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Mariasun Landa / Writer

Utopia is the motor of history and in May 1968 we experienced that

Our weekly magazine Euskonews will reach its tenth anniversary in 2008. To mark this event, within a very extensive programme of activities, every month until December we will publish a special interview with an important figure in the recent history of our country. It is the best gift we can give the thousands of readers who read our magazine every week.



Mariasun Landa is one of the most representative values in Basque literature. She is a writer who is committed to her society and who has masterfully excelled in the field of children's literature. Furthermore, her creations in Basque have been translated into many languages. There isn't a house in the Basque Country without at least one book by Mariasun Landa.

From my point of view Mariasun Landa has attained a level that had never been reached by Basque women writers before...

I am a little puzzled at what you're saying, because I do not feel that way. At least, I am not too conscious of that and I don't want to seem as if I am shy either. It seems to me that ever since I learnt Basque I have used, in as much as I have been capable of, the linguistic tools that were at my reach, and that in children's literature have borne some fruit that may become known abroad. In any case, if I am to tell the truth, for me the way of literature has to be a very risky path, and when I published *La fiesta en la habitación de al lado* (A party in the room next door), an autobiographic piece of narrative in Spanish, I did so because I feel that, as a literary author, I still have a lot of work to do. Therefore, I do not at all feel like somebody who has reached the summit. On the contrary, I would say I am continuously looking for new ways, and with this new book I have not really noticed too much the passage from the world of juvenile literature to that of literature for adults; what I did notice was the lack of skill and ability to go from short stories to long works. In this transit I have been moving with difficulty, working a lot, and I have learnt to do so consciously. Therefore, that pompous phrase might feel nice to me, but, at the same time, that is not what I feel inside.

Agreed, but those of us who can appreciate it from the outside have that feeling. Mount Everest is some 8000 metres high and you have reached 6000... whereas the rest of the women writers in Basque are only at about 4000 meters. For now, at least, you are above.

You need to consider that in the sphere in which I work, that is to say, children's and young people's literature, for some people is just second-class literature. For those who believe in true literature, well, no; there are the classics of children's and young people's literature, who are on the very base of general literature: Stevenson, Lewis Carroll, Carlo Collodi and others. Although they are great books, according to

Mariasun Landa Etxebeste (Errenteria, 1949)

Graduate in Philosophy and the Arts at the Sorbonne University in 1973. She is currently Head Lecturer of Literature Didactics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV / EHU).

She has collaborated in numerous magazines and newspapers in the Basque Country; however, her creative work has particularly focussed on children's and young people's literature in the Basque language. Author of around thirty books for children, most of her work has been translated into Spanish, Catalan, Galician, and other foreign languages: English, French, German, Greek, Arabic, Korean and Albanian.

These are some of her published works: *Amets uhinak* (1982), *Kaskarintxo* (1982), *Elisabete lehoi domatzailea* (1983), *Txan fantasma* (1984), *Izar berdea* (1985), *Iholdi* (1988), *Izaba txikia* (1988), *Maria eta aterkia* (1988), *Alex* (1990), *Irma* (1990), *Kleta bizikleta* (1990), *Kleta bizikleta* (1991), *Elisabete lehoi domatzailea* (1997), *Ahatetxoa eta sahatz negartia* (1997), *Amona, zure Iholdi* (1997), *Joxepi dendaria* (2000), *Sorgina eta maisua* (2000), *Galtzerdi suicida* (2001), *Krokodiloa ohe azpian* (2002), *Nire eskua zurean* (2003), *Inurri bitxia* (2004), *Izar berdea = The gran star* (2005), *Iholdi* (2005), *Izaba Txikia* (2005).

Mariasun Landa received the Lizardi Prize for Children's Literature in the Basque language with the story *Txan Fantasma* in 1982, the Euskadi Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in 1991 with the work *Alex*, and the National Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature from the Spanish Ministry of Culture in 2003 with the work *Un cocodrilo bajo la cama*.

Iholdi and *Un cocodrilo bajo la cama* were on IBBY's List of honour in 1992 and 2006, respectively and *Elefante corazón de pájaro* was short listed for the White Raven label in 2001, which is produced by the renowned International Youth Library in Munich.

In 2004, she received the Commendable Citizen's Medal awarded by the City Council of San Sebastián and the City of Errenteria's Medal. She has recently published the autobiographical novel *La fiesta en la habitación de al lado* (Errein 2007) and was a candidate for the Andersen International Prize 2008.

Author



Josemari VELEZ DE MENDIZABAL
AZKARRAGA



the cannon or in terms of general literature, all of this is second-class and this is something we, the authors of children's literature, are fully aware of.

You have mentioned your beginnings and I would like to comment that we were born in the same year and, as far as I have read, you learnt Basque when you were 24 years old, whereas I did so when I was 21...

Such as the characteristics of our generation, don't you agree?



That's right. I don't know if this happened to you as it did to me, and that you started to write to a certain extent in order to compensate for the blank spaces that we appreciated in literature...

In my case I would say so, yes, I started to write in Basque because of all the lack of literature in that language that I could see. Writing, in itself, being a writer, comes to me from way back before, in the past. I had wanted to be a writer since I was a kid and I will not say that there was something that everybody knew, because it was my secret, and the philosophy studies that I carried out in Paris were, to a considerable extent, in order to be a writer afterwards.

After living for four years in Paris, I wanted to heal the wound that I had been dragging around for some time with the Basque language, and once I got back I entered the world of the ikastolas (Basque schools). Not like in a current ikastola, as they were then, in 1974, something quite different. They were in their beginnings and I went in to learn Basque and then —at the same time as I was learning Basque— I realised that in the world of Basque and in this world of the ikastolas there were certain clear and manifest blank spaces. My pupils then —who were 6, 7, and 8 years old— had no books to read and that, coupled with my love for literature that I brought from before... turned me into a Basque writer.

It is therefore true that, to a considerable extent, I began to write in Basque for the reasons that you have pointed out, to compensate the blank spaces that existed. The writing came to me from long before then. Besides, for example, if I have now written this book in Spanish, it is mainly for that reason. In this "autobiographical narrative", everything refers to the times in which I did not speak Basque and, therefore, the reader will observe that before I learnt Basque I had read and written a lot, both in Spanish and in French. That is why I became a Basque writer, yes, because of the needs you were mentioning before. On the other hand, I also did so because we were adopting a position within a certain cultural project, right? It was all about the world of Basque, of the construction of Basque culture... but all that of being a writer comes to me from long before.

Do you still have any of the works you wrote then?

Yes, yes, of course. I remember that I participated in a contest organised by the Donostia Library, and I won the short story prize for young people with a tale in Spanish. I won another contest in Bera, towards 1970. And in French I also wrote quite a lot in those times. I was young and at that age poetry is usually what you like the most, and although I am now a little ashamed to say so, I used to write poetry and poetic texts. In Spanish...

Would you recover those texts?

Much of what I write nowadays ends up in the waste paper basket. However, papers that have a certain age provoke more respect in me, and those I keep at home. When I discover a paper I wrote thirty years ago, I keep it.

Would it be possible to include them in an anthology?

No, I would not allow that.

Translator



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*We all know that writing is a symbol of freedom and everybody chooses their own style, time and that some may even choose their readers. With respect to the book that you mentioned before, *La fiesta en la habitación de al lado*, (*The party in the room next door*), I would like to ask you: can't the writer choose his or her language?*

I believe that question has a single answer: yes, without doubt. I mean that placing that in doubt means not understanding what writing or creative work is. Up to when I was 24 I used to write in Spanish and French, and apart from that I do not think it is necessary to justify the language the writer adopts to express him or herself and say whatever he or she wishes., "ça va de soi..." as the French say, and whoever does not understand that is not a writer, he or she is something else because he or she places that before writing.

On the choice of language in this book you wrote in Spanish, have there been any more opinions for or against?

I only know that many people, both Basque speakers and Spanish speakers, tell me about how much they liked the book and how they identify with what is said in it, and that they had been wanting to read texts of this type, but there have been people who have wanted to make a big polemic about it. We can say one thing about this, that they have been the ones who have made it impossible to speak about the book, about what is told in it, whether it is good or bad, if it has good or bad aspects. And without doubt, this book blazes trails in literature here, in the widest sense of the concept. It is not the only one but it opens a new trail, the trail that corresponds to the autobiographical gender, and this does not leave anybody indifferent. A lot of people have told me they have felt very identified with it, men and women, and they tell me to keep it going... This book has provided me with a lot of satisfactions.

You have told us that when you were a kid you wanted to be a writer. What did you read as a child?

*Our generation is a generation without television; and that is very touching, isn't it? Imagine: television came into my house when I was 16 years old. Then, in all that period of childhood and youth, our biggest fun was reading, or cinema, the films we used to see in those mediocre village cinemas. And without doubt, the books that I used to read with considerable emotion and passion. The two or three books that had Tom Sawyer as the main character, but especially *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. I used to identify myself with Tom Sawyer, and I also enjoyed *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* and *Heidi* by Spyri. Nowadays, I feel pretty moved when I see from what books we had our part of literature; they were bad-quality editions, they hardly had any illustrations and, in spite of that, how much fun they were to read! Right?*

*It is clear that in our times as kids we used to distinguish very well between the school books and those we kept for our own reading pleasure. In school we would read the canonical books: the *Lazarillo*, the *Celestine*, the *Quixote*... Those were either schoolbooks or the ones we would have to read as homework, and then, apart from those, there were the rest, those we would read clandestinely. I think that in many families we did not appreciate very much the fact that we would tend to stay at home reading, that was considered a waste of time. Therefore, on one hand you had that element of transgression, as we would read them at night, in bed, in hiding, especially comics and comic books; and on the other hand, that reading was for us an authentic source of pleasure and satisfaction. In that sense, I still have fond memories of the reading I did when I was a kid and a young woman.*

In relation with all of that is the reason why a kid like me would say reading books is marvellous. Who has written this like that? Ah! Well, I want to do the same! To provide a pleasure like that to others, inventing things, writing them down and producing illusion in others: that was the wish that kindled my soul. Writing is something that is very cheap to do, you only need paper and pencil. If, as a kid, I had had the chance to become a sculptor, a cinema director or a pianist, well, perhaps now I would be one... But if you have nothing else? Paper, pencil and imagination... you need nothing else to start.

When I was 13 I had written some stories, I had even made clean copies of them, with pictures... and besides I managed to get hold of a small book like that and I dedicated it to my brother, as if I had been the one who had written it.



You asked me before if I kept things. Of course I do! And even now I am astonished when I read them, because they are not badly written at all, although I would not write such things today. But... from the point of view of spelling, they are just fine! I think the nuns really came down hard on us with spelling.

What books did I read? Treasure Island, Uncle Tom's Cabin, La vida sale al encuentro by Martín Vigil... And then there were these books for us girls: Little Women, Heidi, Fabiola. We would then go one step further and then came The Forbidden Age, with a touch of morbid curiosity, as one could not read such things until one was eighteen. Then come other books that are more related with one's training; I remember how I would read those books, as I was in search for my own personality. I would read a book wondering what it is that I am, what I want to be, where the model was. I remember there was one book, a Diario de Ana María (Diary of Ana Maria) for girls and a Diario de Daniel (Diary of Daniel) for boys. I read both and the next step in the process of literary competency used to be crime stories... until I came up with poetry. When I was 18 I was able to read Bonjour Tristesse by Françoise Sagan or L'étranger by Albert Camus. By then I had accumulated quite a lot of capacity for reading literature, and that capacity never ends.

It has taken some effort for you to mention the name of a woman writer; in that list of authors of yours most of them are men. Françoise Sagan did turn up, though.

Johanna Spyri the author of Heidi is also in the list, but that is when I was a small kid... yes, yes.

With those exceptions... it seems as if there were no feminine referents.

In any case, the biggest feminine referent and that enormously marked my training as a writer, was Simone de Beauvoir. I read her when I was 18, I will never forget the experience.

In Spanish?

Yes! It was published by a South American publishing house, as in those times the index of the Church was still in force. In Simone de Beauvoir I found my model, both as a person and as a writer. That model has exerted considerable influence on me for many years. I will not say I am like that today, but starting with the book of essays titled The Second Sex and continuing with her memoirs and her novels, Simone de Beauvoir has been my biggest reference for a considerable period of time. Above all, more than as a writer, as a woman. The model of woman she had vindicated throughout the work.

You have mentioned some women writers. And I would like to reflect out loud: that today's Basque children have you as the source of their reading is something that is very nice. If I asked our young people who is the woman writer they like the most they will surely answer: Mariasun Landa. I believe that Basque literature has benefited from that.

That is very nice to hear, without doubt, but I want to say something: when the kids read a book they do not give a thought to the author, they are not interested and they hardly remember who wrote the book; and if they do remember, they tend to think the writer must be dead, that he or she does not exist any more. It feels very nice to have a meeting with kids every now and then... what a surprise they get! They then realised that there is a woman behind all those books and that woman is quite normal, that she goes around dressed in jeans and that she is not dead, but that she is there speaking to them.

Then I found out that Tom Sawyer was written by Mark Twain and it seems to me that today the same thing is happening, and I don't think this is bad. Later perhaps, when they grow up, yes; perhaps things are changing, above all in the media, and because of the considerable weight that books have acquired commercially. When a lot of propaganda is made, you get to know J.K. Rowling, the author of Harry Potter, but, notwithstanding that, I think that what kids are more interested in is the book, much more than in the author of the book. But, in any case, I accept that...



You have mentioned Paris and your stay there. Paris extended some kind of irradiation throughout the world and it seems that from there some sort of change to the better was going to come, both in cultural and political grounds, for everybody. In any case, in May was the 40th anniversary of all that and in my opinion things have changed quite a lot since those predictions. I don't know if for Mariasun, since you were there, things have changed or have happened the way you saw them or foresaw them.

*The title of my book, *La fiesta en la habitación de al lado* (the party in the room next door) is also related with Paris. I arrived there in Autumn; and by then the party was over, the month of May had passed. And I was to be there for 4 years. In this book, reference is only made to the first of those years and this has nothing to do with the French matter, so to say, but with emigration. I had relations with both emigrants and anti-franquists. All in all, I have always considered myself a result and a descendant of 1968. Why? Because in the four years I lived there, and above all in the University, I enjoyed the changes that the month of May had brought about. Up until then, the classes in University had been magisterial classes. I finished all my studies, if I remember well, without making any exams. This does not mean that I did not learn or that I did not have to work hard. We then found out—all of us— what continuous evaluation meant. What it was to present works in front of everybody, an evaluation of students carried out in a different way. It was not easy for me, as I had just arrived from the world of exams and magisterial classes, and the change was enormous.*

Let me tell you, so as to relate it with my current teaching work, that I continue evaluating my students with the same method. It seems to me that with respect to my discipline, literature of course, this is the fairest kind of evaluation that I can make.

Apart from that, the May 1968 revolt was an absolute political failure. From then until now, things have changed in the world and, from an economic point of view, because of the influence of globalisation, they no longer have anything to do with each other. But the mentalities, the minds, those did indeed experience a revolution, because there had been a bigger or smaller revolution, but it was indeed a revolution. I think that in those times we all wanted some change; we wanted to find other forms of communication, to enjoy a freer sexuality, to respond to education or authoritarianism. With respect to women's affairs, imagine: there was no contraception, there was no divorce, that is when the feminist movements start. And now is when young women are enjoying the result of such advances. It was then, perhaps, when certain ideological advances and opportunities took shape, which we now use sometimes unconsciously, and which are the consequence of many a struggle carried out in those years. In that aspect, I believe, although not politically, but culturally, that May 1968 had an enormous influence in our generation, in people our age, and perhaps today's young people do not understand it inasmuch as they should.

It seems that Sarkozy says that it is better if all that is erased and trashed. But, careful! If he says this, it is because, in my opinion, there is still a certain capacity for utopia among us, and when I say to tell you I mean a certain capacity to struggle, and such a wish could be concreted again at any time. Finally, May 1968 was a form of utopic movement that we had the chance to get to know, of the same type as many others that had taken place in history. Utopia attracts people, because there has been many a utopia in history, but utopia and politics, of course, are at opposite ends. Politics is possible in the fields in which you move with possibilism, and pragmatism. Utopia, on the other hand, is attractive from the terrain of what is not possible. It is the motor of history and in May 1968, at least, we experienced that. After that, history changes a lot and nowadays, I believe, it is very easy to laugh at all that; especially when you see that today we enjoy some of its consequences that we then rejected. But, at least, some of the achievements that I can now think about, as a woman and as a teacher, date back from those times.

Does that mean that the predictions you made when you were a 19 year-old young woman, looking at the world from your observation post, have come true?

Well, well well... the desires of human beings have no limit. When can anybody say "my wishes have come true"? Wishes also are born, reborn, and are recycled at all times. To live is to walk behind desire, right? But, on the other hand, I think we have to be capable of looking at our past without grievances and say: "how lucky we have been! How many things I have managed to attain!". Objectively I mean that I am still alive, for example. When others have left for good. Then, objectively, I think that what that 19 year-old young girl pushed for has been achieved. But, that is my non-objective side speaking. The other side, and we all have a little voice inside speaking—or sometimes even singing— tells us no, that you wanted more, and you experience a certain disillusion and bitterness. But in life, to a considerable extent, our wishes are never fulfilled. Mine is one of those cases, as some projects have been fulfilled and others have not.

It has been said that your literature is considerably realistic. I do not know if you agree with that appreciation...

Said like that, I don't agree very much. I mean that I have been cultivating children's literature for 25 years and it is indispensable to admit that in that trajectory there have been loads of changes. When I wrote Txan fantasma I was not conscious of the fact that I was placing myself in that trend that people call critical realism. But later, that is how I have been classified and unconsciously I situated myself in the literature that was then being made in Europe. But later, in 88-89, when I wrote Iholdi saila, equally unconsciously, it seems I now move within the current of minimalism. As you can see, things change. In the latest books, Galtzerdi Suizida or Krokodiloa ohe azpian, I have dwelt in an interior world and perhaps people will consider it is more intimate, since I have wanted to explore a more problematic interior world, but always in an imaginative, fantasy-laden and symbolic manner.



I have been in favour of realism, true, but always accompanying imagination with fantasy, otherwise I would not have had fun and, besides, kids would not have liked it so much.

Mariasun Landa and Asun Balzola... what do you say to that?

Well, well, Asun! What can I say? It is two years ago since she left us and I still have not found any consolation. We formed a tandem, she was the illustrator and I the writer, as there had been some similarities in our work, from the aesthetical point of view we were quite similar and that is why my texts matched her design... I find it difficult to speak of Asun Balzola because apart from being an exceptional illustrator she was a very close friend. I think we both shared a common aesthetics, she in illustration and me in my literary texts. But apart from that, we were great friends, even if she lived away in Madrid. We were very often in each other's houses, we travelled together, we spoke of lots of things, we had a great time—it seems to me that it is very important to laugh with somebody, to have that kind of complicity—, on occasions we also got angry or upset with each other. Asun Balzola as an artist was a referent for me, without doubt, but also as a person. Although it was like this, suddenly, death comes your way and boom! It all shatters to pieces. All deaths are difficult to assimilate, but a sudden death is terrible because it leaves you incapable of believing what happened, the time passes and you still do not believe she is no longer among us...

Your work, among other instances of public recognition, deserved the Spanish National Prize in 2003, for children's and young people's literature. Three years later, you are amongst the candidates to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Prize, awarded by the IBBYk (International Board on Books for Young People), which we could well consider to be the «small Nobel Prize» of children's literature. Such recognition brought you tranquillity ("they have finally accepted that a Basque woman can make quality literature"), responsibility ("I have to get even higher") or both sensations?

Yes, it all gets together in the same stew, don't you think? The satisfaction for the recognition and, on the other hand, the demand on oneself also gets bigger and sometimes even blocks me completely. On the other hand, and as I was saying at the beginning, to a certain extent, one tends to say: "this is as far as I will get, let's try other ways". For me, as I was saying, at the end of the day, writing is an adventure that I like and this demands other ways and other challenges. Yes, recognition, in any case, I believe it is necessary.

Such recognition has changed your life to a certain extent?

Change, in an important sense?... No, not at all.

I was referring to the systematisation of work...

Well, in that case, yes... I would say that my agenda has filled up, I receive more e-mail and, above all, for the National Prize, perhaps, also provided me with the opportunity to travel abroad. I was in Honduras with Jordi Sierra i Fabra or in Morocco, in Casablanca. I shared this feeling, with Martin Garzo, the writer, that all this recognition opens some windows. You put your head out of those windows and perhaps you like what you see or perhaps not.

I would say that, in my case at least, as I have my monthly pay cheque ensured from a different angle, literature is still for me the space of freedom and adventure. And I would want it to remain that way. Recognition often forces you to write in that way, in an almost mechanical manner. Writing as a job is okay by me, but to keep on going by means of repetitions of your own works is not healthy. There are usually temptations and sometimes we give in to those temptations—why not admit it?— but I'd prefer to explore new spaces. When I began this autobiographical narrative, it was to a great extent because I felt as if I had reached a certain limit in terms of children's and young people's literature. And with this I do not mean that I will no longer work in the field of children's and young people's literature—no way— but I did want to try other paths. To be a candidate for the Andersen Prize is fine... remember that Spain really has only achieved a single Andersen Prize before, "Marcelino pan y vino", in 1968. It was almost impossible for me to get it. Being nominated made me very happy; because all of that means that there was a certain consensus between the children's and young people's literature in Catalonia, Galicia and Spain. At the

Spanish level, the decision to nominate me was taken by consensus and that is a real recognition.

You mentioned that you like the exploration of new literary paths. The same happens to me and I have made an effort to find new spaces. And when I have dedicated myself to the field of literary creation, to prepare a novel, once I have finished the text I have always felt exhausted, as if I was psychologically empty...

I think that is absolutely normal. What you are saying I have felt now with a longer narrative. Two or three years moving around in circles around the same narrative, I have no idea how many hours I have put in. Jesus! And then the proofs and then the printing, there comes a moment, in which you practically hate the text, don't you? And you say to yourself: "vade retro, keep away from me" and when it has come out the printers, I have a feeling of tiresome emptiness. And above all you see your interior as if it was something sterile. It is as if you run out of that level of creation...



Hey, for curiosity's sake, when you write children's literature, do you do so in the morning or during the night?

Well, also in this aspect I have been getting older all these years, because when I was younger... the night was for me, I was a bird of the night in that sense, the night would open its beautiful doors and the night was, for me, a time for work. But not anymore, at night I am extremely tired and my head is full of things, perhaps I need that freshness of the morning in which to write. I think that is the price you have to pay for the passage of time.

Let's not speak about that anymore, just in case. Mariasun, you mentioned Txan the ghost before and surely this is one of your best-known characters. But have you sometimes not perceived any other ghostly figures around you?

The ghosts that I perceive are not outside me but inside. And just as they are in my interior, I also know they are inside the others. A different matter is that others recognise this fact – what I have done this to write on the matter. Txan the ghost, in reality is the story of a girl who is in lack of endearment. She has a lack of love and a lack of communication. If you realise this, these are very recurrent matters in me and they appear in many of my stories. An enormous feeling of loneliness, lack of communication, etc, those are the true ghosts that nest inside us. I am not afraid of ghosts that are flying around, I am afraid of the crocodiles we have within us. I call them interior fauna, because when they wake up... careful!

They make you suffer.

Yes, we all know that. I think that suffering is inescapable, but it provokes some very panicky situations for ourselves. For us and also for the others: nowadays, depression is the malady of the century. It seems that, in general, anxiety is the most extended ailment. What is it then that is happening? That apparently too many calamities are happening inside us in the struggle to vanquish those ghosts.

You are a woman that participates actively in various fora, in women's struggles... you know what current reality is like. What do you think about the outlook of things?

It is true that I try, in as much as possible, to be informed and to have a look around me and that the historical period I have had to live in. And I think things have changed a lot since our childhood. It looks as if we live in different world, and not that much time has passed. 50 years are nothing from a historical point of view. And I wonder: where are the values I was educated in? What has happened? Where are we going?

We, at least, knew two opposite ideologies: capitalism and communism. Now all that has gone to hell, and only one single ideology is triumphant everywhere. The change this has brought about in the world is enormous. Globalisation is a very wide-ranging and profound matter that concerns us all, both from an economic and a cultural point of view. Globalisation also brings about a certain homogenisation that should make us think about how to insert into reality what have been our values. I am not the adequate person to go into this in depth, but these are very difficult times, especially for people my age. Times of a single ideology, and not precisely the ideology we would have wished for. Savage neo-liberalism rules! The speed at which the world goes, and the panorama, are all absolutely new for us. We have had to live within an enormous change and I am convinced that we are at the threshold of a new era.

The role of women in all that?

That question demands a very extensive answer. In the first world, the influence of women is becoming more and more important; that often makes me feel optimistic. In other occasions, when you see the

deaths and the cases of ill-treatment that happen, I feel that sexism is going to make them even more terrible. Besides, taking into account the situation of women in the Third World... well, what can I say! We still have a lot to fight for... defend all our rights and to achieve equality between all the people in the world.



And what can you tell us about the protagonism of women in Basque literature?

I am very optimistic reference to the current panorama. I see quite a few young women with the characteristics of good writers in them, and I think that they have been educated in equality since they were kids, and that they have reached university in the same way. This selection is going to expand. Yes, there are going to be more and more women writers. However, I think the way we women have entered the Basque literary system is more problematic, because among the men writers there are certain networks, which function as such, and I don't know at what point these young women writers will be accepted, if they are accepted, and what price will be. Or perhaps they will be marginated and we shall have to build other networks amongst us women. Right now I can only say that we shall see.