaritza

‘The life of man passes by talking
we enjoy it more when we’re playing.
Singing rhyming verses following a metre,
that is the sport of bertsolaritza.’

Xabier Amuriza

Bertsolaritza is the art of measured, rhyming, sung discourses. The performance occurs when the bertsolari, the person adept in this art, improvises a sung bertso, a poetic speech, about a specific theme that has been suggested. The artist must follow strict rules concerning metre and rhyme and, aside from the case of written bertsos (the diffusion of which is traditionally carried out on paper), only has a few seconds between hearing the theme and starting to sing.

The bertsolari is, as such, a singer who improvises to the public. The author of written bertsos is not considered a bertsolari, although their works may be of greater technical quality; instead, they are denominated bertso-jartzaile, the writer of bertsos for the occasion. This distinction might suggest that the bertsolari is not defined by the activity, but rather the capability, unusual to a certain extent, for improvising in front of the public. A bertso is a complete stanza, even though the term bertso derives from the Latin for ‘verse’, meaning a single line. Finally, it should be noted that the term bertsolaritza is used to designate both the art of improvising bertsos and the social movement that has emerged around this, even though the activity itself can also be called bertsogintza.

Bertsolaritza is a non-traditional genre, belonging to the group of mixed transmission proposed by Juan Mari Lekuona. As such, bertsolaritza does not like to forget its authors; however, neither is it a genre which maintains all aspects in collective memory, as its history is full of names, dates, places, and bertsos.
As Koldo Mitxelena states (Mitxelena, 1988: 25), the tradition of *bertsolaris* is old, "at least from the period of improvising maidens that is mentioned by Garibay in the fifteenth century". However, the oldest mention of the genre is given by Joxe Azurmendi (Azurmendi, 1980): the old law of Biscay of 1452 makes two references to *bertsolaritza* thus indicating that the art of improvising was strongly rooted in the Basque Country during the 15th Century given that, if it were not, it would not have been partially prohibited.

The law names two types of improvisers, both of which are referenced in the feminine. They are ‘hiletariak’ (Basque) or ‘las plañideras’ (Spanish) [the mourners], recognised in many European cultures; and ‘profazadak’ or ‘las profazadas’ [the gossipers], women who used the satire genre. They would often sing on market days, saint days, and at all types of festivities, and, without a doubt, represent the oldest ancestor of modern *bertsolaritza*. Unfortunately, there are no records of *bertsos* from that period, nor any from the following three centuries; the most reliable (that is, recorded) search for the oldest conserved verse brings us to the 1930s, the decade to which the most memorable *bertsos* from the previous century arrived by way of oral transmission.

The majority of *bertsos* which have been conserved from the eighteenth century are written rather than improvised. The authors of these *bertsos* are renowned *bertsolaris* according to chronicles from the period. However, it is impossible to empirically prove this statement given that no signs of improvised creations remain; moreover, it is impossible to know what modifications conserved *bertsos* underwent during intergenerational transmission.

The first proven documented reference to an improvised *bertso* performance occurred in 1802 and was a competition between rivals. However, there is also data referring to a performance in 1799: two *bertsolaris* improvised against each other for a long time and after their performance a group of arbitrators deliberated over who the winner was. Although the improvised verses no longer remain, the performance is renowned to have been of excellent quality, thereby confirming its occurrence. Moreover, a further remarkable fact is the unusual quantity of spectators who attended the event in Tolosa town.
square: some 4,000 people. As regards written bertsos, Iztueta states that the late eighteenth-century written sheets of bertsos dealt with what amounted to big pelota matches, even if Patri Urkizu found many works from the same century about a variety of other topics (Garzia et al., 2001); from the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the subject matter diversified considerably. One of oldest examples of written bertsos could be the satirical verse from 1716 found in Lasarte by Jose Maria Satrustegi (Saturstegi, 1983). In any case, in order to not create confusion between the two subgenres of bertsolaritza, each one experienced its own evolution.

**Improvised Bertsolaritza**

Joxerra Garzia proposes telling the story of bertsolaritza through a clear distinction between written and improvised bertsos (Garzia, 2012). Based on the documented corpus, he identifies seven periods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Bertsolaris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Until 1900</td>
<td>Prehistory</td>
<td>Fernando Amezketarra, Etxahun, Xepnelar, Iparragirre, Bilintx, Otaño…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1936</td>
<td>From marginal bertsolaritza to the first championships: the movement experienced a period of inflection at the start of the twentieth century.</td>
<td>Txirrita, Kepa Enbeita…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-1945</td>
<td>Time of Silence: Francoist repression was ferociously against bertsolaritza.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1979</td>
<td>Resistance: during the final years of Francoism, bertsolaritza became a social movement of resistance.</td>
<td>Azpilaga, Lopategi, Uztapide, Basarri, J. Lizaso, Agirre, Lazkano, Lazkao Txiki, Mattin, Xalbador…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The sheets of written bertsos (bertso-paperak in Basque) were the most common method for the diffusion of bertsos after oral transmission. These were loose pieces of paper written for a special occasion about some contemporary event.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Performers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-1999</td>
<td>From singing to the town, to singing to the public: bersolaritza was resuscitated and due to social change, the homogeneous audience became heterogeneous.</td>
<td>Amuriza, Egaña, Sarasua, Peñagarikano, Murua, Mendizabal, Sebastian Lizaso...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 onwards</td>
<td>Bersolaritza and diversity: contemporary performances bring together a diverse audience and improvisers.</td>
<td>Maialen Lujanbio, Unai Iturriaga, Igor Elortza, Jon Maia, Amets Arzallus...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Prehistory**: this period includes all representations of bersolaritza until the year 1900. The bersolaritza of this period was all written; despite the fact that bersolaris did improvise, it is not possible to prove this.

2) **From marginal bersolaritza to the first championships**: the period from 1900 to 1936 included the changes that bersolaritza endured at the start of the twentieth century. Two principal factors caused the renaissance of this art form: firstly, Manuel Lekuona established the foundations for the study of bersolaritza and, secondly, some cultural associations and the Basque national movement decided to promote the cultural values of a people immersed in migration from the rural to the urban.

3) **Time of silence**: the early years of Francoism were harsh on bersolaritza. As such, until 1945, the movement practically disappeared.

4) **Survival**: from 1945 to 1960, bersolaritza gradually recovered in the Southern Basque Country and gained strength in the North. Although few performances were organised, its survival constituted a remarkable effort. In the North, however, the exiled doctor, Teodoro Hernandorena led a powerful cultural movement that reactivated the oral traditions of the region.

5) **Resistance**: the end of Francoist protectionism (a policy to restrain trade and international relations between Spain and other states) and reinforced resistance against the dictatorship (1960-1979). As bersolaritza had survived the hardest period, bersolaris became the voice of the oppressed. Censorship prohibited many performances and fined multiple bersolaris; Biscay bersolari Jon Lopategi was imprisoned.
6) **From singing to the town, to singing to the public:** the last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the most significant resurgence in *bertsolaritza*. After this moment, the audience, until then homogenous, diversified considerably. *Bertsolari* Xabier Amuriza enforced the sophistication of the creative process through both performances and methods and books published to learn the art-form.

7) **Multifaceted bertsolaritza:** new generations have performed an endless amount of innovative suggestions to the heterogeneous public at the start of the twenty-first century. Traditional *bertsolaritza* enjoys good health amongst new contributions.

**AZPEITIA, 1799.**

My friends set out
filled with enthusiasm
and found me
yesterday at midnight;
Challenging someone
so spitefully
isn't a good idea
in your home town;
I wanted to defend myself
by the light of day
using a pure Basque
but nobody accepted.

*Fernando Amezketarra.*

---

5. Currently, *bertsos* are published specifying the melody employed by the improviser; however, this is a relatively new practice and as such some of the works within this anthology do not reference the melody given that most anthologies to date have not included this musical information. In the case of not mentioning any specific source, the *bertsos* have been taken from The Xenpelar Documentation Centre Data Base on *Bertsolaritza*: bdb.bertsozale.com.
**Tolosa, 1802.**

**Fernando:**

If this job
brings no silver,
we cannot survive
on gifts alone.

Even if, from time to time
they buy us wine,
we gather few sacks
of grain for the mill;
And whilst we sing
of those who do not lack,
I carry little gold
on my back,
so we'll have to find
another way.

**Zabala:**

Our income
is on display,
singing verses
does not pay,
nor does it bring
in the grain;
Those with everything,
lucky them;
Noble singer,
I’m a poor man,
I have little more
than that at home,
but with what I have
I’ll continue on.

**Fernando:**

One question can
be posed,
you say that
singing won’t us feed;
Even when we
earn a high price
our sacks are often
empty inside;
And now this profession
will not pay
me through my days,
well, who has it all?
But remember do
all this, my torture.

Zabala:

If I’m to live
a good life
I have to sleep,
through the night;
and when I wake
I start it all again.
The search for sustenance
fills my conscience;
A bite to eat,
and a flask of wine,
to quell the thirst
and keep the body fine.
This is how
I must get by.

Fernando:

If you want to live
a long retirement
don’t go out at night
to party and drink;
old age brings us
greater humility,
oh, if only a good
master would have me.
A heavy load lifted
food and drink gifted
my body transformed
and work soon shifted.
Oh, we'd get by so well,
if we were thus assisted.

Zabala:

Fernando, I have an idea,
a plan to help us,
so listen clear,
and believe in this:
Blessed by god,
we have this talent,
two peas together,
in one pod;
the pair of us singing,
let us share our habit
with others to feed us
and fill our pockets;
so we can live well
and be ourselves.

Fernando Amezketarra and Juan Ignazio Zabala.

WHILST I’M HERE DOING WHAT I DO BEST

Pello Errota:

Whilst I’m here doing what I do best,
I can see Txirrita coming,
and who wouldn’t be surprised
to see this man?
Without a doubt
he’s back from seeing his girl.
How elegant he looks
wearing two shirts.
**Txirrita:**

Oh what shame I feel  
walking through here!  
We will offer any compliment  
for hopes of a free drink.  
I’m wearing two shirts  
because I forgot to take one off…  
Pello, how could he wear two  
if he doesn’t own more than one?

*Pello Errota and Joxe Manuel Lujanbio “Txirrita”.*

**THEY ARE SHOUTING “LONG LIVE SPAIN”**

They are shouting “long live Spain”  
I shout the same –  
I feel no hate  
towards Spain.  
We Catholics should know  
what the Lord above says,  
leave that which is strange in peace  
and let everyone look after their own.  
I say again “long live Spain”  
for the Spaniards,  
but I also say “*Gora Euskadi*”⁶,  
it’s ours and for us too.

One morning, a teacher  
told his students  
that Spain was great  
with strength and vigour.  
That once she conquered  
great America by force  
and stuck the Spanish flag  
in American ground.

---

America was nothing
until that flag was planted
and from that moment
it belonged to the Spaniards.
After hearing this,
the children were overjoyed.
A large group
gathered that afternoon.
They tied a white cloth
to the end of a stick
and placed it in the ground
in the teacher’s garden,
and all the pears they found
they gobbled straight up.
When the teacher saw them
he shouted ‘hey thieves, what are you doing
taking things that aren’t your own?’
And the children, altogether
chorused in reply,
‘But sir, have you forgotten
what you told us this morning?
We’ve placed our flag
in this here garden
and if that makes us thieves
then the Spanish
you mentioned earlier
were also thieves.’

*Kepa Enbeita “Urretxindorra”*

Eibar, 1920.

**Basques in Paris, Worthy People**

Basques in Paris, worthy people
gathered here today;
Brothers and sisters,
come all this way.
How many are in the Americas
far from home
today we’re together with them
in body and soul,
and thanks be to God,
we’re gathered here today.
let us swear to choose
another place like this
and now let the joy
and laughter start
for today here we are
Bertsolaris, verse, and song,
let us share
this fruit of ours across the globe.

The fishermen row and row
through the endless sea,
there the shepherd on the moor
singing and whistling.
The farmers in the field
work their lands.
Now, Sunday, we Basques
are here together
and our land
is filled with pleasant song.
The sun fills the sky
from dawn until dusk.
My heart fills with joy
at this beauty surrounding me!
Young and old, great and small,
brought together,
and here we are today
celebrating arm in arm.
Brothers and sisters, there is no fear
whilst together we are here.

Iñaki Eizmendi “Basarri”.

PHONECALL TO SPACE

Mattin is an astronaut, sent to the moon by the Russians; Xalbador is a friend who has called him.

Mattin:
We must sing a verse or two
I’ll go ahead and go first,
they sent me from Russia to the moon,
don’t you fancy coming too?

Xalbador:
We spoke by phone last night,
with a great space between us.
Before arriving, think for a second,
Mattin, there’s no wine on the moon.

Mattin:
I left Russia for the moon,
nobody thought I’d make it.
They were searching,
if you’d joined, you’d be here too.

Xalbador:
Reaching the moon is no mean feat,
Mattin spent hours and hours getting there.
But now, since landing
I’ve scarcely heard from him.

Mattin:
Listen to the news, people of the world:
The moon has nose and eyes.
But half the world should know
that the moon is missing your ears.

Xalbador:
They would have sent me too
but they chose our Mattin:
At least there was a lighter person in Ahetze, otherwise, the moon would have fallen.

Mattin:
I wanted to go to the moon, to flee the world, they say there’s life up there too, here, they don’t want to see us anymore; next time, we’ll go together.

_Fernando Aire “Xalbador” and Mattin Treku._
_Urruña, 13-02-1966._

**OUR TEACHER TOLD US**

*Small spillages. Also something larger. Tears.*

Our teacher told us the topic beforehand. I’m not going to talk unless it’s about that. I confess, brothers and sisters, from the bottom of my heart, that I live in the Basque Country between tears.

I carried a heavy load that has never lightened. Like me, who else has felt such pain? Sixty-years-old, with ever-greying hair. I have one regret: That foreigners govern us.

Victorious and vanquished, we often play the game. But our treaty is a hopeless cause. That which is ours
is sent to Madrid.
How can a Basque
not let spill tears?!

*Manuel Olaizola “Uztapide”.*
*Usurbil, 03-07-1971.*

ST PETER AND ST ISIDORE

*Jon Enbeita, Saint Peter, is god of thunder and Ireneo Ajuria, Saint Isidore, protector of farmers.*

**Enbeita:**
Nowadays one doesn’t know whom to worship,
after so long, the heavens hold too many gods;
If you wish for good weather,
then come in peace and remember, Saint Peter guards heaven’s keys.

**Ajuria:**
Guard of thunder and holder of the keys of heaven
but still, like me you must do what you can.
I hold the sun, you the rain, those are our conditions, and together we’ll measure the agriculture of this earth.

**Enbeita:**
I start to negotiate and take charge,
don’t come here with your fury and demands;
you were lazy with the earth,  
angels’ suffering;  
with the likes of you  
I won’t make a deal.

Ajuria:

Lately I hear  
many requests like that,  
and it all happens  
because you’re so stubborn  
from here on in  
you’re on your own  
give me your keys  
of you I want none.

Enbeita:

At home you pray  
day and night  
than the angels  
toiled the land.  
And men like you  
became the dons of heaven  
the fault’s not yours  
but of he who sired you.

Ajuria:

I know very well  
your conduct in the skies  
what you don’t know  
is how to leave the door behind.  
I’m surrounded  
by angels and farmers,  
all you know is how  
to open and close the door.

*Jon Enbeita and Ireneo Ajuria.*  
24-07-1988, Morga.
THE RICH ORPHAN’S NEW BROTHER

Aitor [Mendiluze], you’re an orphan. This has never been a problem for you; in fact, now, you’re rich, very, very rich. Today, your servant, Sebastian, has shown this man to your office: he, Egaña, says he’s your twin brother.

Air: Nahiz ta hiltzea derrigorra den

Egaña:
I can see quite clearly the reason for this visit.
Until now I was lonely but what’s this vision!?
Finally, my greatest wish has been granted me,
hello, dear brother, an embrace,
dear me, I’m overcome with emotion.

Mendiluze:
What joy! What emotion!
I’m stunned beyond belief.
Is it possible, perhaps you’d like me to give you something?
Dear brother, you don’t know how joyfully happy I am to have met fourteen brothers this very week.

Egaña:
What little trust you show with such suspicion and I wasn’t to mention that your hair is missing, but look in the mirror now and observe your reflection, brother fifteen is the spitting image, don’t you reckon?
Mendiluze:
The spitting image?
What is this nonsense?
We’re only similar
in that we’re balding.
And what does it matter,
that we’ve both lost our hair?
After all, that’s not genes,
it’s only aging.

Egaña:
Don’t sing such things,
my dear brother,
it’s clear that we
share a mother.
You can’t deny it,
we’re two peas in a pod,
although if you’d like
you’re left and I’m right.

Mendiluze:
Alright, I’ll admit it,
we’re a little similar,
but, like I said before,
you’re not my only brother.
And anyway, it must be said,
you’ve lost your head,
for left and right
aren’t that alike.

Egaña:
Look, it’s clear to me,
such brothers are we,
but I won’t annoy you more,
I’ll go and leave by that door.
Just write me a little cheque
and I’ll head off straight away
you don’t even need to add the amount
the signature alone is just OK!

**Mendiluze:**

You’re really not very original
I’ve heard the same again and again,
but us people must help
those who could be friends.
How can I refuse to give
you the blank cheque.
I’ll leave the decimal point on the right
and you put the numbers you think best.

**Egaña:**

It really does seem like
this guy is mean as sin.
If you won’t write a cheque
at least offer your coat and ring.
At my lacking originality,
you’ve starting frowning.
But how can I be unique?
when I tell you, I’m your twin!

**Mendiluze:**

How could we be twins
when you’re older than me?
I think it’s best you leave -
You’re the worst impression I’ve received.
Outside there’s another twenty,
yes, the hall is full a plenty.
so Sebastian, go and get me,
brother number sixteen.

_Aitor Mendiluze and Andoni Egaña._

17-10-2008, Durango.
Bertsolari championships

Improvised bertsolaritza during championships is different to that which occurs habitually: it is a judged, evaluated performance mediated by the highest parameters. Its origin lies in challenges, rivalries, and competition. Bertsolaris confess that they find working in pairs or groups more enjoyable than individual improvisation. The bertsolari must respond to the companion in order to demonstrate who has the upper hand in the combat.

Until the second decade of the twentieth century, bertsolaritza was no more than a spectacle in taverns, bars, and cider houses. As the good name of bertsolaris was lost to all type of barrels, certain Basque-philes decided that it was important to turn that situation around. To be more specific, in 1930, with the intention of reviving the tradition of bertsoliaricaritas competitions, the Euskaltzaleak association organised a contest in honour of Toribio Altzaga. The bertsolaris Txirrita, Lujanbio, Telaetxipi, Zabaleta, Agirre, and Bitoria participated in that first event and the judges unanimously declared Bitoria the champion. Nevertheless, from 1930 until the emergence of the festival of the Day of the Bertsolari, no further contests were organised. As the production of bertsos during a championship is unique, here are eleven examples to give an idea of the development of bertsolari championships.

1935: First Day of the Bertsolari, Basarri First Champion

The first Day of the Bertsolari was held in 1935 in Donostia-San Sebastián on 20th January, the day of Saint Sebastian. During this period, the word ‘champion’ was completely unknown within the world of bertsolaritza, yet this was the first event of a series which, after the war, would be known as the ‘Great Championship of Bertsolaris in the Basque Country’ (Euskal Herriko Bertsolari Txapelketa Nagusia in Basque). The associations ‘Euskaltzaleak’ and ‘Euzko Gaztedia’ from Donostia-San Sebastián organised the event. According to the contemporaneous account in the magazine Argia, “never had there existed a Basque festival of such quality in Donostia-San Sebastián” (Etxezarretia, 1993). Twenty bertsolaris started singing at
ten thirty in the morning in the Poxpoliñ theatre in the Gipuzkoan capital. The judges, who included Jose Ariztimuño Aitzol and Manuel Lekuona, sat in the centre of the stage, with the bertsolaris at either side. At the end of the event, Basarri, a young 21-year-old bertsolarí from Zarautz, was proclaimed champion; and veteran bertsolarí Txirrita did not even figure in the top four champions.

Following the tradition of floral games (a series of historically related poetry contests with floral prizes), the judging panel explained the competition challenges in bertsos: one verse without a chosen theme, another with predetermined theme and metre, a third with a given opening couplet, and a final verse in pairs. The following verse was sung by Joseba Zubimendi to start the second exercise.

Now you’re going to start
the second exercise;
for this you must use
this very melody.
And you all must sing on
the following theme:
‘the Basque language is being lost
and if Euskara ceases
our Basque sons and daughters
will forever disappear’.

Joseba Zubimendi.

Bertsolariek desafioak, guduak eta txapelketak, Auspoa, 1993.

1936: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The success of the first Day of the Bertsolarí was such that the organising associations immediately began plans for the second event. In that second event there were three eliminatory rounds in which the best bertsolaris from Gipuzkoa, Navarre, and the Northern Basque Country did battle. The final was celebrated in Donostia-San Sebastián, in the Victoria Eugenia theatre, where the first performance took place at eleven in the morning. The bertsolaris carried out the same exercises as the year before and, after finishing the competition, Txirrita won
the 150 peseta prize for the winner. Uztapide was runner up, Zepai was third, fourth came Dargaitz, and Iriarte was fifth.

Basarri was the one who chose the themes. For the second exercise, he asked the bertsoalari to improvise about ‘their hatred for war’. Txirrita composed the following verse. Moreover, he did not lie: he died shortly after the Spanish Civil War started.

How many times in my life have I sat in church praying? and now I’m glad to see peace on earth abounds. There cannot be a man more cowardly than I, who lived his life in solitude so as not to send sons to die.

Jose Manuel Lujanbio “Txirrita”.


1960: Basarri returns, Uztapide reigns

After the two Days of the Bertsolari celebrated during the Second Spanish Republic, in the midst of the tragic post-war years, bertsoalari continued performing in various towns as much as was possible. Finally, the Basque Language Academy took over organising the championships. Moreover, in the 1960s, not only was the Grand Bertsolari Championship organised, but also championships in Biscay, Navarre, and Gipuzkoa.

That year, they established a new rule which is still observed today, albeit with some variations: the last winner could only participate in the final stage of the competition in a battle against the best bertsoalari of the other candidates. There were opinions in favour and against. Finally, Basarri won the championship in 1960, having sung thirteen bertso. The second place went to Uztapide, who had to sing forty.

Bertsolaritza has always reflected contemporary society. On some occasions, however, bertsoalari have not been the best exponents of current affairs. This can be demonstrated by Narbarte’s response to
Alfontso Irigoien’s opening verses, as he does not add any information to prove his knowledge.

Fabiola is the new Queen of Belgium.
I see that Alfonso speaks the truth, the same, being otherwise, he wouldn’t make the claim, and that in itself must mean something.

Andres Narbarte.

Bertsolariek desañoak, guduak eta txapelketak, Auspoa, 1993.

1962: Uztapide’s harvest

The Basque public was hungry for bertsos so the Basque Language Academy took great pains to organise further competitions: those in the provinces were annual, and the grand championship took place every two years. The championship of 1962 started in June and finished with the grand final on 30th December in the Astoria theatre in Donostia-San Sebastián. Eight bertsolaris were set to challenge Basarri and Uztapide, the previous finalists. They included Xalbador and Lazkao Txiki, renowned bertsolaris of this period. The presenter proposed the theme of ‘mother’ and Uztapide sung the following three bertsos.

What a beautiful theme has been given to me; now I must sing some verses three into which, I’ll put my everything. One word says it all in two syllables: mother.

My mother nurtured me at her breast
and from there I gained
great strength
to sing bertsos
making my heart beat
dawn disappears
twilight arrives
and old Uztapide
is shrinking by the day.

I remember her well
my mother,
what a shame
she’s not here now;
God took her
up to heaven
I know that soon
you’ll be saddened
but I too will be
up there one day.

Manuel Olaizola “Uztapide”.
Bertsolariek desafioak, guduak eta txapelketak, Auspoa, 1993.

1967: “If Xalbador was understood in Gipuzkoa…”

Uztapide also won the 1965 championship. According to contemporaneous accounts, the performance was exactly as expected. However, in order to understand what happened in the 1967 championship, it should be noted that bertsolari Lazkao Txiki sung very well in the previous edition in 1965, and gained the applause and support of many fans, even if he did not win; however, he was a clear favourite to win the next competition.

As previewed, Lazkao Txiki also participated in the 1967 final; he would have been as eager as Xalbador to participate in the final stage of the day. However, the adjudicators chose the shepherd from Urepele, Xalbador, to duel with the reigning champion. The audience heckled for five and a half minutes when the judges announced the
decision because they would have preferred to see Lazkao Txiki in the final. Fernando Aire, Xalbador, cried whilst chaos reigned. Finally, the bertsolari from the Northern Basque Country composed the following verse and the racket turned to applause.

That event, amongst other reasons, provided sufficient reason to put a stop to the wave of championships and they disappeared until 1980. However, there was one competition organised in 1968 in which Basarri (who withdrew from competitions in 1960) participated.

Brothers and friends, please don’t think I’m overjoyed, I’d be happiest observing from one side. If you’re malcontent the fault’s not mine; you did catcall, but I still love you all.

Fernando Aire “Xalbador”.

Bertsolariek desafíoak, guduak eta txapelketak, Auspoa, 1993.

1980: AMURIZA, CRAFTSMAN WITH WORDS

After a gap of twelve years, the Basque Language Academy decided to start organising championships again, but not in the same way. Sixteen bertsolaris would be selected from the start, without the large knock-out round. The changes affected the classification, championship structure, and the creative dynamics of the bertsolaris. A new typology of bertsos was introduced. It was then that the majority of bertsolari schools that still exist today were established, as well as the first methods for the study of bertsolaritza.

After a long pause, the bertsolaris from Biscay eagerly attended the championship; Xabier Amuriza won and Jon Enbeita came second, both from Biscay. The press used titles such as “Amurizaren semaforo gorriak kable guztiak erre zituen” [Amuriza’s red light burned all the cables] and “Amurizarena beste kupeleko sagardoa da” [Amuriza’s is cider from another barrel] to report the events of the day (Aulestia, 1995). Amuriza sung these three verses when he was asked to improvise about the theme ‘father’.
Air: Aita izena kanta beharrak

My heart saddened, at having to sing of ‘father’; I didn’t expect to have such an opportunity; A prisoner in Zamora, it nearly drove me mad always going there, and then he died. I’d like nothing more than to see him here.

My father was both joyous and a little serious and he taught me of life through the art of bertsos; Oh, dear father, my days pass slowly by but as I learned from you my love to improvise I’ll make a great tree of the fruit you gave me.

This theme suddenly appearing seems like a dream; in this village we’ve all seen thunder, rain, and storms a plenty; you, father, were so good to me not strict, but tender; now St Sebastian reflects the Basque nation today, the applause I get, I send to you, away.

Xabier Amuriza.

1986: Sebastian Lizaso, Champion of Mockery

Due to disagreements over the organisation of championships, the relationship between bertsolaris and the Basque Language Academy deteriorated and both sides distanced themselves from one another. Consequently, the bertsolaris, with the help of their fans, decided to organise their own championship in 1986. This would lead to the establishment of the Association of Friends of Bertsolaritza in the Basque Country.

Four years earlier, the 1982 Championship of the Basque Country was the most Biscayan yet: Amuriza won, Jon Lopategi came second, and Jon Enbeita third, all from Biscay. Lopategi was the clear favourite to win, but in 1986, Sebastian, the son of bertsolari Joxe Lizaso, overtook him. Even so, the most memorable performance from that final was carried out by the favourite from Biscay on the following theme: ‘You’ve thrown your old clothes away; now you see a man taking them from the rubbish’.

Air: Gaztalondo handian

I didn’t know what to do
with those old clothes,
I’ve always tried to
Dress fashionably a la mode,
maybe, then, I threw
them away, almost new,
the answer I have
is clear to me.
It’s saddening
that I might see
the game
of this poor old man –
yes, there’s too
much misery.

I see you’re sad
in your old age,
life has treated you bad,
to tell the truth.

What could I
give to you?

I didn’t know
of the likes of you,
here, take it all
and have it free,
I need nothing in return.

my heart
explodes,
and I still have
more clothes.

We go out drinking
day and night
you, instead,
must sit and fight.
You’ve knocked
on my door
and my heart
jumped to the floor.

Being such,
I think to myself
if there’s any justice
I can’t leave you like this.
So here, go, clothe yourself
with the best of my bedroom shelf.

Jon Lopategi.

Bertsolariek desafiak, guduak eta txapelketak, Auspoa, 1993.

1991: Jon Sarasua’s Trap

Although the Gipuzkoa championship is not the Grand Championship
of Bertsolaris in the Basque Country, the events of the competition’s
final that took place on 22nd December 1991 are worth mention.

That year Anjel Mari Peñagarikano won the championship and
the hearts of the audience. The runners up were Egaña, Euzkitze, and
Sarasua, respectively. The latter secured his place with the first real controversy in *bertsolaritza* championships, given that what happened to Xalbador was in effect unavoidable. The *bertsolaris* sung fantastically until the final exercise. Their chosen theme was the following: ‘At dusk, having been woken with a kiss from your mother, you’ve gone for a night out, promising to be home by 2am. It’s currently 6am. You’ve just remembered what you promised your mother. In this situation, there and then, you’re to sing three verses.’

Sarasua wanted to react to the championship’s desire for competition and spectacle. After two stanzas with seven couplets fabulously improvised, his final verse consisted of a mere joke with no technical merit, which is reproduced below. It was, seemingly, a gesture against the participants’ thirst for competition.

*Air: Aranora joan ziran I*

I’ve made the greatest effort
to impress;
well this is a championship,
    I’ve done my best.
You would rather,
    I’d stayed at home
    but here I am
to go it alone.

*Jon Sarasua*

**2001: Egaña and Lujanbio**

*Bertsolaritza* enjoyed a prolific era between the 1993 and 2001 championships. There are many examples which would fit within this anthology; however, to demonstrate the result of the transformation that took place during those eight years, the following two excellent performances suffice.

The first reflects the start of a discursive change in *bertsolaritza*: the art from the twentieth century has been transformed from analysis to description, and the following composition can be considered a symbol of the start of this change. Maialen Lujanbio had to sing
about this theme: ‘A friend of yours died in the Himalayas last week. Today you received a postcard from him/her.’

Air: Baserrian jaio nintzan

Dear Maialen, how are you?
    With great fervour
    I’m thinking of you throughout my mountain adventure.
    We’re very happy here at home with nature,
    y’know, the same as always, on the edge of danger.
    The summit of Makalu fills our sights
    the day after tomorrow we’ll reach its heights.
Your always, I’ll send you this with a warm embrace.
    how loving the kiss,
    and now, how cold my face.

    I want to cry
    but I should not
    It’s better not to otherwise the tears will mar this card blurring the words and destroying the rest.
    I want to sob
    but I’ll hold it in,
    I can see him leaving base camp…
    all his hopes and dreams

7. Translator’s note: gender here is unspecified and should be read thus, however, in accordance with that stipulated in the introductory note, the translation has been carried out using the masculine.
now lost.
He wanted to leave
his flag at 30,000 feet,
but instead,
the stench of death was left.

The radio warned
the chance of avalanche
but set on your dreams,
you chose to advance.
You were and are
bloody-minded
you’ve always kept on
so one-sided.
The illusion of life
and death’s paradise
took you away,
without goodbyes.
I want to send you
some final lines
and who knows?
Perhaps you’ll get them
on the other side.

Maialen Lujanbio

The second example from the same year is by Andoni Egaña: in the first lines of his stanzas the bertsolari from Zarautz suggested in an abstract manner what would happen in the second half of the verse – this provided a reference, to a certain extent, to the structure of ancient couplets from Basque oral literature. He was given the theme ‘you are a 45-year-old professor who has fallen in love with an 18-year-old student. Your thoughts and your feelings don’t add up.’

Air: Munduko ilunabarra

Set my feelings alight,
fill the sky with stars,
face of all my sight,
the bells of life and death chime.
When I first met this student,
I didn’t want to see her,
she stood in front of me
and I felt my own fear.
I’m a married man
and until now, quite happily,
but now it’s all crashed down
and my choice I cannot see.
Understand? I don’t understand,
but it’s happening to me.

Life’s a game of roulette
going back and forth.
I’ll have to see what I get
I can’t influence it’s course.
On the one hand, there’s my wife
dear to me, I love her so,
on the other, there’s this girl
who makes my heart stop and start.
To tell the truth, I’m in love,
it’s much more than a fling,
what am I to do though?
Shall I just flip for heads or tails?
After all, life’s just chance,
when all else fails.

My heart and my head,
can never agree
one wants one, the other not,
the choice is up to me.
‘It’s heads or tails,’ I said,
but it’s all just destiny.
I don’t know whether to choose
the path ahead with my wife
or to opt for the girl
with adventure inside, for my life.
I've gone crazy wondering,
    and now it's time for bed;
I'll leave the choice to my pillow
    and most of all to my head.

Andoni Egaña.


2009: A FEMALE CHAMPION

The 2009 Grand Championship of Bertsolaris had an enormous influence on the development of this art form: specifically, for the first time a woman won the championship. The bertso sung by Maialen Lujanbio after she was named champion is an excellent synthesis of her triumph and of contemporary bertsolaritza.

AIR: Eguzkiak urtzen du han goian A

I remember the grandmothers of yesterday
    carrying the laundry on their heads,
I remember the grandmothers of yesterday
    and the mothers and daughters of today.
    
Congratulations Joxe⁸ and all of you,
    I admire you deeply
    and I'll give you all
    a piece of the winner's txapela.
    
Our journey is not easy
    amidst so many laws and bureaucracy
    by night we'll return
    to all four corners of the Basque Country
    with our strength reinvigorated
    and courage in our hearts
    let us continue raising this great nation
    with Basque in our hearts and minds for its creation.

Maialen Lujanbio

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8. Joxe Agirre (1929-2012) awarded the txapela [beret] to the winner as he was the oldest bertsolari at the time.
**Written Bertsos**

At first glance, improvised and written *bertsos* appear the same on paper. However, after detailed analysis, it is soon clear that one group provides a much more elaborate result. To tell the truth, the creative process involved in written and improvised bertsos is very similar – which is to say that the author uses the same technique in both cases, but the absence of urgency established by the setting provides the writer with more than enough time to improve and perfect his/her stanzas. Once composed, the *bertsolaris* of yesteryear used the help of a person versed in letters to preserve the artist’s thoughts on paper; nowadays, however, *bertsolaris* do not require any help for this.

According to historian Juan Ignacio Iztueta, during the late eighteenth century the principle function of the sheets of written *bertsos* dealt with what amounted to large *pelota* matches, even if Patri Urkizu uncovered many works from the same century on a variety of other topics (Garzia et al, 2001). With the coming of the nineteenth century, however, the subject matter of *bertsos* diversified considerably: historical events, social issues of towns and areas, natural disasters, religion, love, war, jokes, gossip, and so on. Indeed, a history and chronicle of the Basque Country from this period can be found within written *bertsos*. Juan Mari Lekuona offers a classification of the historical periods of both written and improvised *bertsos*; the former is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>Bertsolaris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800-1830</td>
<td>Pre-romanticism</td>
<td>Fernando Amezketarra, Zabala, Txabalategi, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-1876</td>
<td>Romanticism</td>
<td>Etxahun, Otxalde, Xenpelar, Bilintx, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-1935</td>
<td>Pre-renaissance</td>
<td>Pello Errota, Udarregi, Kepa Enbeita, Txirrita, and so on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Until improvised *bertso* championships began, written *bertsos* enjoyed great success. There even existed wandering sellers of written *bertsos* whose role was that of commercialising the work of *bertsolaris*. They gathered the written texts and wandered from fair to fair,
festival to festival. Many had some form of disability, such as Prudenzio Abarrategi Besamotza, the one-armed man from Urduliz, who was a famous bertso seller during Txirrita’s time.

Unfortunately, that period ended some time ago, and nowadays, written bertso have lost the function and the force they used to have. The magazine Argia, amongst other publications, has begun offering complete sections of written bertso. However, such published works enjoy little recognition nowadays, aside from those incorporated within the album of some singer.

**NEW VERSES ABOUT URRUÑA’S PELOTA GAMES**

1

In the year 1851
in Urruña, did happen,
this pelota match when
the ball flew so furiously;
the Gascoigne behind, Autziartze in front,
to beat the Spaniards easily.

2

Those from Sara chose their friends;
known sportsmen all, throughout the land,
and now they face the chance to win;
the prize given by Abbadie
is our reason and motive,
and our French-Basque honour, we will defend.

3

Don’t misjudge those from the province,
they play pelota better than any,
if you don’t believe it, ask in the square,
we all wish for players like that,
people admire their strong passes,
but the Gascon annoys them.

4

The Gascon behind, Autziartze in front,
the people here enjoyed the game so much,
his team mates played so well,
without reproaching him anything,
when the game finished the four smiled,
we are at your service whenever you wish to play.

5
Goodbye Navarrese and those from the provinces
with the French there is no fun in pelota,
of the three, the Gascon rules this kingdom,
we’ve not seen the like before,
in their last game, believe it,
he won barely trying.

6
They lost and left in vain,
leaving the French resting,
youngsters came, eagerly;
he didn’t believe they had equals in all the world,
the Gascon confused them in the second step,
well the hare slept where they weren’t expecting him.

Joanes Oxalde.
1951, Urruña. (Adapted)
Anton Abbadiaren koplarien guduak (1851-1897)

ADVANTAGES OF THE BAD WOMAN

Air: Andre txarraren bentajak

1
We are in the year
eighteen-sixty-four
my family’s story
is what follows;
I liked a beautiful woman
and did bring her to my home,
she has found a new pathway
from bedroom to street.
II
Father permitted matrimony
mother wanted my acceptance,
so I also decided to
put myself in her hands;
such a beautiful woman,
humble and sweet.
You can’t tell if the pan is good
until it’s on the heat.

III
She gets up for 10 o’clock
opens up the wardrobe,
gets her clothes, and by 11
she’s dressed beautifully;
she has a cup of wine
to keep her body healthy
she cares for herself
better than for her man.

IV
Not long ago, I’ll say when,
at dusk, one Sunday,
my woman was dancing,
those who saw did laugh;
she doesn’t fancy working but
she dances the fandango quickly,
if I had seen her,
I would have broken her back.

V
She tripped at the top of the stairs
and fell from top to bottom,
at first I thought it was
some old pot or pan;
she had one foot in Vitoria
and the other in London,
today she’d still be there
if nobody had found her.

VI
I grabbed her there
I could not lift her up;
they said, ‘she’s drunk,
don’t pay her any attention’,
she was drunk as anything,
but she didn’t break a bone…
she said ‘I’m weary,
sweet wine, is there none?’

VII
After a day spent out
she returned by night,
forehead frowning, eyes squinting
she entered the kitchen;
the poor children were crying
asking for their supper,
maize in the mill, bread missing,
and food in the street.

VII
Best friend to wine
and angry with her husband,
today I would bet
on my woman too,
to empty a whole bottle,
without a glass;
that is enough,
the rest has no merit.

*Frantsizko Petrirena “Xenpelar”.*
1864.

*Xenpelar bertsolaria, Auspoa, 1969.*
TO THE NORTHERN TRAIN

Air: Norteko trenbideari

I
In the year 1867,
I saw the first train on Spanish soil,
its route passed my sight, sometimes going underground;
since then, they've put down new tracks.

II
Who made the Northern Train like that?
With great knowledge and good understanding;
no man can find a better horse:
by morning it leaves Irun and arrives in Madrid by dusk.

III
Let us help one another mutually without anger,
although it goes with great speed, it stops suddenly;
if someone needs to come to Donostia from Madrid,
they have the incredible advance in the north.

IV
This line has many tunnels, bridges, and rivers,
with two tracks it’s newer than ever,
with electric energy and many guards;
day and night, without stopping, always transporting something.

V
He goes tranquilly to the train, although we all age,
it has fabulous access, you can enter the coaches easily;
passing ten leagues, you’ll arrive home in an hour,
the third is as magnificent as the second.

VI
Magnificent seats and another very good thing:
if it’s needed, every coach has a bathroom;
the other day I saw an old lady of 80,
a French Basque with white hair, the lady of Bentaberri.

VII
They don’t need coal cellars or stokers;
the only thing they need is to be attentive and keep hold of the key;
opening it upon arrival and closing it when leaving,
he wanders day and night whistling ceaselessly.

VIII
He was a clever man, the maestro who created electricity,
he turned down the flame;
now it stops the force of water in many places,
before it was cheap, but now it’s worth a lot.

IX
Saying that, boiling water cries:
“is it important that it’s always boiling in the pan?
I have no food but fire, smoke, and embers;
if you study me well, the cold is also strong”.

X
The master of electricity stood there staring
with open arms, taking that as a good argument:
“I know your days and nights are painful,
if what you say is true, the flames will go out”.

XI
My knowledge of the world has been superficial,
I ask God to please illuminate me;
before I didn’t know electricity existed,
now cold water moves the train whilst before boiling water did it.

Jose Manuel Lujanbio “Txirrita”.
1931. (Adapted)
Txirritaren bertsoak, Auspoa, 1971.
SINGING EVEN IN THE GRAVE

Air: Dozena bat bertso berri

I
I was sad, very sad,
I wanted to die
and thought: will it be possible
to improve my mood?
Not raise it, nor endure it,
empty to my very soul,
cursed, I started to sing,
what else to do?

II
I started singing,
it was not in vain,
without realising
my gaze improved.
The smile began stumbling
filled with teeth
who said singing
wasn’t worthy?

III
Since then I’ve thought
that children don’t come from Paris
that everyone is owner
of himself.
Pains flood me,
I have no one to share it with,
but starting to sing,
they all disappear.

IV
They took bread from me,
and ate my story,
they made me carve out
my very own grave.
I was about to sing
of man's agony
if the very song had not lifted
my fallen spirits.

[...]

vi
The bird is born singing,
the mountain asks it,
the cage too
seems like a place to sing.
Thanks to song
pains are lessened
and is not our cage
a place for singing?

[...]

ix
I have many afflictions
but soon I’ll be cured
without wanting, and I continue
thanks to song.
I’ll sing something,
I don’t mind how and what,
whilst I sing
nothing bothers me.

xi
What pain, death!
Who hasn’t thought about it once in a while?
But, please, don’t bring
me some sad flowers.
Before burying me,
leave the coffin open
so that I can sing my last bertso
to your crying.

Xabier Amuriza.
1984. (Adapted)

IN BERTSOS, YES, I CAN

Air: Nire gorputza dardarka daukat

I
I don’t know if
you’re fleeing me,
you’ve made my heart
a chest of doubts.
Wouldn’t leaving
be the easiest?
However, I want to
show my pride,
so that you have a reason
to be proud as well.
If I’m able or not,
I was never in doubt,
I’ll give you a present,
a beautiful work of art,
so my feelings
are immortalised.

II
I want to paint your portrait,
 a sign of my affection,
with a smudge of coal in your hair
two red blushes on your cheeks,
white teeth, red lips,
two grey holes in your wings.
Murky colour, coloured gold
in your eyes,
it almost seems a miracle,  
each one is different.  
In truth, I really tried,  
but resigned in pain,  
night and day I didn’t sleep,  
for working so hard,  
but I did not hold,  
all the colours in my hand.

III

I gave up, resigned with rage  
threw my paintbrush down.  
In my hands, I took up  
the sculptors’ chisel and hammer.  
But the bronze did not  
lend itself to your figure,  
slate and stone  
poor curves do make,  
clay slid out of my hands  
as though in shock,  
wood is past its best  
destroyed by time.  
Finally I realised  
it was not possible,  
to capture your likeness,  
for you are too beautiful.

IV

Bizet paid homage to his Carmen,  
Beethoven his Elisa,  
Cohen paints his Suzanne,  
Tapia his Maddalen.  
I’ve put my all  
into a song for you,  
those that haven’t tried it  
won’t know the effort;  
in attempting to add
black, white, and in between,
I failed straight off,
trying my best.
Looking at the stave
nothing springs to mind,
the note ‘so’ would feel great shame,
faced with her brilliant shine.

v
To craft my feelings,
the way is poetry.
I crossed myself and waited
for the muses to arrive.
The Goddess Venus springs to mind,
and Cupid’s arrows,
stars, nightingale, ivy,
fallen leaves, and wind,
the walkway to Maritxu,
and Bartolo’s fountain,
that is the most confusing thing,
where is grace found?
For you, all that is written
falls short.
Why are you so amazing?
Why so special?

vi
I’ve decided, I’m going to
take a supreme photo,
making the most of the dusk light
to paint the evening purple.
When I revealed you,
my hurt, my pain!
Your tiredness or when you fall asleep

is not the same,  
as the second before loving you  
and feeling full satisfaction.  
How to capture it all?  
The present and the past.  
What poor, short way,  
that with the camera,  
a single instant doesn’t capture  
what you are to me.  

VII  
Lately the cook,  
carries many gallons,  
changing the saying slightly  
‘mouths don’t pay’.  
Designing a new dish  
was my hope and aim  
to make in your honour  
‘steak and cauliflower’.  
I added your saltiness  
and my vinaigrette  
but even paying close attention  
I burned it.  
Wouldn’t it be better to give up  
and put away the chef’s tools,  
for your sweet and salty taste  
has no equal?  

VIII  
I doubt I have  
the means or not,  
in bertsos I’ll attempt  
the limit of my aims.  
You are my hope through desperation,  
my relief in heat,  
a warm overcoat  
on cold autumn afternoons,
calm in the storm,
laughter in sadness,
white flag in war,
the crunch of fallen leaves,
fire in my chimney in winter,
the smell of damp earth in summer rain.
In *bertsos*, yes, I can easily express,
how much love I feel for you.

Andoni Egaña.

*Tximeletak sabelean, IZ, 1994.*

**CHRONICLE OF A BIRTH**

*Air: ETAren su etenetik*

I
One in the morning,
first contraction
some water dripping
between my thighs.
*Is the moment here?*
We both doubt it
the rests last no more than
five or six minutes.
He jumps to his feet
we need this and that!
Me naked in the bedroom,
my adventure starts
my body is preparing
to split itself in half.

II
In this very house
my father, grandmother,
her mother, and hers,
were all born.
Four walls which gather
the umbilical cord
which form the memory,
of the women of this family.
I feel safe and secure,
in such a feeling,
the profound sensation,
linked to the pain of birth –
everyone’s come
to help me through.

III
Elisa knocked at the door
at two on the dot.
My partner lets me know
*The midwife’s on the spot.*
He made her coffee,
black as night,
I said, if only we’d
sorted something earlier.
It’s coming early,
the little child.
She replied
try and calm down,
life is savage,
and unkind.

IV
She spread old sheets
on the upstairs chair,
I’ve filled myself with water
and been out for air.
She asks, *how are you love,*
*Is the pain back?*
I grabbed her collar,
and let out a cry
to talk to the child,
I turn to my inside:
Let us abandon each other
you to freedom, me to pain,
so we can split apart
but stay the same.

v
The inner passage,
entrance to my innards,
slowly opens
then expands.
Breath is my epidural,
my doctor, conscience,
pain leads me
into corporeal compliance.
I leave my mind
and follow my body
enjoy the rests,
and brace myself for the pain...
I’ve never felt the same,
so sure and so contained.

vi
Much like the barge,
mercy of the storm and rain
I drift on by
floating on the waves of pain.
I don’t fight it,
it’s better like this,
arm in arm
with pain I dance.
In four long hours
I’ve reached 10 centimetres,
and so begin the howls
from inside of me
not long now to wait
until I see your face.
VII
I struggle from the bathroom
to the sofa covered in sheets
following my body
I get down on hands and knees.
I’m going to break in two!
And what comes to mind
is the need to push out
this pressure from deep inside.
And then I hear
it’s crowning
your father picked you up
and brought you to my chest
Beautiful darling, how are you?
and welcome to the world.

VIII
Now I have you in my arms
as the sun begin to dawn
all the blood and sweat
are life’s scents
I move my breast
to your small face:
Hungry for life, hungry for skin,
come, mama’s life, take it in.
Have you come to this world
with eyes open to behold?
At twenty to seven, am,
you arrived in our small home
and took your first breath
to a view of the ocean.

Uxue Alberdi.
Couplets

It is snowing in the mountain,
throw more wood on the fire,
the mothers of pretty girls
are afraid of dishonest boys.

Up there, Saint Bernabé,
down there, Gordobil,
in the square of Otxandio
someone is playing the drum.

The couplet is similar to a four-line *bertso*. This may be comprised of three structures: 1) alternating lines of 10 and 8 syllables, 2) two 8-syllable lines, a 10-syllable line, and another 8-syllable line, or 3) it may follow the rhythm of *bertsos*. Whatever the case, the rhyme is always found in the short lines. The name of the genre is metonymic, given that its name derives from the metre. Moreover, this type of stanza is not unheard of in other cultures, such as that of Castile, in which the couplet is a stanza formed of four 8-syllable lines.

Although metrically similar, the couplet is not a short *bertso*, nor is it a shorter part of a longer stanza, much like a short story is not a fraction of a novel and a child of ten is not half an adult of twenty. Length is decisive in genre typology. Couplets do not have space for ornamentation. With regards content, couplets can be divided into two types: groups of couplets about one theme (such as given dates like Christmas or feast days) or recurrent themes within balladry; or groups of couplets that do not share a common theme, used for dance. The internal logic of the couplet is traditionally visual and does not deal with transcendental themes; onomatopoeia is abundant; and they are often humorous.

The couplet, like the *bertso*, can form part of other literary genres, such as lyric-epic songs and the didactic genre. Even so, there are two functions or roles that are particular to the couplet: firstly, couplets demonstrate popular heritage, which is sung throughout Basque societies; secondly, couplets learned or prepared for specific processions
and rituals throughout the year still survive today in various locations in the Basque Country.

The couplet genre is divided into three groups:

– Ancient couplets: traditional pieces, clear examples of popular knowledge that are linked to other genres within Basque oral literature.

– Dance couplets: amusing stanzas originally often sung by dancers a cappella.

– Processional couplets: couplets sung in determined serenades and processions celebrated at Christmas or Saint Agueda’s eve (5th February).

**Ancient couplets**

**LELO**

*Lelo il lelo, il lelo
leloa zara il leloa.*

The Roman armies tried to
but Biscay was triumphant.

Oktabiano, master of the world,
Lekobide from Biscay,
sea and land,
has left us space.

The dry fields are his
clouds cover the mountains
when we’re in an advantageous place
each one has his way.

**ANCIENT COUPLETS OF ZEANURI**

The most beautiful grass
is wheat in the field,
the best woman
the Virgen Mary.
A long time ago I said
*Mari eskupulu*
that the night-time rounds
are not safe.

Antonio, couplet and couplet
money in his pocket
many mad men
gather in the square.

Making the rounds by night,
sleepwalking by morning
you, son, you don’t like
to take care of yourself.

Antonio Goitia,
violinist,
plays the accordion
for eight gold coins.

Anton the blacksmith,
a chatterbox in the window,
he carries lead,
thinking it’s gold.

**My Love Eats**
My love eats
bread with strawberries
and is still
thin and slender.

Mari Carmen, the seamstress,
daughter of a wealthy family
in one day alone
she sews trousers and a shirt.
It's been a long time since I've seen you,
Oh, Fidela, the girl from Donostia,
before I preferred
the liver of a good pig.

_Dingili dango Mariñe_
if we were always like that!
To always be that way
you must be scatter-brained.

I must make a window
in front of the sea
to see when
my love does leave.

The sea is all water
you cannot see any sand,
to look upon my love
there I'd go and stand.

In Bilbao there are many doctors,
especially, in Barrencalle,
I also go there,
when my head aches.

My bowed hat
always wants to go to the bar
someday I'll leave it
in exchange for a draft.

You are too beautiful
to work in a garden,
look for a gentleman
to walk you through the streets.

They say my skin is dark,
Oh, but it doesn't bother me,
red wine is also dark
and everyone drinks that.

Young woman from Lezama,
young bronzed woman,
one can see in your face
that you’re from Lezama.

Dance couplets

The figtree in the yard
has three stems.
The woman who likes boys
has slender legs.

Slender legs,
and even thinner heads,
dancing is better,
than pulling weeds.

I’m going to weed
the garden,
weed the grass
and throw out the maize.

Mother, if you want
to buy boys,
by the church
it’s eight for a coin.

If they’re good,
they’re quite cheap,
if they’re bad
try and leave them.

DANCE COUPLETS FROM ATAUN

I’m going to start
enjoying youth,
if you see me doing so
don’t console yourself.

Oh, that new tambourine,
bought in Iruñea\textsuperscript{10},
the sides are blue
the centre of coppered gold.

The tambourine in my hand
is of fine fleece
it cost one lady
the money for a memorial.

The birds in the cage,
the students in the school,
the boys of the town
go to the tavern by night.

The depths of the sea is green,
the fresh fish live there;
this year, lady, I want you to come
with me to the brothers’ convent.

There’s fog at sea
reaching Orio bay;
I love you more
than a mother loves a son.

\textsuperscript{10} Iruñea: Basque name for ‘Pampelune’, ‘Pamplona’ in Spanish.
The water of the sea is immense,  
you can’t see any sand,  
I would cross it all  
to see my love.

I look and look  
at the path ahead,  
when will my love  
come home to town.

FATHER SAN MIGUEL

Father San Miguel from Iurreta,  
flower of the highest heaven;  
he is watching the old folk dancing  
and roars with laughter.

The gorse blooms in Garai square,  
in Ermua, wormwood blossoms;  
he who wants to dance,  
should go to the Barrueta houses.

Lift the point of your toe  
higher than the sky;  
if you can’t lift your leg  
bend down your head.

I was young and somewhat crazy,  
I stood in front of her;  
she opened her apron  
and took me into her lap.

In the fields there above,  
the partridges sing,
they have dirtied the trousers of the mayor of Errigoiti.

**Processional Couplets**

As mentioned above, going out to make the rounds and beg on Saint Agueda’s eve (5th February) and Christmas is Basque tradition, even if there are reasons to believe that these customs were already established before Christianity. The beggars are frequently accompanied by at least two bards, both of which are well versed in processional couplets and, on arriving at a house, they consider which couplets are most adequate for the situation. Moreover, on Saint Agueda’s eve, the bards are very clear about what to sing to whom; the following demonstrates the rules for making the rounds in Ataun11:

1) In each house where a couplet is sung, all members of the household must be mentioned.

2) Each person should be mentioned in the following order:
   Those who do not adhere to this are well remembered.

3) After singing to one person, this formula is used to direct the couplet to the next person:
   “Orain aurrera goazen (izena) bori koplatzen” [Let us now sing to (name)].

4) More than one couplet can be sung to the same person, however they should all fit. Those versed in couplets can write new ones, but they should not be abusive.

OLES TA OLES

Greetings, people at home
we come knocking at your door
I stand here alone
without wife, child, or more.

The door is made of glass,
the sign of gold,
master of the house, I ask
should we sing, or not?

The master of the house
stays silent,
we continue onwards
blessing those inside.

We were with the mayor
yesterday past,
who gave us leave
to go in peace.

Holy martyr saint
full of piety
bless us
peaceful and healthy.

We must thank
this wounded saint
who always blesses
the name of Christ.

Strength of hatred
a heart like a gentleman
first they whipped him
then ripped out his heart.
MARIJESIAK

In this holy December,
with the birth of Christ,
let us all be happy
for such great joy.

The ox and the mule
stand by him,
using their breath
to warm the cold child.

It’s the twenty-fourth
of December
we’ve achieved
what we wanted.
The Lyric-Epic Genre

"Somewhere a bell rings,
I know not where from
it could be
the sound of agony.

I have seven sheets
all stained with blood,
the eighth will take
me beyond the grave."

Frantziako andrea [The courtesan from France].

This genre, which appears in many other cultures, is comprised of popular lyric poetry, fables, stories, legends, songs, and ballads. The works included in this section employ language which is very distinct from everyday speech: they use a specific register, and the performances do not occur during daily life. Although each one is well established, it can be difficult to unite the texts as one group; for instance, the use of formal and textual criteria can create certain confusion at the moment of differentiating lyric and epic texts (unless these are combined with the use of metric and rhyming criteria, of course).

It is clear that terminology pays homage to the principal schema outlined by Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Menéndez Pidal, 1953) to explain the development of Spanish poetry generation after generation: the beginnings belonged to the epic genre, then lyric-epic ballads emerged, and, finally, these were followed by strictly lyric ballads. Even so, one cannot assume that during the epic period, popular lyrical and traditional poetry did not exist; this explains the development of ballads and endeavours to explain how they evolved from epic songs to lyrical ballads, but no further. Ultimately, Garzia’s suggestion (Garzia, 2007) unites epic and lyric works in one single genre; however, the texts presented in the following sections should not necessarily be considered both epic and lyric. As such, the subgenres presented in this section contain significant differences amongst them, in comparison with previous genres.
Popular Lyric

Popular or traditional lyric is the subgenre consisting of lyric poems transmitted orally, a variety of poetry that often emerges during the initial stages of a culture. The authors are anonymous, or with the passing of time, all information is lost.

The most significant production of popular lyric poetry in the Basque Country cannot be confirmed. Often the year a poem is written down is used as the date, although many texts deal with prior historical events or mention some previous date. Traditionally, the eighteenth century has been considered the golden age of popular lyric poetry, principally because it was during this period that poems were first written down. According to Juan Maria Lekuona (Lekuona, 1982), however, popular lyric emerged after balladry and before the bertsolaritza of the nineteenth century. Whatever the case may be, rather than declaring whether a genre came before or after another, perhaps it would be more appropriate to state which specific genre was most popular during a determined period (and empirically affirming this is impossible).

In principle, the lyric poem is clearly a distinct subgenre, yet through the characteristics attributed to lyric poetry we can find similarities with other subgenres: the absence of the use of the first person, conversational fragments, the use of narrative, and so on. With regard to the theme, however, the genre’s uniqueness is evident: the popular lyric above all deals with the theme of love as the author demonstrates his or her pains and feelings. This love may be joyful or damned, and, in the majority of cases, the texts often contain some moral or warning: they endeavour to advise of the dangers of love for other mortals. Lyric poetry utilises a different register, as is principally reflected in the specified use of metaphor. Three symbols are employed: stars or space, flowers, and birds.

The examples of this subgenre are an expression of an interior world, but not all of them are presented through monologues. There are numerous songs elaborated in the form of conversations, many of which reflect the hopes and fears of lovers. Lekuona (Lekuona, 1982) identifies a three-step structure for these songs: story, monologue, and dialogue. Nevertheless, it is also possible that the text only consists
of two steps. In this subgenre, syllogistic structures and subordinate orations are abundant and, as such, it seems clear that there is a significant influence of written literature within lyric poetry.

**Love**

Love is crazy  
the entire world knows it  
I had a love  
and they stole it...  
I hope our Holy Father  
deals with it better than I.

During last month’s festival  
I met a star,  
her dark blue eyes  
shone from afar,  
she gave me a little smile  
and it made my heart flair.

Since then we’ve spoken  
about whether she loves me  
she told me yes twice  
I was so happy!  
I didn’t think her promise  
was filled with lies.

And now my heart is tainted  
like salt taints water;  
unlike the light from a star  
I’m in complete oblivion!  
I’ve been robbed,  
and I know no consolation!

**Honey, where are you?**

Honey, where are you?  
I cannot see you
nor have I received news;  
Where are you lost?  
So much has changed  
your desire,  
you promised me,  
not once but twice  
that you were mine.

I’m the same person  
I’ve not changed  
I took you into my heart  
to love.  
A father’s jealousy  
is that which  
stops me  
seeing and loving you.

Jealous father!  
You sent your daughter  
to that convent  
to rid her of me.  
Even so, I hope she  
doesn’t become a nun:  
we share a faith  
lent to both of us  
without a doubt.

On the back of a mule  
you came to see me  
hidden from your father  
to offer consolation.  
I’ve already seen  
twenty-four years go by,  
but next year  
I won’t mind  
your father’s wrath.
I'll tell all they
who are my daughters:
look into my eyes
and understand what I say,
when they are young
teach them discipline;
for when they're old
it will be too late,
as I well know.

THE PARTRIDGE HAS

Two wings the partridge has
and a beautiful crest upon his head
oh, if you also had such a mane of youth
to attract the girls.

The lover should no shame feel
walking fearless through the night,
by day he is dishonoured
the birds see it too.

I walked behind you night and day
to reach that beautiful lily
in sadness, I got there finally:
the most beautiful petal had fallen.

Not one person lives without some pain.
I carry it too,
I wanted to marry you
but my father will say no.

What would your father say,
that I'm not good enough
or that you’re too much for me,
There’s no prince for you now.
I saw a lily in a garden
I wished to have it by my side
its petals don’t fall in summer or winter,
there’s none alike in all the world!

I decided to go there one night
to take that rare flower
I didn’t think anyone was watching!
That night I thought I’d lose myself.

I want to give you all an example,
particularly you young people:
he who walks by night is not prudent;
I saw myself, thanks be to God!

Fables, Stories, and Legends

Popular narrative is the response to the very demands of human thought, according to Jose Miguel Barandiaran (Barandiaran, 2011). The famous ethnographer adds the following comment by Joseph Bédier in the prologue to his work *Euskal Herriko alegia, ipuin eta kondairak* (Fables, stories, and legends from the Basque Country): “the ancient stories are about the creation of the earth; it is enough to accidentally hit a rock with a stick in order to make the earth come out”.

Fables are short tales with morals. Their characters are often animals which possess human qualities, such as speech for example. Although Felix Maria Samaniego was a renowned fable writer from Araba (Álava), the origin of this subgenre resides in oral folklore and, as such, they have a place in Basque oral literature.

The short story is a brief narrative and constitutes one of the most significant examples of popular literature. There are three principal characteristics: they deal with events from unspecified times and places; they follow formulas established at the beginning and end of the narrative, and no stories of strictly Basque origin exist.
Legends are also short narratives, but, unlike the short story, the characters and places therein are limited. Moreover, legends use fantastic elements: fairies, goblins, imps, and so on, and, in the case of those beings, it is truly difficult to affirm that their creation is specific to the Basque Country.

**THE DONKEY AND THE WOLF**

The story of the donkey and the wolf is set in the times when everything spoke.

One day, a donkey came to Ataun from Navarre with a bottle of wine on his back. Suddenly, a very hungry wolf crossed his path.

The donkey said, ‘If you’re thirsty, I can give you a drink.’

The wolf replied, ‘I’m not thirsty, but I’m awfully hungry; now I’m going to eat your head and ears.’

So the donkey said, ‘There’s a flock of sheep up there without a sheepdog; whoever goes there can have at least two pairs of rams.’

The wolf replied, ‘But I’ve got a thorn in my paw and I can’t walk up there; with you here, why would I go up there?’

So the donkey said, ‘There’s a hermitage up there, the hermitage of St Bartholomew. I want to go to mass, so let’s go together.’

The wolf said OK, and the donkey trod the path to the hermitage happily. The wolf, however, remembering what the donkey had said, approached the place with the flock of sheep. But there weren’t any sheep there, so he ran to the hermitage. Upon seeing that the wolf was coming, the donkey kicked the door shut.

The wolf shouted to him from outside, ‘Old donkey, you know-it-all. If I see you again, you won’t make it to the church.’

And the donkey replied, ‘Old cursed wolf, you know nothing. Even if you’ll eat me tomorrow, today I won’t die at your hands.’

**SHARING OUT THE CHICKEN**

A long time ago there was a family which was very poor. Christmas came and they scarcely had food to eat. At home there was only one
edible thing: a chicken. The father considered killing the chicken for the Christmas feast, and did so.

When the mother arrived home she was very surprised. 'But, what have you done? The chicken was the only good thing we had!'

The father responded, 'Yes, that's why I don’t believe we’re that poor.'

The mother was very clever and had a great idea.

'Bring me the chicken, I know how to make the most of it…'

She went to see the King, and said the following thinking it would melt his heart.

'Your majesty, tomorrow it’s Christmas. We’re very poor, but as you’re so kind-hearted, we’ve decided to offer you our only worthy possession.'

Straight away the King realised the mother’s intentions and said to himself: this woman wants to take advantage of me and take home a good present, but I’ll be the one to make the most of her.

'Thank you, but if I divide one single chicken between the members of my family the only thing I’ll create is conflict. You divide it up between my wife, my two sons, my two daughters, and me. If we’re all happy at the end, you’ll be rewarded. But if somebody wants another’s bit, I’ll punish you.'

The mother cut the head off the bird and gave it to the King saying, 'Sir, you must think a great deal, you’re the head of the kingdom, and, as such, the head is yours.' Then she spoke to the queen, 'Madam, you’re sat on the throne all day, giving orders to the servants, this section is yours.' And she gave her the back of the bird. Then she cut off the two legs and gave them to the princes saying, 'It’s important for princes to leave the palace and travel the world, so the legs are best for you.' And for the daughters, she cut off the wings and said, 'Soon you’ll have to fly the nest and for this you’ll need wings. And the rest of the meat we’ll leave for the poor and, as I’m so poor, I’ll keep it for me.'
The King found this amusing and so rewarded the woman. If this was the case, or if it wasn’t, get in a pumpkin and go to Ataun town square.12

MATEO TXISTU

Many years ago, in the area of Tolosa, there lived a priest with a small parish. In his church he didn’t have a great deal of work, other than baptisms and funerals, and so he had more time for his true passion: hunting.

His neighbours and parishioners called him ‘Mateo Txistu’ after the well-known noise of the priest whistling to his dogs when he was about to leave for the hunt. They all joked and laughed about the priest’s habit.

The days and months passed and nothing happened to break the town’s peace. But one day the Devil, who is always seeking weaknesses in human souls, appeared to Mateo Txistu in the form of a distinguished gentleman. Mateo, who was not stupid, realised who the elegant gentleman really was straight away.

‘What do you want, demon?’ He asked immediately.

‘Me? Nothing!’ Replied the Devil, confused.

‘So, why are you here?’ And, laughing, Mateo Txistu whistled to his dogs, picked up his rifle, and disappeared from the Devil’s sight into a nearby forest.

The Devil was enraged at having been made a fool of by the priest. An angry Devil is very dangerous as he can do anything. He spent several days deciding how to get revenge, and finally came up with a plan.

One Sunday, in the middle of mass, a beautiful white hare popped its head around the door of the vestry where the dogs awaited their master. As soon as they saw the hare, the dogs pricked up their ears and started barking furiously.

12. Translator’s note: this phrase is typically used to end fairy tales in Basque. An equivalent might be the phrase with which such tales in English typically conclude: “And they all lived happily ever after”.
Mateo stopped the mass for a second to check what was happening in the vestry. How surprised he was upon seeing the hare at the door, just asking to be chased. He didn’t think twice: he abandoned the mass and his shocked congregation, grabbed his rifle, and left with his dogs in pursuit of the hare that had run out through the fields.

He was never heard of again. He never returned. However, since that moment, many people have heard him whistling for his dogs, or heard their sad barking; and, on some nights with a clear full moon, you can still see the silhouettes of the priest, the dogs, and the hare on their endless roaming.

**Epic Songs**

Epic songs are poetic narratives about an act of war or some great deed. The equivalent within written literature is the epopee, an extensive narrative with the same objective; on occasion, epic songs are often no more than fragments or adaptions of epopees. Epic songs created within oral traditions are generally presented within the subgenre of the ballad. Their strength is based on rhythm and musicality, which are used to give the tale vigour. They are the first examples of oral literature written down and, to a certain extent, this discovery was what instigated the archiving of other genres. Moreover, epic songs are the oldest works of Basque oral literature.

**The Battle of Beotibar (1321)**

After a thousand years,
water follows its course,
the Gipuzkoans have entered
Gaztelu castle,
in Beotibar they met the Navarrese,
to do battle.

**The Burning of Mondragon (1448)**

Untzueta and Bergara died
bringing with them Zaldibar
Aramaio consumed by flames
as well as Guraia
who didn’t save his father.

Although Gomez was powerful
Presebal was also there
as well as Joanikote.
In the Madelen they now lie
without trumpet or viol.

Gomez had many friends,
those from Araba,
good folk from Gipuzkoa
and from Biscay.
He doesn’t lie alone,
Presebal rests too
in the company of Joanikote,
without signs or markers,
not far from Halogen.

The light of dawn arrives
above their location.
those from Bergara have begun
to start a new tradition,
amongst themselves they state,
let us burn Mondragon to the ground.
let us enter quickly
through the city’s corner,
with beards shaking,
they couldn’t use their weapons,
those from Ganbooa bringing flames,
they started fire,
and those inside from Oñezta left
to avoid the smoke.
Gomiz Gonzalutx was there,
against Presebal,
Joanikote, and the others,
who shared their part.
Flying on his feet
the young man from Ozaeta:
quickly he went
from one bank across the river.
Mother asked him:
Son, what have you there?
Cure my wounds, mother,
and put me to bed.
He followed me close behind,
the fast son from Ganboa,
even faster than
Abendañue the stutterer.
I give many thanks,
to St Marina,
who diverted him via Axe
and led me to my home.

Ballads

Ballads are brief narrative songs; they have unique characteristics which differentiate them from other songs and genres. They are termed a ‘ballad’ or ‘romance’: the first designation is linked to European tradition, whilst the second, ‘romance’, is more common in the Iberian peninsular tradition. Some experts consider the romance a type of ballad. Thanks to the greater relation between Basque ballads and the corpus of European oral literature, studies prefer the term ‘ballad’. European ballads share a common base and, as such, they can all be included within one corpus and contrasted.

Despite the fact that one can speak a great deal about ballad typology, their principal objective is to narrate brief histories and events: the most common themes are impossible love, tragic deaths, assassinations, and similar events. The characters within the ballads are actors who carry out actions but are unimportant within the story; they scarcely mention anything relevant about these characters to the audience and, as such, they can almost be considered mere narrators. The same can be said of other contextual aspects: place and time are not described, and only general, superficial information is provided.
Ballads have predominantly been transmitted by people with a low level of formal culture (even if they demonstrate high-brow oral culture). Additionally, they can change with every performance and are in constant transformation both textually and musically; nevertheless, the melody varies less than the text. Like other examples of popular culture, ballads tend to preserve the transmitted legend. So the bard or singer does not know the references or events, but still maintains the text and adapts it, even if he or she must use incoherent phrases or words to do so. With regard the form, ballads are similar to bertsos and are presented in rhyming stanzas. Whatever the case, the rhyme scheme used within ballads does not utilise elaborated rhymes. Rather, they use rhymes created through the repetition of sounds, with the aim of making the narrative more enjoyable for the audience listening.

The text Euskal baladak: antologia eta azterketa [Basque ballads: Anthology and examination] (Hordago, 1983) published by Joseba Lakarra, Koldo Biguri, and Blanca Urgell presents 28 ballads and 235 versions, but some of the ballads published within this text have been included in another section of this anthology: as most historical testimonies until the sixteenth century are epics, a collection of these pieces reflects the subgenre of epic songs (Beotibarko Gudua [The Battle of Beotibar] is one of these). Lakarra, Biguri, and Urgell (who present the ballads and lyric-epic songs together) propose the following relation between ballads based on historical events, displayed in chronological order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ballad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1321</td>
<td>The Battle of Beotibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1390</td>
<td>The Battle of Acondia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1388-1401</td>
<td>The Battle of Urrexola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th – 15th Century</td>
<td>Sandailia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1434-1449</td>
<td>The Song of Bereterretxe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1443</td>
<td>The Song of Aramaio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1448</td>
<td>The Burning of Mondragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Olaso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Century</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 15th Century</td>
<td>Alostorrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1471</td>
<td>The Count of Salinas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1476</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1497</td>
<td>Testamentuarena [The Tale of the Testament]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Century</td>
<td>The Song of Juanicote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1545</td>
<td>The Song of Chantarrón</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Century</td>
<td>Urtsua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th – 19th Century</td>
<td>Musde Sarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 18th Century</td>
<td>Jaun Barua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LITTLE ISABELLA**

Little Isabella, little Isabella,  
please do what I ask:  
tell the singer at the door  
that he can come in.

‘Good day on and on  
young sailor’  
‘and to you too,  
beautiful lady.’

‘My parents have sent me  
to learn this song’  
‘if you want to know it  
come with me on board.’

Many thanks  
but that’s not my aim  
at home mother and father  
would miss me greatly.

Although she said this  
he picked her up  
and took her on board the ship.
He picked a poppy
placed it between her breasts,
sleep led the lovely youth
a hundred miles away.

So it was a question of luck
that then two boats struck
waking in that moment
the lovely youth.

‘Take me, take me
to my parents’ home’
‘it’s five-hundred leagues
to their town
and five-hundred leagues
aren’t easily covered.’

‘Young sailor,
have you a dagger?’
‘I don’t have a dagger,
but I’ll give you my sabre.’

He gave her the sabre
and she pierced her heart,
in that moment, a cadaver,
the lovely youth.

‘Oh brothers, good friends!
What shall we do with her?’
‘Cense her with incense
and perfume with laurel
we’ll bring the lovely youth
on our seven-week journey.’

‘Oh brothers, good friends!
What shall we do with her?’
‘Give her seven kisses, every one
and throw her to the ocean.’
They kissed her seven times, each one,
and threw her to the ocean.

JAUN ZURIANO

“Jaun Zuriano, Jaun Zuriano,
are you asleep? Wake up.
Your wife, Doña Rosa,
is getting married again tomorrow.”

I’m not one of those from Marlbrook,
nor least Turkish,
most of all, I could be
a celestial angel.

‘For bringing you there,
how will you reward me?’
‘a thousand pounds of wax
for my Virgen Mary,
the same and more
the angel of St Michael.’

‘In the square I have seven horses,
choose the best.
Jaun Zuriano has taken one,
and is racing town to town.’

‘Greetings, Greetings, God save you,
I’m after hospitality tonight.’
‘There’s no room here today,
God bless you on your way.’

‘Who is this Marlbrook,
this Turk from the country of Marlbrook,
raising the race of Turks?’
'When Jaun Zuriano lived,  
there was shelter for the poor.  
when Jaun Zuriano lived,  
the poor were sheltered.'

'Who is this poor man,  
this flighty poor man?  
He’s mentioned Jaun Zuriano,  
who is on this pilgrimage.'

'Here I have a sword  
which Jaun Zuriano gave me:  
he who pulls it  
will be my promised one.'

'In the stable I have a sword,  
which Jaun Zuriano gave me:  
he who lifts it  
will be my promised.'

'There is that brave youth,  
he tried and couldn’t lift the sword.  
Let’s see the second…  
Him either.'

'Let’s see if this worried man can’  
Him, set in his gaze.  
‘Try it, youngster.’  
He tries and lifts the sword.  
‘He is my Jaun Zuriano.’  
‘She will be my wife.’

**The Washing**

"Your washing is white,  
young woman.”  
“I treated it well,  
yes, father friar.”
“Your hands are white, young woman.”
“I always wear gloves, yes, father friar.”
“Your hands are white, young woman.”
“I always wear gloves, yes, father friar.”

“Do you have any family, young woman?”
“I have two sons, yes, father friar.”
“Do you have a husband, young woman?”
“In far-off America, yes, father friar.”
“Would you know him if you saw him, young woman?”
“By his old clothes, yes father friar.”
“Would you know him if you saw him, young woman?”
“By his old clothes, yes father friar.”

“Let me caress you, young woman.”
“the river separates us, yes, father friar.”
“I can clear it in two steps, young woman.”
“It’s not in my interest, yes, father friar.”
“I can clear it in two steps, young woman.”
“It’s not in my interest, yes, father friar.”

“Let the fires burn you, young woman.”
“Let the fires burn you, young woman.”
“If you, sir, are the coal, father friar.”
“If you, sir, are the coal, father friar.”
“Let the waters sweep you away, young woman.”
“If you, sir, are the ship, father friar.”
“Let the waters sweep you away, young woman.”
“If you, sir, are the ship, father friar.”

ANA JUANIXE

One day I had great sacks of coal.
I was not selling coal, but sacks of wheat.

Three women came one after the other, the third asked me the price of the wheat.

For the others, a good coin, for you, a good embrace.
Don’t make me blush like that, in the middle of the square.

If you had told me this, in a secret place, the wheat, you, and I could have worked it through.
My mother must go to work
in the morning or the afternoon,
you can take a walk
whilst she is there.

Mother returns home,
the house smells of men.
Ana Juanixe, Ana Juanixe,
who is in the house?

The neighbour Catalina,
she came whilst you worked.
It is not Catalina,
his chin is bearded.

Wait, lad, wait,
whilst I put on the lights,
whilst I put on the lights,
and see who you are.

Mother, you do not care
for my health at home,
my heart blackens
in the light.

Leave, lad, leave, lad.
By that window,
so my mother goes
with her suspicions.

THE COURTESAN FROM FRANCE

When I came back
from the French court
I found my mother
in the kitchen, sad.
Mother, what are you doing, here on your own?
I have received news of you.

What news have you?
Blessed son, I’ve heard you are to be married.

Where does she come from?
From the court in France, darling mother.

I do not love the French, especially as a daughter,
I must fulfil the promise I made.

You must fulfil the word you gave.
You must leave now and kill her.

She is so beautiful, my wife
it’s not possible, mother, to do this.

If you cannot, call your brother, your younger brother, the student.

Juanita dismount from the horse
so I can pierce this dagger
into your heart.

Oh, how sharp
the point is.
Just seeing it,
slays my heart.

I have seven horses,
dressed in sheets,
the eighth however,
is covered in pearls.

Moreover, I have
a golden chalice
a golden chalice
and a surplice.

I will give you them
if you let me live.
I’ll keep them for me
but you won’t survive.

I hear a bell
from where I don’t know,
it might be
the sound of agony.

I have seven sheets
stained with blood,
the eighth will
lead me from this life.

Oh mother-in-law,
filled with lizards,
let the snakes make
your dusk time bed.
BERETERRETXE’S SONG

Bereterretxe, from bed
approaches the girl:
“Go and see if a man is there”.

The diligent girl,
went straight away and saw
one hundred men going from one window to the next.

From the window, Bereterretxe
greets the count
he offers him one hundred cows with his bull.

The noble count,
kindly says
‘Bereterretxe, come with us, you’ll be home and healthy forthwith.’

Mother, bring me a shirt
the last I wore,
he who survives won’t forget the day after Easter.

Mother flees running
to Bostmendieta mountains.
on her knees she enters Buztanobi’s in Lakarri.

“Young Buztanobi,
beloved brother,
if you don’t help me, my son will be lost.”
“Quiet sister,
please don’t cry;
if he still lives, your son is in Maule.”

Andoze valley
is so deep and great!
My heart has broken into pieces.
Mother flees running,
  to the count’s door,
“Oh, sir, where is my gallant child!”

“Didn’t you have another son,
  as well as Bereterretxe?
He died near Ezpeldoi; go and raise him.”

The daughter of Ezpeldoi,
  is called Margarita
with full hands she cleans Bereterretxe’s blood.

What a beautiful washing
  that of Ezpeldoi!
They say it is three dozen of Bereterretxe’s shirts.

THE LAMENT OF MILIA OF LASTUR

What is the new mother’s wound?
  Grilled apples and rosé wine.
Milia, however, is the contrary;
  under the cold ground, with a stone atop.

Milia, you must go to Lastur
  grandfather has bought a herd,
  grandmother tends the grave.
Milia, you must go there.

A stone fallen from heaven,
  landed on the new Lastur tower
it broke a battlement in half,
Milia, you must go there.

Look, my Milia from Lastur
  Peru Garzia has been a rouge,
he has taken Marina from Arrazola for his wife,
  let him have his plan and marry her.
The 14 deaths

I
The year 1825,
13th day of October
Markina Etxeberria’s house, Altzibar,
I knocked on the door by moonlight,
and was readily welcomed in.

II
They greeted me like a count,
bade me sit and offered food;
that’s how I saw the family,
and whilst we sat, the master of the house and I,
I plunged a dagger into his heart.

III
He jumped from the bed to escape his death;
he didn’t deserve such from me.
When his daughter saw him like that
she began to pray for help;
I cracked her head with a miserable axe.

IV
A young girl of three and twenty,
what pity to treat her so!
Dash out her brains with a darned axe;
it’s no miracle I’m a ruin,
they should have hanged me there and then.

V
When she saw her husband and daughter,
poor Katalina, she began to cry.
If she didn’t want to end up like the rest,
she should have told me where the money was,
but I knew only too well, they had none.
VI
Holy Christ, I must confess
what I did in Catalonia.
After Lerida, in the town of Urbil,
five people in one family did live;
I killed them all by the dead of night.

(...)

XI
I am named Jose, my surname Larreina:
from Mendaro, born and bred, a native there;
I am ruined, abandoned in the world;
let mother a better son make,
for my evilness is so great.

XII
The other day, I visited my younger brother
who felt great pity upon seeing me.
Oh how saddened our parents are!
If the others had learned from me.
It also shocks me that they’ll kill me...

Author unknown\textsuperscript{13}.
1825. (Adapted)

\begin{itemize}
\item[13.] The text “Hamalau heriotzena” (“The 14 Deaths”) has been published in anthologies of both written \textit{bertos} and ballads from the Basque Country. In anthologies of ballads, there is a nineteenth-century group demonstrating characteristics of both \textit{bertos} and ballads: they follow the metre of \textit{bertos}, and have a named author, but use the style and theme pertaining to balladry. The pieces displaying sadness and narrating bloody events are denominated “\textit{urkabe-bertos}” (“bertos from the gallows”) or “\textit{kantu lastimoso}” (“songs of pity”), and the majority are, without a doubt, distributed as loose sheets of written \textit{bertos}. The texts employing the aforementioned characteristics have traditionally be classified as vulgar ballads (vulgar romances or ‘\textit{literatura de cordel}’ [cordel literature]). On the other hand, despite the fact that the eleventh stanza names the author, in the Basque Country “Jose Larreina” or “Jose de Larreina” is traditionally sung in that verse.
\end{itemize}
The Theatre Genre

“**Zuberoa** is the only area which still presents popular theatre in the Basque Country. [...] The actors are often youths who cannot read. The representations often happen outside on a set [...]. One part is sung, and the other recited. The beginning is funny, and the Zuberoans or Souletines eagerly attend to watch the foreigners, giving up the first rows to the public.”

*Wilhelm Humboldt. 1801.*

*Literatur Terminoen Hiztegia* [Dictionary of literary terms]. Basque Language Academy.

The theatre genre, or popular theatre, refers to all those dramatic spectacles organised by and for the public. These shows take place outside of amphitheatres, in streets, town squares, and open fields. The most well-known examples of this genre are masquerades, pastorals, and burlesque theatre. As a non-traditional genre, Basque popular theatre has a clear history, which reads as follows:

**Table 6. Brief Chronology of Popular Theatre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1494</td>
<td>Plays celebrating the royal wedding of Jean d’Albret (John III of Navarre) and Catherine de Foix (Catherine of Navarre), included some works in Basque.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1510-1511</td>
<td>In the town Leintz-Gatzaga, at that time in the region of Araba (nowadays Gipuzkoa), performances celebrated Christmas and Easter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Century</td>
<td>The province of Zuberoa adhered to European customs and organised the first masquerades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td>The first registered pastoral was performed in Atharratze, entitled “Jundane Jakobe’s great tragedy”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Author, Pedro Ignacio Barrutia de Aramaio wrote <em>Scenes for New Year’s Eve</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Francisco Javier Munibe’s <em>The Drunken Trickster</em> in Basque and Castilian is staged: the songs in Basque, the dialogue in Castilian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>The final traditional rustic serenades are performed in Irrisari.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1950</td>
<td>Etxahun-Iruri renewed the pastoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>In Barkoxe, Germain Lechardoy staged the old <em>cencerrada</em> or <em>astola</em>ster, <em>Kaniko eta Beltxituna</em> by Jakes Oihenart. The final <em>asto-laster</em> (donkey races) events were performed in 1930; they were later prohibited by the Church and the police.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pastoral**

The pastoral (pastorala or trageria in Basque) is a form of popular theatre from the Zuberoa; it was originally a work about the mysteries of the Middle Ages and, although other themes would later be developed, the pastoral maintains its original structure. In essence, it is a liturgical drama which has developed in a similar way in many European nations: the Basque pastorals are like mystères (France), laudi (Italy), morality plays (England), auto (Castile), and misteri (Catalonia). The Church and state have opposed pastorals on many occasions throughout history: the Paris parliament prohibited mystères in 1548 on account of the consequent neglect of parishioners, the decrease in charity, and the rise in adultery, carnal sin, scandals, and unbridled laughter. Even now, the pastoral remains alive in the Basque Country, after surpassing obstacles throughout distinct periods.

Table 7. Chronology of the Pastoral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Barkoxe</td>
<td>Xahakoa</td>
<td>Patrick Quéheille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Aloze-Ziboze-Onizegaine</td>
<td>Belagileen Trajeria</td>
<td>Dominika Rekalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Ezpeize-Undüreine, Ainharbe, Ürrüstoi-Larrabile et Sarrikotape</td>
<td>Xiberoko Jauna</td>
<td>Jean Louis Davant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Gamere-Zihiga</td>
<td>Eñaut Elizagarai</td>
<td>Junes Casenave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Santa Grazi</td>
<td>Santa Engrazi</td>
<td>Junes Casenave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Ligi</td>
<td>Bereterretx</td>
<td>Pier Paul Berzaitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Maule</td>
<td>Antso Handia</td>
<td>J. Louis Davant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Idauze-Mendi</td>
<td>Ramuntxo</td>
<td>Pier Paul Berzaitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Altzürükü</td>
<td>Ürrütia</td>
<td>Niko Etxart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Iruri</td>
<td>Etxahun Iruri</td>
<td>Roger Idiart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Sohüta</td>
<td>Xiberoko Makia</td>
<td>J. Louis Davant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Source: suazia.com
The history and development of the pastoral can be divided into two principal periods: the first lasted until 1950 and dealt with religious themes concerning the life of saints and biblical personae; the second period, following the Second World War, was marked by Etxahun Iruri’s reinvention of the genre which significantly modified it (Davant, 1998). The following table illustrates the differences between the pastorals of these two periods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Pastorals</th>
<th>Modern Pastorals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author unknown.</td>
<td>The author is known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The text is not elaborated. The stage director (errejenta or pastoralier) and the actors can change the text at will.</td>
<td>The text is carefully maintained and the notion of author is clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The texts use free verse.</td>
<td>The text follows an established metre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They lasted a whole day.</td>
<td>They last three or four hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until 1980, the participants were either all men, or all women.</td>
<td>Actors and actresses participate equally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They dealt with universal and, above all, religious characters.</td>
<td>They’re based on characters from the Basque Country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pastoral provides a dualist vision of the world, given their focus on the fight between Good and Bad. The good characters are the ‘khirixtiak’ [Christians’], autochthonous friends of the hero; the bad characters are the ‘turkoak’ [Turks] and are foreign. In addition to these two groups, divine characters, angels, and even God, amongst others, also figure. The work takes place in an open field, which has been extended over time. The back of the stage contains two doors: the one of the left of the audience is the door for the good; the other, on the right, is red, and is the stage entrance and exit for the bad characters. There is often a wooden doll depicting the devil on the red door, and next to this are the musicians, above the door in a type of stall: originally, this was led by the txistu (a three-holed pipe) and the drum; this was later replaced by an orchestra. The stanzas narrating the story consist of four lines, with a simple rhyme scheme on even lines. The pastoral uses the following structure:
Table 9. Structure of the Pastoral\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Munstra</td>
<td>Announcement in local towns and neighbourhoods on the days of the performance, as well as during preceding days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lehen pheredikia</td>
<td>The play’s prologue: Greetings and brief announcement of the pastoral’s theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jelkaldiak</td>
<td>Dramatic acts or scenes: each one depicts a situation or event. Some are traditional, and repeated in all pastorals. These are completed with Zuberoan dances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azken pheredikia</td>
<td>The audience are thanked, the pastoral’s message is concluded, and a final greeting is offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azken kantorea</td>
<td>A final song of thanks closes the pastoral.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year after year, the structure of pastorals has been repeated. Between the jelkaldiak scenes, well-known acts are repeatedly yearly, even though they may not fit perfectly with the theme of the pastoral.

**Sancho the Great; Lehen pheredikia**

I
You’re welcome here
to these lands,
the need for history
in our hands.

II
One thousand years ago
Sancho the Great lived
the chosen one
of Basque kings.

III
He lost his father
and was crowned young
his mother and gran
did spur him on.

\textsuperscript{14} Pictures related to pastorals are shown at the end of the edition.
IV
Sancho de Oibar
was his first love;
their son, Ramiro,
governed Aragón

V
Then, for politics
he chose another
and married
the count of Castile’s daughter.

VI
His father’s kingdom
did grow and grow
he took control
of Castile and Aragón.

VII
He kept looking after
his friends in the North
and helped the Basques
send their enemies forth.

VIII
Protecting the Crown
from armed Muslims
he signed a pact
with his kin.

IX
In middle age
he died all of a sudden,
the kingdom split
between his sons.
And so began
the Basque decline,
but we still remember
Sancho’s reign.

J. Louis Davant.
2004, Maule. (Adapted)

RAMUNTXO; 7TH JELKALDIA

Ramuntxo with his mother

Mother:
Your uncle Iñaki,
has sent a letter,
which does confirm
a job for you.

Oh, Iñaki, so well-meaning,
my brother, quiet seeming,
a life of work
and now alone.

We should remember
America is wealthy,
here you have nothing
smuggling won’t keep you.

Ramuntxo:
You know that I
am with Gaxusa
I’ll talk to her
about this offer.
**LIV**

*Mother:*

Gaxusa is just a child,
son, open your eyes;
you'll not be enough for her
as your mother, I won't tell lies.

*Pier Paul Berzaitz.*

*Maule, 2003. (Adapted)*

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**Masquerade**

Masquerade is a theatrical spectacle in Zuberoan carnivals; dance, *bertsos*, and songs all have a special place in its development. Its origins are both ancient and unknown, yet according to historians, it was a popular tradition in sixteenth-century Europe, and thus arrived in Zuberoa. On carnival Sundays, youngsters from the region would gather together and prepare the spectacle, dressing in disguises to walk through the area. Their disguises were based on representative professions of that period in the Basque Country; nowadays, in the twenty-first century these are still repeated in the same way as four-hundred years ago. Year after year, one Zuberoan village is responsible for preparing the masquerade, a task which takes four months.

Although the first masquerades required some eighty participants, nowadays only about twenty youngsters attend. Much like the pastoral, the masquerade is also dualist and divided into two groups: the Reds (educated and elegant) and the Blacks (careless and crazy troublemakers). The five best dancers of the masquerade are usually in the red group and are called *aitzindaris* (those in front): Txerreroa, Gathuzaina, Kantiniersa, Zamalzaina, and Entseinaria. A fanfare often accompanies both groups.
Table 10. Characters in the Masquerade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zamalzaina</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>He wears a skirt with a horse on the belt. The masquerade’s main protagonist and most adept dancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Txerreroa</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>He carries a cane with a horse’s tail hanging from the end. Six bronze rattles are in his belt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathuzaina</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>He carries a sort of pantograph which is used to seize things from the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kantiniersa</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>A nineteenth-century barmaid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entseinaria</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>The person carrying the Zuberoan flag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marexalak</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Three or four blacksmiths for Zamalzaina. Their master carries a hammer and wears a leather apron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kherestuak</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Zamalzain’s two castrators, the master and the apprentice, who use the Occitan dialect of Béarn (different from Basque).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaun-andreak</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Directors of the dance. The man wears trousers and carries a cane, the woman has a light, white dress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborariak</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Male and female farmers wearing dark clothing. The man has spurs, the woman a basket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kükülleroak</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>The youngest dancers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xorrotxak</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Two knife-grinders, the master and the apprentice. They walk by filing instruments and wear hats with stuffed squirrels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buhomeak</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>They carry wooden swords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kauterak</td>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>Six boilermakers, one dressed as a doctor (Medezina). They carry canes made of roots bearing bronze rattles. Their clothing is old and torn, to reflect their humble origins. One is called Pitxu.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The masquerade is Zuberoan in origin, although it has also existed in Baiona. As regards the Southern Basque Country, some representations have taken place in Gipuzkoa and Biscay, in localities such as Donostia-San Sebastián, Bilbao, or Lamiako, amongst others; such spectacles, however, have always been based on adapted versions by the “Gaztedi” dancers from Bilbao.

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15. Pictures of each character can be seen at the end of the edition.
Table 11. Structure of the Masquerade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrikada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upon arrival, the troop wanders through the outskirts of the town to prepare the show. Following the sound of the <em>arribada</em>, they visit the houses where they are given food and drink. Then they pay homage to the lords and ladies of the town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Branlia       | 1) Kontrapasa     | 1) Some characters dance in a circle, others form pairs and dance in the centre.  
|               | 2) Branletik jauzia | 2) At first they all dance together, then each one demonstrates their skills.  
|               | 3) Karakoiltzia   | 3) A slow dance in a circle.                                                                                                                                 |
| Ofizioarenak  | 1) Marexalak      | 1) They put horseshoes on the *zamalzain*, who doesn’t like it at first, but then relinquishes.  
|               | 2) Kherestuak     | 2) This represents the castration of *zamalzain*.  
|               | 3) Gabota dantza  | 3) *Txerrero, Cathuzain* *Kantiniertas, Zamalzain* and *Entseinaria* dance in a ring.  
|               | 4) Xorrotxak      | 4) Representation of the sharpening of the master’s sword.  
|               | 5) Buhameak       | 5) They dance with wooden swords, and then the master walks through the square.  
|               | 6) Aitzindariak   | 6) *The aitzindaris* perform the *godalet* [small glass] dance in front of the masters.  
|               | 7) Kauterak       | 7) Representation of how the master’s old vase is repaired. In payment for this, the master throws coins into the air. *The kauterak* and *buhameak* jump up to catch the money and they all land on Pitxu, who dies in the act. The doctor resuscitates him and the master of the boilermakers reads a testament to him. |

In some cases, *jaun-andreak* and the farmers or *laborariak* will often have their own dance. The masquerade will normally finish with
a dance called *Muñeínak*, in which all the actors and the audience participate\(^\text{16}\).

**The couplets of Xorrotxak**

*Couplet sung to the town mayor*

Good afternoon Mr Mayor, to you and your family
we Xorrotxak have returned this year again
we wish you good health indefinitely
to you, yourself, and your family

*Couplet sung to the town priest*

God bless you good day, Father
we promise that with our friends
you’ll have fun, well and proper.
Let this masquerade pass by merrily.

*Couplet sung by the Xorrotxak to themselves*

This morning we got up for the festival
we’ve had a long journey, and we’re thirsty;
if you give us good wine to drink,
then we’ll sing to you easily.

(Ofizioarenak, Xorrotxak) Eskiularrak.

1992, Eskiula. (Adapted)

**Kauteren pheredikia**

Good afternoon!
Spectators in this square
people from here and all around,
lovers of festivals,
young and old,

---

men and women,
great and small,
we’re here having learnt so much from Eskiula!
The prayers in San Pedro square
are beautiful compared with the rest of Eskiula;
after false bills
and living things most terrible,
the new war in Iraq
the fall of the German Wall,
Russian democracy,
or Rocard’s resignation.

We are born
to make soup, empty bowls, and anger men;
we know how to cook, eat, and sew,
make babies, birth and mother them.

(Ofizioarenak, Kauterak) Eskiularrak.
1992, Eskiula. (Adapted)

**Burlesque Theatre**

Burlesque, or comic theatre is the spectacle which seeks laughter from the audience. The subgenre was created by the rowdy *xaribaris* and other burlesque works from the Northern Basque Country. Such spectacles are organised around a particular event with the intention of denouncing it through satire, pantomime, and similar recourses. The characters within the representation are traditionally an engaged or married couple, given that marriage is often the principal theme. The couple are submitted to a peculiar parade through the town’s streets on the back of two donkeys, on which they sit facing backwards and using the animals’ tails as reigns. After this parade, they are taken to the town square where a representation is realised to laugh at the expense of the couple. If the Church or local authorities accept something that was viewed as inacceptable by the local community, youngsters from the area would organise a burlesque performance to denounce the event and warn the townspeople.
Given that the variety of comic representations is significant in the Northern Basque Country, the terminology employed to refer to these differing expressions overlaps in many cases. Below are the most representative examples of Basque burlesque theatre:17

1) The xaribari:

In Zuberoa, this is termed asto-lasterrak, in Low Navarre and the Lapurdi these farces are called tobera or tobera-mustra, and in Luzaide, karroxa. As farce or popular theatre, the xaribari is a comic version of the pastoral. They share the same structure, comprised of sections called pherediki and jelkaldi, but they are often shorter; sometimes they are organised as the preamble for a pastoral. Their beginning, however, consists of an asto-laster (also galarrots or zintzarrots in Basque, cencerrada in Spanish) or nocturnal musical parades through the town with the intention of waking the locals with the noises of rattles, cowbells, and shouts. Even so, the terminology overlaps, as mentioned above; the terms asto-laster or tobera-mustra are also used to refer to these satirical farces carried out to denounce the bad behaviour of some townspeople. Some farces were so cruel that they were prohibited by the authorities. Thematically, they do not solely deal with marriage; rather they critique various reproachable conducts: wife beaters, drunken husbands, promiscuous priests, and so on. In short, the theatre organised by the local youngsters reflects scandal. In any case, the principal theme of marriage can be affirmed, be it marriage between an older man and a young girl, the second marriage of a widow, or the wedding of the most beautiful girl in the town to a boy from a local town. During the initial cencerrada, the youngsters alert the town that they are going to perform a xaribari and that, if somebody wishes to stop it, they should buy them drinks for the day. After the cencerrada, the principal representation or tobera-mustra takes place in the town square: this consists of a trial with judges, a solicitor, lawyers, an usher, police officers, the defendant, and the witnesses. There are also two bertsolaris, one supporting the defendant,

17. As a demonstration of this diversity, one could mention the appearance of hosto bidea or berdura, a pathway made of maiz leaves linking the houses of the two people involved in an inadequate relationship, and giving natural elements a satirical twist.
one against. All the actors appear on the floats, often surrounded by horses and other characters (aside from the kabalkada). Nowadays, these are not organised very often.

2) Xaribari parades:
These are parades carried out by day, and, as they normally take place before the xaribaris, they are often given the same name. They are organised by the farce to introduce the actors that will participate in the show. In some cases, the parade acquires greater importance than the show itself and the youngsters spend more time in preparation; in these cases, the parade is termed kabalkada.

3) Xaribari serenade:
Briefly, this could be referred to as the nighttime version of the parades. The serenade, which is characteristic of the Northern Basque Country, is denominated by various forms: zintsarrotsak (in Zuberoa), galarrotsak (in Low Navarre), and the terms tupinak, turutak, kantoreak, or asto-lasterrak, amongst others. They are defined as recitals of cacophonous songs in which bad behaviour within a marriage is denounced; the performers use pots, pans, tubes, cowbells, and other items to make noise. They can also use musical instruments. Between sessions bertsos are sung to mock the people who are the objects of the serenade.

NEW ASTO-LASTER. AZKEN PHEREDIKIA.

The verses that you’ve heard
are hunched and lame
it’s not our fault
they don’t enjoy great fame.

The writer, unfortunately
hasn’t often got it right
and the people have spoken
of how he talked.
The livestock of the carnivorous ecologists is poisoned and our hunters’ prey is lost and gone.

Let us go to the shacks below Ohry’s peak to quench ourselves with the sweet herbs there.

\[(Xaribari, \text{asto-lasterra})\]
\textit{Txomin Peillon. “Ehizlariak eta Ekologistak”}. 2008. (Adapted)

\textbf{Tobera. The old man and the girl from Makea}

\textit{In Makea, a man aged 74 married a girl of 24. Xetre is the bertsolari on his side, Oxalde, is against him.}

\textit{Xetre:}

What blame can we place on today’s theme? Perhaps he who loves ages from wanting to wed? Think on it well, what judge can condemn this? Doesn’t an old chicken make the best broth?

\textit{Oxalde:}

Well, well, today’s theme is something else, The old man remembered marriage once past his best, Shouldn’t he be after a better candidate? This man is the Devil’s portrait! I bet he can’t even piss in that spot.

\[(Xaribari, \text{tobera})\]
The Didactic Genre

Ttakun-ttakun,
taka-ttaka,
tuku-ttun;
first comes the sound,
than it resounds,
Think now, and respond!

If one of the principal functions of oral literature is the transmission of characteristics and customs of a community, the concepts of norms for conduct and education form a vital part within the aspects that one generation must pass on to the next. Although all oral genres share this function, this genre in particular carries out this objective. It is a well-known fact that infant education in many cultures begins through song. Songs provoke first words, awaken creativity, and instigate games; however, songs also highlight the norms running from game to game, given that lullabies are evident all over the world; finally, riddles and puzzles aid the mental development of children. This genre contains a brief demonstration of these three functions.

Childhood Games

The objective of these songs, as explained above, centres upon the provision of ludic-didactic concepts within the process of infant education. They may be songs to accompany certain activities, or songs with a merely epideictic objective.\(^\text{18}\)

**Talotxin, talotxin**

Talo, talotxin,
our boy has five wells
come, grandmother,
with a big cake,
we'll satisfy our hunger
having soup.

---

\(^{18}\) Translations of the next examples have been taken from ETNIKER (1993) *Juegos infantiles en Vasconia* (Infant Games in the Basque Country).
TXALOPIN TXALO

Txalopin txalo, txalo eta txalo,
the cat is in the Chinese plum tree,
if it is, so be it, so be it, if it is,
he’s looking for new shoes for his feet.

GURE NESKATO, NESKATOTE

Our girl, little girl
in March it’s her birthday
another March, another year
our girl, little girl.

Our boy, little boy,
in April he is three,
another April, another year,
our boy, little boy.

Our girl, little girl,
in October she is eight,
another October, another year,
our girl, little girl.

Our boy, little boy,
in December he is ten,
another December, another year
our boy, little boy.

ATXEA MOTXEA

Atxea motxtea
perori pan,
your son is in the mill.
When I went to the mill,
I found a hare,
I threw a Stone at it,
knocked out an eye
I put another one in.

—Ding, dong, who is dead?
—Txomin the cobbler.
—What’s his sin?
—He killed the town’s dog and broke the Friday fast.

Lullabies

The songs sung by fathers, mothers, and grandparents to help the youngest in the household fall asleep have been transmitted from generation to generation in that moment, just before falling asleep.

LOA-LOA

Sleep, txuntxurruntxuntxurruntxuntxurrun berde\(^{19}\), sleep
Sleep, little blackberry, sleep deep.
father’s gone to Vitoria
he’s taken mother on a mule,
he’s earned a lot of money
he sold her on the way
go to sleep, sleep, sleep.

LITTLE BOY

Little boy is crying,
mother bring some milk,
bad father is in the tavern,
playing poker.
Father playing, mother working,
it’s such a shame,
thanks to you, little boy
you brighten up the home.

\(^{19}\) Txuntxurruntxuntxurruntxuntxurrun verde could be also translated as ‘on the green hill’.
If father would behave,
how we’d thank him,
and then I could bring
new shoes for your feet.
With eyes wide open
my dreams are so sweet.
father’s put your shoes in the oven
instead of meat.

Cursed game, damned, wicked, evil,
where did it come from?
My beautiful love, my man,
is lost to this affliction.
Crying and crying at such misfortune,
I’ve found no jubilation.
Since mother went to heaven,
I’ve received no affection.

THE SEA IS CLOUDY

The sea is cloudy
until the bay of Baiona
I love you more, my darling,
than the bird loves his son.

Father is remembering,
below the night-time sky.
I love you more, my darling,
than the fishes love the sea.

Food is cooking in the oven,
we’ll soon eat our dinner.
I love you more, my darling,
than good wood loves fire.

There are thousands of stars
filling the sky with light.
I love you more, my darling,
than the moon loves the night.

Sleep, sleep, child,
rest until the sun rises.
I love you more, my darling,
than sleep loves the darkness.

Now the child sleeps on,
angel, sleep.
I love you more, my darling,
than father loves me.

Riddles

In 1926, Resurreccion Maria de Azkue published a text entitled Igarki-zunak (Riddles) (Bilbao, 1926), in which he explains common riddles in Europe, and classifies the 186 examples gathered in the text into two types: descriptive riddles, which give information about the answer little by little; and suggestive riddles, which provide information indirectly.

SNOW

A blanket, without thread,
covering everything, but water.

THE YEAR

A tree with branches
each one has seven eggs.

BARBED WIRE

An old lady with one hundred teeth.

20. Resurrección María de Azkue’s work (Azkue, 1926) is available here: http://www.liburuklik.euskadi.net/handle/10771/10385


**TURNIP**

It goes in round, comes out long, 
goes in hard, and comes out soft.

**FEBRUARY**

The month in which women 
talk the least.

**FARTS**

It’s breath without a body.

**THE TONGUE**

This cave 
is always moist 
the dragon living there 
is surrounded by white walls.

**THE BELL**

With a long skirt, 
and a short tongue, 
you hear from afar, 
it’s calling sounds.

*R. M. Azkue. Igarkizunak.*

1926. *(Adapted)*
The Quotidian Genre

"Gezurra esan nuen Getarian
eta ni baino lehenago zen atarian."

"I told a lie in Getaria,
it got home before I did."

"Kanpaia nahi ez duenak aditu,
ez dezala soka mugitu."

"‘If you don’t want to hear the bells,
don’t pull the cord."

Some performances of oral literature happen on a daily basis: they do not require large audiences or extensive texts. It is enough to sing, tell, or recite a brief piece of popular knowledge transmitted from generation to generation, without being broken by younger generations. In this sense, these brief stories, sayings, and refrains do not gain special value in the moment of expression, nor do they represent great pieces alone; rather, they are understood as creations of a genre reflecting the dynamics of oral literature; these small pieces are works marking the difference in quality and value of a language. In the case of Basque oral literature, this anthology contains three examples of the everyday genre: jokes, refrains, and sayings and replies.

**Jokes**

Jokes are brief, amusing narrations, dramatized on occasion; the force of the narration always happens at the end. In the Basque Country, jokes have traditionally been a recourse employed to pass time, principally in friendly, or dinnertime conversation. Jokes are significant indicators of a culture: on the one hand, they reflect points of tension within a community, and, on the other, they give an idea of the type of humour shared by the members of a culture.

Basque jokes do not have any relevant peculiarity in comparison with those from other cultures; in an attempt to highlight differences, one might say that Basque humour is based on real, local events, and is often presented through short stories or occurrences from some
friend or well-known person. The most well-known protagonists in the world of Basque jokes are the bertsolaris Fernando Amezketarra and Lazkao Txiki.

THE CARPENTER AND HIS SON

One day, a carpenter and his son were working on the priest’s house. The priest invited the father to lunch, but not his son. At the table, the carpenter started to pray aloud, ‘in the name of the father and of the holy spirit, amen. In the name of the father, and of the holy spirit, amen.’ The priest said to him that he’d forgotten ‘the son’.

‘Ah.’ He replied that the son was waiting by the door and the priest had to invite him to lunch as well.

THE PRIESTS WHO WANTED TO MARRY

Three priests debated about whether or not they should be allowed to marry, to which one responded:

‘We won’t see it, but our children will.’

LAZKAO TXIKI AND THE JOB

The other day Lazkao Txiki was asked

‘How many siblings do you have?’
‘Six, three sisters and three brothers.’
‘And how many are living?’
‘Living, only me.’
‘And the others?’
‘No, the others work.’

FERNANDO AMEZKETARRA AND THE WEIGHT OF THE MOON

One day, four youngsters bumped into Fernando Amezketarra; the four of them believing themselves to be very intelligent, decided to have a laugh at the expense of the bertsolari. When Fernando was
close by, one said, ‘Brothers, Fernando will clarify our doubts; he must know something like that, surely?

‘Yes, yes, it’ll be whatever he says.’

‘Fernando, we would like to know how much the moon weighs.’

‘And you, intelligent men, aren’t you ashamed of asking an uneducated peasant man like me such an easy question?’

Whilst he replied, he drew a circle on the ground with his cane and then divided it into four equal parts. Pointing at one part, he asked one, ‘How much is this?’

‘That? A quarter.’

‘And this?’ he asked pointing at another part.

‘That’s another quarter.’

‘And this?’ he said pointed at the third part.

‘Another quarter.’

‘And this?’ he asked pointing at the fourth part.

‘A quarter too.’

‘In which case, it’s easy to work out how much the moon weighs: a pound, no more, no less.’ And he went on his way, leaving the youngsters behind embarrassed.

Proverbs

Refraims or proverbs (errefain, esakune, errefrau, esaera zahar, zuburbizt, or errapu in Basque) are brief phrases and expressions that reflect popular knowledge about life and the area. Paremiology is the discipline dedicated to the study of refrains. They are short and brief, and, in order to achieve this brevity, they principally use ellipses and parallelisms. This brevity is vital, as this allows greater mnemonic value and the receptor can easily remember the information. Whatever the case, other characteristics contribute to their memorability: rhyme, rhythm, puns, and so on.

Haritz eroriri orok egur

(A fallen tree makes fire wood) [Take advantage of someone’s misfortune]
Uholde handienak ere itsasoan baretzen dira
(The biggest floods are calm when they reach the sea) [Every cloud has a silver lining]

Erle joanak eztirik ez
(The bee that’s gone brings no honey) [A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush]

Herriak bere legea, etxeak bere aztura
(Countries have their laws, houses their customs) [To each his own]

Bakea ez da diruz erosia
(Money doesn’t buy peace) [Money can’t buy happiness]

Gaizki jan, gaizki lan
(Bad food, little work) [The belly carries the legs]

Ilunpeko jostea, argitako lotsea
(Sewing by night, shame by day) [Haste makes waste]

Hobe da ogi hutsa, abo hutsa baino
(Better dry bread than nothing) [Something is better than nothing]

Lagunaren behiak erroa luze
(The neighbours’ cows have long udders) [The grass is always greener on the other side]

Motel oro, beti hitz-nahi
(A stutterer always wants to talk) [Those who cannot always want to try harder]

Ondo eta azkar, usoak hegan
(Well and quickly, birds in flight) [More haste, less speed]

Ardi galdua atzemante liteke, aldi galdua ez
(A lost sheep can be found, but not lost time) [Time wasted, not regained]

Geldirik dagoen erlojuak ere, egunean bietan ondo markatzen
(Even a stopped watch tells the time twice a day) [A blind man may sometimes hit the mark]
Nola soinu, hala dantza
(Such a sound, such a dance) [Do as you would be done by]

Errege tontua, asto korotua!
(Stupid King, a crowned donkey)

Odolak su bage diraki
(Blood boils with no flame)

Oihan orotan otso bana
(Every forest has a wolf) [Every rose has its thorn]

Orik ez den lekuan, azeria errege
(In a place without dogs, the fox is king) [Where there’s no rule, chaos reigns]

Oren ardia otsoak jan
(Everyman’s sheep are eaten by the wolf) [Where everyman is a master the world goes mad]

Dabilen harriari ez zaika goroldiorik lotzen
(A rolling stone gathers no moss)

Hobe da gutxi eta kito, ez asko izan eta zorrezt ito
(It’s better to have little and get by, than lots and drown in debts)

Saltzen dabilena galtzen dabil
(He who sells loses)

Ur joanari presarik egin ez
(No rush for past water)

Hiru belarritara ezkeror, ez da isilpekorik...
(If three people hear something, it’s no longer a secret) [What three people know, the whole world knows]

Koldo Mitxelena. Textos arcaicos vascos. 1964. (Adapted)
Sayings and replies

The saying and reply (zirto or ditxo in Basque) is a humorous phrase or improvised reply in response to another phrase. The person adept at using sayings and replies is called ditzolaria, testularia, or zirtolaria. Despite being a practice extended throughout the Basque Country, only those authors who give the most amusing and unexpected responses received one of these adjectives. The replies are typically very brief and principally based on rhyme.

“Erosi diat astoa…” “I’ve bought a donkey”
“Hik beharko duk hik, lastoa!” “Well, you’re going to need straw!”

***

“Nehork ez hil nahi…” “Nobody wants to die…”
“Baina zahartu bai!” “But they they want to grow old?”

***

“Mihiak ez du hezurrik hausten…” “A tongue breaks no bones…”
“Baina bai hautsarazten!” “But it can make them break!”

***

“Asto bi zeuzkaagu guk etxean, asto bi.”
“We have two donkeys at home, two”
“Bi?”
“Two?”
“Bi, bai, bi: atzo ezkero ukuiluan dagoen hori eta hi.”
“Yes, two: the one that’s been in the stable since yesterday, and you.”

***

“Horixe da txakurtxo polita… zer izen du?”
“What a lovely dog, what’s it called?”
“Pitxita.”
“Joe.”
“Eta putzik egiten al du ipurdia itxita?”
“And does he know how to keep his bottom closed and blow?”

***
“Barato, barato!”
“Cheap, cheap!”
“Hi haiz aparato!”
“You’re a device”

***

“Excusen, excusen!”
“Excuse me, excuse me!”
“Hi adina bagaituk esku hutsen!”
“We’re the same as you, with nothing in our hands!”

***

“What cigarettes do you smoke?”
“Ganador…”
“Winner…”
“Hala jartzen dik hor!”
“That’s what they put there!”

***

“You have a boyfriend, don’t you?”
“Bai”
“Yes”
“Is he here?”
“No, he’s in the army.”
“No; soldadu dago.”
“Where”
“In Lerida.”
“Orduan eukiko dezu azkurea heridan!”
“Well, you must be gagging for it!”
The Ritual Genre

Baga, biga, higa,
laga, boga, Sega,
zai, zoi, bele,
arma, tiro, pun!
Iliki miliki,
gerrena plat
olio zopa,
kikili salda,
urrup, edan edo
klik!
Iki mili kili klik!

According to various experts (Markaida, 1991), in comparison with other genres demonstrated above, the pieces included within the ritual genre are lowbrow art forms, or secondary genres, much like those within the quotidian genre. In effect, they do not require long texts or great audiences; however, they represent the conglomeration of sayings, stories, and songs that are shared by the community of one geographical and historical location. The ritual genre is comprised of oral pieces used in events that are systematically repeated throughout the development of the life of a community.

The difference between the quotidian and ritual genres is unclear given that there are various performances that may occur repeatedly during routine daily life. The anthology Bertso eta kantak [Bertsos and Songs] (two volumes; Etor, 1991) published by Patri Urkizu (Urkizu, 1991) lists 40 moments, situations, and types.
Table 12. Classification in the text Bertso eta kantak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>In favour of the Basque Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Congregations</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Fables</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Lullabies and infant songs</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>In the bar</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Carnivals and asto-lasterrak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Xikitoak(^{21})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>On the rounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Goodbye greetings for going to sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Professions</td>
</tr>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Pelota players</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Dancers</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Deaths, prisons, and the like</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Acts of war</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Themes of love</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Serenades under a window</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Solitude</td>
</tr>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>The fountain</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Saying goodbye to fiancés</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Allegories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Dialectics</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Praise</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Speaking of sins</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>The desperate</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Marriage vows</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Against gossiping</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Disinterest</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Amusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Chronicles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some of the types in this classification have been included in other genres within this anthology, the diversity of options highlights that some performances only occur when they take place in conjunction with determined factors. In the text *Oral Poetry: An Introduction* (Minnesota, 1990), Canadian critic Paul Zumthor (Zumthor, 1990) considers the circumstances of oral poetry and, referring the moment of the performance, establishes four types: conventional, natural, historical, and other. Conventional performances are those which occur during a celebration linked to the cultural agenda of the community, such as Christmas; those concerning nature are those which consider changes in the weather, such as the seasons, and the rainy season; historical performances pay homage to previous events like, for example, a war; all other performances are included in the final category.

As regards Joxerra Garzia’s classification, the ritual genre tends to centre upon five themes: firstly, songs, narratives, and expressions which serve to explain natural events. Oral literature is plagued by ref-

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\(^{21}\) *Xikitoak*: erotic couplets sung by shepherds in the Northern Basque Country.
erences to nature, whether seasonal changes, customs observed during specified dates, or warnings about future meteorological changes. In second place, health is as important a theme as nature: sayings and songs for healing, or supplications for someone’s speedy recovery are some examples which have survived intergenerational oral transmission. Thirdly, those who enjoy both nature and good health will typically want employment, and popular literature also serves to maintain ancient, essential professions in collective memory. Many explanations of medieval jobs have been learned through songs. The person with good health and employment often fears losing them, and, in order to deal with this fear, oral literature provides this person with two tools: on the one hand, and in fourth place, is witchery and the evil eye, providing reasons to explain one’s disgrace, or that of another; on the other hand, the fifth theme may concern prayers or recourses for difficult times. In any case, in comparison with the classification above and that proposed by Garzia, some typologies have no equivalents (such as the xikitoak, erotic pieces by shepherds from the Northern Basque Country), but, even so, all of these examples belong to this genre.

Regarding the classification in this anthology, the common denominator of rituality within this genre should be highlighted. That is to say, the special character that emerges when, within the cycles of life, certain conditions occur; without this factor, many of the works included in the section could probably be placed within another genre. In any event, the classification endeavours to emphasise the value of these pieces for anthropology and ethnography.

**An Angel Says**

An angel says
depth in the forest
that tonight is born
a son of our town.

Drinking wine and
recovering after sleep,
to this child
we must sing sweet.
At the gates of Bethlehem  
I did see Jesus,  
and all my sins,  
they were taken.

Come, oh shepherds,  
come to me.  
Leave the flock,  
let’s go to Bethlehem.

SAINT JUAN OF LETAINA PORT
Saint Juan of Letaina Port.  
This afternoon  
fourteen old women playing the trumpet  
on top of a fat person.

In Saint Juan everything is burned,  
witches and mosquitos,  
to ensure the good plants in the garden  
are clean.

In order that our good customs  
stay well and clean  
let us rid ourselves of  
dirty songs and dance.

Live, live, live, in Saint Juan  
let us dance on the north wind.  
Oh, oh, oh, we’re going to Saint Juan.

BEAUTIFUL MOON
Beautiful moon, shine the way,  
I have a long path ahead.  
Tonight I want to find my love,  
lead me to her yard.
The Ritual Genre

FISH SELLER

I am a woman selling fish
everything that sailor brings from the sea,
be it bream, hake, tuna, or sardine,
be it clam, dogfish, anchovy, or eel.

OH, PELLO, PELLO

¡Oh! Pello, Pello, I’m tired,
shall I go to sleep?
Spin and straight away, straight away,
spin and straight away, yes.

Oh! Pello, Pello, I’ve spun
shall I go to sleep?
Make the yarn and straight away
make the yarn and straight away, yes.

Oh! Pello, Pello, I’ve done the yarn,
shall I go to sleep?
Wind it up and straight away
wind it up and straight away, yes.

Oh! Pello, Pello I’ve wound it,
shall I go to sleep?
Sew and straight away, away
sew and straight away, yes.

Oh! Pello, Pello, I’ve sewn
shall I go to sleep?
It’s daytime, tomorrow, tomorrow,
it’s daytime, you’ll come tomorrow.

BLESSED BREAD

Blessed bread holy,
made in the land,
blessed by heaven
when we eat this,
let my soul be saved.

Witch trials

Arriola, marriola, kin kuan kin,
portan zela, porta min,
arritxinalet, segera, megera,
kiru, karun, pek e itzau.

Let her die, amen.
Let her drown, so be it.
Let her burst, amen.
Let lightening strike her down, so be it.
Let lupus kill her, amen.
Let her spine break, so be it.
Let eleven thousand devils take her, amen.
Let a beam strike her head and emerge from her talons
and burst right here, so be it.
The Applied Genre

The classification of an art form in constant evolution should always contain an open section, in order to make way for the study of pieces and genres created in recent periods. Joxerra Garzia classifies the group of expressions originating in the hybridisation of contemporary periods as the applied genre (Garzia, 2007). This hybridisation may be due to modern media (television, radio, the internet, and so on), or to the appearance of new customs (such as those of religion). In this sense, texts created to be read out on the radio, conversations which are broadcast live on television, or recordings published online as podcasts, amongst others, can all be studied as texts. Unfortunately, no significant research has been carried out about this group of examples; in the case of the religious works, however, there are a series of texts dedicated to the analysis of Basque sermons, which form the only subgenre demonstrated within this section.

Sermons

The sermon is a religious discourse given by a priest during mass with the objective of predicating the doctrine of good example. Originally, the sermon, or homily, would be given in Latin, but as that the ordinary members of the public could not understand the Church’s language, this was adapted to vernacular languages after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s; however, the rest of the mass service continued to be carried out in Latin. This change instigated the appearance of Basque dialects within the church. Since then, Basque sermons have often been dogmatic (if they concern dogmas), mystical (if they are about mystery), aesthetic (if they refer to religious practice), or exhortations (if they consider moral themes). The themes are often religious and there is no great difference with sermons in other languages; there is no lack of sermons about carnal sin or about the agony of hell; the sermons with political references, however, are no more than loose, unedited manuscripts. Even so, sermons concerning the first commandment tend to have local references, given that they present lists of local superstitions.

Basque predication provides an interesting source for research given that many priests and vicars have spoken both inside and out-
side the Basque Country as missionaries. The most relevant orators are, amongst others, Txomin Agirre, Juan Bautista Agirre, Joakin Lizarraga, Juan Mateo Zabala, and the missionary Bizente Sarria, who visited California.

The example chosen for this anthology, ‘Sermon of God’s grace’, was written by Juan Mateo Zabala. The entire text contains references to wars and trials of the period, the King of Spain, and begging farmers. The text is reproduced as it was published by Father Luis Villasante (Villasante, 1996), a member of the Basque Language Academy, with the aim that readers can appreciate the early nineteenth-century written Biscayan dialect. Zabala was a Franciscan priest born in Bilbao in 1777. He was a missionary throughout Biscay and he wrote multiple works about the Basque language. Zabala’s unedited manuscripts are conserved in the Franciscan convent in Zarautz.

**Sermon on God’s Grace**

*Sta in sorte propositionis. Eccli. c.17.v.24*

1. If you have earned the kinship and grace of God, work to keep it. Man cannot have greater joy in the world than through His grace; as such, the greatest madness among men is, if they want this divine virtue, making little effort to achieve this grace and not lose it once given. In order that you have it before your very eyes, that you might know what God’s grace does in our souls, I want to show you this madness; and for this reason, I’ll tell you two things in this sermon: firstly, what this grace does to our soul; and, secondly, which we’ll come to, I’ll tell you what little you might do for this grace. On the first point, I’ll endeavour to express what immeasurable honour and greatness God’s grace brings to our soul; and just by knowing this, you’ll know how blind we’ve been in not wanting such magnificent grace.

**First Part**

2. The miracles that God’s grace carries out for us are so great and so divine that nobody would believe them unless faith showed them to us. The beauty that it brings is so marvellous
that it can scarcely be matched in the eyes of man; there are no eyes that see it, nor ears that hear it. It amplifies the light of the moon and the stars to the greatest brightness; yet, despite uniting such light, it is darkness compared with the soul of the Lord’s grace. And if we saw such a soul in grace, we’d think we were in heaven; the most beautiful things in all the world would repulse us; our only desire would be to keep looking, we would be there stupefied and amazed, with no thought of hunger, thirst, or tiredness. As such, God does not want us to see our soul in grace, so that we do not lose ourselves, blinded by the beauty of the sight, like Lucifer lost himself upon seeing his beauty; for on seeing such beauty in ourselves we would believe ourselves God’s equal; much like he thought. The angels in heaven are surprised and muted before the beauty of the soul in grace; their greatest wish is to observe it ceaselessly, as St John Chrysostom says. And King David wished to express the same when the richman in heaven said he’d like to see his face and to come closer, close, that he might see it. Seeing such marvellous beauty, they asked the others: Who comes forth who is as beautiful as a morning star, as marvellous as the moon, as luminescent as the sun, and more terrifying than a well-trained army in the face of the enemy? The Holy angels say all this and more of the soul in grace.

3. But what miracle seeing angels like that, absorbed by the beauty of the soul, if God himself also wished to see it, be with it, speak to it, says St John Chrysostom? And that’s what David wanted to hear when he said: the King wants to see your beauty. What sweet words he says, like miracle, because a miracle is as good as her! He says to her: you’re so beautiful, my love, your sight is worth seeing. Oh, how beautiful you are! Other times he calls her his beloved wife, his dove, his only, and sometimes, his queen. Through all these words he wishes us to know how great the love that he professes is, how high grace raises the soul, and, as such, it becomes his beloved wife, and so she’ll be Queen not only of a piece of land, nor of villages, but of earth and heaven. So St Paul of the Apostles says that he who is blessed
by grace has inherited from the Holy Father along with Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Apostle says the same in another place. He says that grace makes us the sons of God; and if we’re his sons, we inherit all his patrimony. Let us stay here a while, and let us watch, the best we can, in order that we might know what St Paul says of how the grace transforms us. He says it makes us God’s inheritors, brothers of Jesus Christ in this inheritance. This inheritance gives us the right to reach all the things that are Jesus Christ’s and, as such, when he says the Holy Father has the whole world in his hands, he might say he gave us those things too. Ignite your feelings and desires, and try and see if it’s possible to find something which does not give you grace. You will search in vain, and you’ll find nothing, and nobody could make anything spring to mind; what gives us grace is not red gold, nor precious stone, nor land, nor sun, nor moon, nor sky, nor angels; is it God himself, with his goodness, his kindness, and his knowledge, and that is why King David said to the Lord, you are my inheritance.

Look a while, beloved, this great marvel that grace gives the soul. Awaken finally from this lethargy, and observe the happiness that God desires you, believe in what might be done through His might: you have it in your hands, if you wish to be God’s child. God has given you the right to be His Son, says St John, the Evangelist. The authorities of this world, who are great Kings, but mortal and perishable like us, a grain of dust, a drop of dung, that will die like us, and become earth like us, and will rot in a grave, they don’t want us as enemies, they scarcely speak to us, scarcely look at us. But God, omnipotent and immortal, as owner and Lord of all the world, creator of heaven and earth, does not only watch us, does not only want to be our friend, does not only want us to live with Him, but also wants us to be His children and leaves us so that when our own will wants we can become His children through His grace. Oh, what incomparable kindness! Oh how incredible God’s love for man! Oh blessed charity! What is it Lord, that you might remember man, or that you might raise up man’s son so high?
One man, because he has a little more than another, because he has more livestock, or more money, if he scarcely wants to look at another, if he scarcely wants to talk, if others scarcely want to talk to him, scarcely want him as friend and companion, and You are Lord of heaven and earth, and the man poor, weak, and tired; You, adored by angels, the son, the moon, the stars, and all things, and the man, a shadow fleeing from birth; You fill the world with Your unlimited greatness, and the man, a piece of earth: You are all things, and the man is something You made from nothing, something You moulded with Your hands; and, even so, You don’t only look at the man who is nothing in comparison with You, You don’t only want him to be Your friend, You don’t only allow him to live with You in Your house, eating at Your table; not only that, You want him to be Your son, and You order him to be, giving him the right to become the son of God whenever he wants. What happiness and joy, what freedom wouldn’t give us this right that is God-given? What mustn’t be we do to reach this greatness? Why mustn’t we have this grace is that makes us God’s children?

Tell me, beloved, if the King of Spain were to take you as his own child, if he declared that you were to be recognised as the Prince of Asturias, if he chose you to be inheritor of the throne and all his patrimony, how great would be your honour? And what sort of joy would fill your heart? And if you were told and sent to his palace, to live there, to eat at his table, and walk with him, with all the greatness that is begotten a King’s son; would you postpone leaving, day after day, for house work, for a little money, for some livestock, or for some diversion or game? For nothing. Before I believed that you would leave all your labours, money, livestock, parties, and the rest, and that, wherever you were, you would go, as quickly as possible, to wherever the King was, to see yourself in such great honour. But what could be the goodness and honour bestowed upon you by the King of Spain in comparison to that given by of God? Nothing, nothing, my Christians; the relationship that the King could give you wouldn’t make you more than the son of another man like you,
and you would continue being mortal and perishable, a grain of earth, and full of problems and fears, like before; however, grace makes you a celestial Son of God, and immortality is not comparable to the patrimony and the kingdom that the King would give you, they are mere pieces of lands; but the inheritance that grace gives you is all of the celestial patrimony. [...]
Conclusion

Oral literature, above all in comparison to written literature, has always been relegated to second place; although it is considered the origin of all learned literature, it has scarcely received the attention or fame attributed to the literature of libraries. However, the late US expert in comparative oral tradition, John Miles Foley, would often use a formidable example to reflect the value of orality (Foley, 2004). If we were to resume the existence of homo sapiens within one year, which is to say, if the genesis of homo sapiens was 1st January and the current day was 31st December at midnight, when did humans start writing? We cannot know for sure when man began to talk; however, the most ancient written remains allow us to calculate the birth of writing. According to Foley, the oldest written code was the arithmetic system of the Near East, created 8,000 years BC; in the ‘homo sapiens’ calendar, this translates as 22nd November. The Greek alphabet is from 19th December (775 BC), the Gutenberg printing press is from 27th December, and that tool that is so indispensable nowadays, called the internet, is scarcely 15 minutes old (23:44 31st December in the ‘homo sapiens’ calendar, corresponding to 1997 in our era). As such, until the development of artificial systems of communication, it should be noted that human beings transmitted their ideas, pains, and happiness orally, sung or spoken, as they were born biologically prepared for this.

Unfortunately, many of these thoughts and experiences have gone with the wind. The act of not considering them interesting manifestations has excluded an endless number of works of oral literature from the field work and archiving begun by Romanticism. The genres presented in this anthology are in debt to the romantic trend (for beginning their archiving), but there are some shortcomings: the boisterous couplets of the asto-lasterrak, the completely unexpected sayings and replies, the jokes from one period or another, and so on; there are many pieces and genres which are still today not duly documented, above all because they did not enjoy the prestige they deserved in their period. Meanwhile, together with this deficiency, there are many pieces which are not preserved in their totality, whether because only a few fragments are known, because not all the essential information about
their transmission is stated, or, in the case of some bertsos, because the melody employed for the emission remains unknown.

The lack of complete archives may be the cause or the effect of the lack of systematisation within such a multidisciplinary field, but it is clear that oral literature does not have a defined classification which can respond to the plurality of manifestations that it encompasses: the lyric-epic and ritual genres are clear examples of such a situation. The detailed research carried out by some disciplines has contributed to the definition and development of some genres; the case of balladry and ancient couplets within the field of literature, or pastoral and masquerade in that of theatre are the most significant examples. Even so, the additions of these contributions are yet to be made, this is to say a multidisciplinary system which brings together all the similar oral genres is still to be created\(^{22}\).

Fortunately, thanks to the work carried out by researchers within different fields such as literature, theatre, anthropology, and musicology, as well as other areas, a sufficient number of pieces have been preserved so as to create a prolific collection on oral literature from the Basque Country. The examples presented in each genre have been selected after a long analytical process. In this sense, this anthology aims to reflect the diversity and abundance of Basque orality, given that these two values are those which best demonstrate how the secrets of the survival and life of Basque culture reside in oral literature.

\(^{22}\) It must be mentioned that this anthology makes no reference to the art of puppetry, which nonetheless is inherently connected to oral traditions. The use of puppets and marionettes could be related to many genres (for instance, Popular theatre and Didactic genre) and subgenres (e.g. Fables, Stories and Legends) of orality. The Tolosa Puppet International Centre (www.topictolosa.com) is a significant point of reference in this area.
INTERESTING LINKS

Bertsolaritza:
• www.bertsoa.com
• www.bertsozale.com
• www.bertsulari.net
• http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/22ii
• http://www.mintzola.com

Couplets:
• http://www.trikimailua.com/sailak/koplenzerrenda.htm

Lyric-epic Genre:
• http://www.badok.info/diskoa.php?id_disko=347&cid_artista=141
• http://www.basqueliterature.com/en/basque/historia/ahozkoa/baladak
• http://www.amaroa.com/elezaharrak
• http://klasikoak.armiarma.com/testuak/herri14001.htm

Popular Theatre:
• http://www.berria.info/pastoralao4/pastoralak.php
• www.suazia.com
• http://www.carnivalkingofeurope.it/pdf/maskaradak.pdf
• http://www.eke.org/eu/kultura/antzerkigintza/toberak

Didactic Genre:
• www.ueu.org/download/liburua/Kantutik_jolasera.pdf
• http://www.liburuklik.euskadi.net/handle/10771/10385
• http://www.ahotsak.com/gaiak/030501/?page=2

Quotidian Genre:
• http://www.ikasbil.net/web/ikasbil/txistea
• http://www.ametza.com/bbk/htdocs/hasiera.htm
• http://www.cke.org/eu/kultura/bertsularitza/bertsuzen-arauak/ditxolaria- eta-koplaria

Ritual Genre:
• www.ueu.org/download/liburua/DOINUZAHARREN.pdf

Applied Genre:
• http://www.euskaltzaindia.net/dok/iker_jagon_tegiak/21011.pdf
• http://www.euskaltzaindia.com/dok/euskera/49727.pdf
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* Resurrección María de Azkue’s work (Azkue, 1926) is available here: http://www.liburuklik.euskadi.net/handle/10771/10385


Urkizu, Patricio:

Pastoral: antzezleak oholtza gainean.
La Pastoral: actores y actrices sobre el tablado.
The pastoral: actors and actresses on the stage.

Pastoral: eszenatokia.
La Pastoral: el escenario.
The pastoral: the stage.

Pastoral: antzezleak oholtza gainean.
La Pastoral: actores y actrices sobre el tablado.
The pastoral: actors and actresses on the stage.
The Abraham pastoral: april 1928.

Pastoraletako publikoa.  El público de las pastorales.  The public at a pastoral.
Zamalzaina
Gerrian zaldi gonadun baten itxura darama. Maskaradaren pertsonaia nagusia da, dantzaririk trebeena.

Lleva una falda con forma de caballo en la cintura. Es el personaje principal de la mascarada, el bailarín más hábil.

He wears a skirt with a horse on the belt. The masquerade’s main protagonist and most adept dancer.

Txerreroa

Tiene un bastón de cuya punta cuelga una cola de caballo. Lleva seis cascabeles de bronce en la cintura.

He carries a cane with a horse’s tail hanging from the end. Six bronze rattles are in his belt.

Gathuzaina
Pantografo baten itxura duen tresna bat darama; tresna horrekin jendearen gauzak hartzen ditu.

Lleva un instrumento que parece un pantógrafo; lo utiliza para cogerle cosas a la gente.

He carries a sort of pantograph which is used to seize things from the audience.
Kantiniersa
XIX. mendeko itxurako kantinera da.
Una cantinera del siglo XIX.
A nineteenth-century barmaid.

Entseinaria
Zuberoako bandera daramana da.
La persona que porta la bandera suletina.
The person carrying the Zuberoan flag.

Marexalak
Zamalzainen errementariak dira, hiru edo lau. Patroiak, mailua ez ezik, larruzko amantala ere erabiltzen du.
Son tres o cuatro herreros de zamalzain. El patrón, además de un martillo, lleva un delantal de cuero.
Three or four blacksmiths for Zamalzaina. Their master carries a hammer and wears a leather apron.

Kherestuak
Zamalzainen bi zikiratzaileak dira, patroia eta mutila, eta Bearnoko hizkeran mintzo dira.
Son los dos castradores de zamalzain, el patrón y el aprendiz, que utilizan el habla de Béarn.
Zamalzain’s two castrators, the master and the apprentice, who use the Occitan dialect of Béarn (different from Basque).
Jaun-andreak
Son los directores de la danza. El hombre lleva pantalones y bastón, la mujer un vestido blanco y ligero.
Directors of the dance. The man wears trousers and carries a cane, the woman has a light, white dress.

Laborariak
Gizon-emakumeak dira; nekazariak dira eta jantzi ilunak dituzte. Gizonak akuilua darama; andreak, saskia.
Son agricultores, hombres y mujeres; visten ropas oscuras.
Male and female farmers wearing dark clothing. The man has spurs, the woman a basket.

Kükulleroak
Dantzari gazteenak dira.
Los bailarines más jóvenes.
The youngest dancers.

Xorrotxak
Zorrotzaileak dira, patroia eta mutila. Tresnak zorrozten ibiltzen dira; buruan, katagorri disekatua duen kapela dute.
Son dos afiladores, el patrón y el aprendiz. Andan afilando instrumentos; llevan un sombrero con una ardilla disecada.
Two knife-grinders, the master and the apprentice. They walk by filing instruments and wear hats with stuffed squirrels.
Buhameak
Zurezko ezpata handi bana erabiltzen dute.
Llevan una espada de madera.
They carry wooden swords.

Kauterak
Son seis caldereros y uno de ellos viste de médico (medezina). Llevan bastones hechos con raíces que portan cascabeles de bronce. Utilizan ropa vieja y ajironada, para reflejar su humilde procedencia. Uno de los caldereros se llama Pitxu.
Six boilermakers, one dressed as a doctor (medezina). They carry canes made of roots bearing bronze rattles. Their clothing is old and torn, to reflect their humble origins. One is called Pitxu.