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The Basque Heroine Libe and the Nationalist Press (1895–1936)

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ABSTRACT

The founder of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana, wrote *Libe. Melodrama dramático* (a dramatic melodrama) in 1902. Arana placed the heroine 'Libe' in a medieval battle. She was created to convey what the role of Basque women should be in defending their Homeland. Arana died shortly after the script was published in 1903. His successors attempted to disseminate the play and publicise the character and meaning of Libe in the press and the theatre. This article analyses how *Libe* was presented in the nationalist press and the impact of the successive adaptations and performances of the play . It covers the treatment of female heroism in the nationalist press based on the theoretical framework provided in the research by Teresa del Valle, Mercedes Ugalde, Miren Llona and Nerea Aresti, all of whom have conducted in-depth studies on the gender discourse of Basque nationalism. The article goes on to consider the scripts of the two plays featuring the Basque heroine Libe, together with the archives of the Basque nationalist press from the onset of the movement in 1895 until the outbreak of the Spanish civil war in 1936.

In 2020, some 1,098 women in Spain bore the name of Libe . Most of them are from Gipuzkoa and Biscay (territories within the Basque Country) and their average age is 16.9 years, which shows that it is a young person's name. However, these women and their parents are not likely to know the name's origin; nor are they likely to be able to relate it to the apocryphal heroine created by Sabino Arana, the founder of Basque nationalism.[1] They are probably not aware that this Basque heroine even existed. In fact, in today's Basque Country few people know that this figure was devised in order to promote the envisaged role of women in Basque nationalism. She was a heroine intended to prevent the Basque and Spanish races from mixing.

Arana founded the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) in 1895. In doing so, he created a new nationalist movement which advocated that the Basque Country, a territory located on the Cantabrian coast, ought to be independent of both France and Spain. Basque nationalism emerged in a very specific context as a reaction to an identity and value crisis within traditional Basque society -- a society practically unchanged for centuries. Liberalism had given rise to modernisation and industrialisation, and this had caused a massive influx of so-called 'foreign elements' from Spain. In Arana's view, their presence put Basque traditional society at risk, as a result of which the Basque Country was undergoing a critical phase. Therefore, the new movement was conceived as an antidote to the processes taking place in the late nineteenth century; it

was conservative, supported Basque independence and regarded Spain and the Spanish as enemies.

Arana subscribed to the theses of German romanticism, in which the nation transcends individuals and emerges not from the will or the national awareness of these individuals, but from other pre-existing identifying traits, including race, language, history, historical rights, customs and traditions. In fact, Arana looked to history in order to build an idealised past, to return to an idyllic rural *Euzkadi* (a term he coined to refer to the Basque Country). To do this, he relied on legendary tales dating back to the Middle Ages and created Basque heroic figures. One of these was a fictitious heroine called Libe.

For a number of years, I have conducted research projects on the role that nationalism in general, and Basque Nationalism in particular, has had in the creation of collective, nation-based worldviews.[2] Heroic figures have been pivotal in the development of these worldviews. It is therefore surprising that the study of national heroes and heroines as elements of identity construction remains merely a desideratum in historical science. This does not mean, however, that the subject of heroes has not been dealt with. There are classic studies by Joseph Campbell (1949) and Northrop Frye (1957) that have thoroughly analysed it. Campbell's work was a milestone in the research on heroes and heroism that continues to be often cited today. Frye analysed the various meanings that can be attributed to myths and the different theories that exist around them and around symbols.[3] More recently heroisation has become the focus of increasing attention as a consequence of the cultural turn in connection with the construction of identity.[4]

The gender perspective has also gradually started to be taken into account. Marina Warner (1991) was one of the first researchers to do this. She studied the prominence that the image of Joan of Arc had in transforming the view of female heroism. Venita Datta (2011) examined the construction of heroism in France at the end of the nineteenth century. She explained the role played by both male and female heroic figures in the formation of national identity. More recently and of particular interest to this article is a book considering a global study of women warriors, including the contribution of female fighters in nation-building, edited by Boyd Cothran, Joan Judge and Adrian Shubert. In Spain, María Cruz Romeo investigated the heroines in the 1808 Spanish war. And in the Basque Country, Nerea Aresti studied how some heroines became protagonists of literary passages that were particularly remarkable in the nationalist epic narrative, and analysed the different meanings given to the Basque heroine Libe according to the type of gender discourse that prevailed in each period.[5]

This article studies the meaning of the play entitled *Libe*, demonstrating how Basque nationalism attempted to make her known as a symbolic figure through the press, and examining what the impact of the play's successive publications and performances. A specific aspect to be covered is the treatment of female heroic character in the Basque press. It is not my intention to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the role that women have played in Basque nationalism. Teresa del Valle, Mercedes Ugalde, Aresti and Miren Llona have already done so in great depth.[6] Their contributions will serve as a reference frame for this analysis. In order to meet these aims, I have studied the plots of the two plays in which the protagonist is the Basque heroine Libe and I have consulted the nationalist press on the subject from the onset of the movement

in 1895 until the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. I have analysed the following publications: the magazines *Bizkaitarra* (1893−1895, 1909−1913, 1930−1936), *Baserritarra* (1987), *La Patria* (1901−1903), *Patria* (1903−1906), *Aberri* (different periods: 1906−1908, 1916−1923, 1932), *Aberrija* (1908), *Euskalduna* (1896−1909), *Euzkerea* (1929−1936) and the newspapers *Aberri* (1923) and *Euzkadi* (1913−1936).

The article starts with a brief explanation of the concept of hero/heroine and the dual typology of the heroine, which will provide a brief theoretical framework for the analysis to be carried out in later sections. Then, a review of the meaning that *Libe* had in the different periods will be undertaken, including its impact and follow-up in the nationalist press and the significance of heroising women, using a chronological approach and a gender narrative of Basque nationalism. This will be followed by a short conclusion.

Heroes and heroines

No consensus exists in the literature as to the definition of the concept of 'hero'. Apart from the qualification made by Campbell, who distinguished between the hero–warrior, hero–lover, hero–emperor, hero–tyrant, hero as world redeemer and hero–saint, no clear typology exists of models of heroic figures in History.[7] However, what can be concluded is that a national hero is a character whose life and actions are perceived by his/her followers as personal sacrifices for the nation. Thanks to the extraordinary nature and to the exceptional, superhuman powers attributed to heroic figures, they are objects of devotion for their followers. These attributes may be assigned to either female or male figures, although the specific qualities of each generally differ.

Since ancient times, literary traditions have made a clear distinction between heroes and heroines, each with their own defining features, which reveal gender roles and the prevailing vision of the world during each historical period and in each society. Men's skills have tended to be more related to logic and intellect than to intuition and emotion. Features such as strength, courage, bravery and authority have traditionally been considered necessary to be a hero. In contrast, qualities attributed to heroines have been related to the strength of the soul, chastity, devotion and submission. In addition, there has been a great imbalance between the number of male and female heroic characters found throughout history, as there have been undoubtedly many more heroes than heroines.[8]

However, this does not mean that female figures have not been shown to act heroically. In fact, practically every nation and political movement has had or has created its own heroine. In the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, the making of heroines was undoubtedly linked to the gender mechanisms prevailing in those movements and it was nation-building male elites who invariably created heroes or heroines, as appropriate. Heroines were those women who exceeded the limits of ordinary, everyday life and made a sacrifice for the greater good. Many of them were young women who relinquished their lives for the sake of faith, for their God, for their Homeland or for a combination of the above. In fact, heroic status was conferred on them precisely when they accepted this sacrifice to benefit their community or their nation.

Two major archetypes of heroine can be identified in various literary and historical traditions. One of them was the virgin and warrior, a type of heroine that can be traced

back to Ancient Greece. In the Middle Ages, there were female fighters such as Amazons (recovered from classic Greek mythology) and the Nine Worthies. These heroines were exceptional women who displayed features associated with virility and took on male roles by participating in violent or dangerous situations.[9] In these cases, behind the heroic actions, it is difficult to separate female and male figures. These women acted as if they were men and it could be suggested that women may only become traditional heroes when they are presented as having the archetypical features of the opposite gender; that is, when they sacrificed their femininity.[10] Individually, the most significant examples were Boudicca and Joan of Arc, who joined the army to rescue their respective nations and died in battle. Boudicca was the queen of the Iceni, a tribe who lived in southeast England. She led her soldiers against the Roman occupation. No references to Boudicca can be found in the nationalist press. The example of the heroine par excellence for Basque nationalists was Joan of Arc. A symbol of virtue by nature and a source of inspiration for many writers, she was also seen by Basque nationalist thinkers as the figure that epitomised patriotism and Catholicism, as will be further explained below.[11]

The other classic type of heroine was the subservient one, created in the Middle Ages. These heroines acted and held values that differed from male role models. They embodied an image of persistent and total submission, mutism and determination; they were discreet heroines, women who served men whose actions were essential.[12] In many nationalisms, the national symbol was a woman, a custodian mother. She was the personification of respectability and the perpetuation of the nation.[13] This heroine epitomised the glorified maternal figure who accepted her sons' death as a sacrifice for the nation. Moreover, these heroic mothers were assigned the role of creating solidarity among the members of the community in order to strengthen it and make it grow. In many nationalisms, then, they symbolised the spirit of collectiveness, as in the cases of Mother Ireland (whose more usual allegoric form was Hibernia), Mother Russia (Rodina) and Mother Ukraine (Berehynia).[14] The figure of the Mother in Basque nationalism (particularly of the Virgin Mary) has been analysed in the classic studies by anthropologists del Valle (1985) and Joseba Zulaika (1988).[15]

The construction of the heroine in the early Basque nationalism (1895–1903)

Arana founded the PNV in 1895. His doctrine was based around the idea that the Basque Country was facing a critical situation as a result of the arrival of Spanish people, pejoratively called 'maquetos'. Arana argued that they posed a threat to Basque rural society in general, and to the Basque race in particular. In addition, he argued that this population influx would lead to the loss of Basque culture, especially of the Basque language (*Euskera*). In his view, this would bring about important changes in the Basque traditional way of life, including the loss of religiosity. Therefore, his doctrine was mainly built around the concepts of race and Catholicism. Arana also advocated that it was necessary to recover both the characteristics of the Basque community (which had been preserved and perpetuated for a long time) and its historical customs and self-government (the *Fueros*, ancient laws), which the Spanish had taken away.[16]

This general approach also included Arana's dichotomous view of women, which has been thoroughly studied by Ugalde, Llona and Aresti, among others.[17] Arana said, 'A woman is nothing more than a piece of a man, a companion, and the male is the [normative sex] type of the human species'.[18] Taken in isolation, this is undoubtedly a negative evaluation of women. However, it was no different from the perception of women that other conservative and Catholic parties had at the time. It may seem striking that the following sentence was also written by Arana, 'Only when patriotism reaches women's hearts can we be sure of triumph'.[19] But both statements were indeed produced by the same person. This ambivalence can only be understood when one considers the ideological framework of the period.[20]

Arana ascribed to women the role of keepers of old lineages and pre-industrial families. While for Arana 'Basque men constituted the most accomplished expression of the nation', Basque women also had a virile quality, a strength and vigour typical of the Basque race that made them suitable for safeguarding racial purity.[21] Arana aimed to create a Basque nation based on a rural society, built on the *baserri* (Basque farmhouse), which was not contaminated by the effects of industrialisation. Within this framework, women became the channel through which the race could be perpetuated, and consequently they were instructed to avoid 'mixed marriages' at all costs ('mixed marriages' being those between an individual with eight Basque surnames, namely, a thoroughbred Basque, and a person who was not). Arana's purpose in writing *Libe* was to teach these lessons.

But this was not the first time that he had spoken about a Basque heroine. In his search for an ideal historical past of the Basque Country, Arana resorted to legendary stories dating back to the Middle Ages. And one of these gave rise to his first heroine. He placed her in the battle of Arrigorriaga (888 CE), in which the Biscayans fought against the troops of Alfonso II of Asturias. Emulating literary passages from other national narratives in which women had become fighters, Arana included in the plot a 'masculine Biscayan woman' who killed Ordoño, the head of the invading troops.[22] This woman's achievement boosted the morale of soldiers and was crucial to the victory of Biscayans. She fought side by side with men for their Homeland, was capable of killing enemies and was granted the status of heroine.

This is the archetype of the warrior heroine discussed above, which Aresti referred to as the 'virile heroine'.[23] The figure of the heroine with male characteristics was not an original concept, since it may be found within Basque symbology prior to Arana, as well as in Spanish and international historical and literary texts.[24]

Despite the symbolic strength of this warrior woman, Libe was Arana's and Basque nationalism's heroine par excellence.[25] Arana's new political movement required its own Joan of Arc and, as the historian José Luis de la Granja claimed, Arana did 'invent Libe as their heroine'.[26] As he could not find a female character equivalent to the Catholic French fighter in Basque history, he produced a mythical figure from a legendary period, the Middle Ages, in which Basque people had fought to defend their identity and their independence against foreign attempts to dominate them.

The play *Libe. Melodrama Dramático* was written by Arana in 1902 and published by Tipografía Universal in 1903. It was released under the pseudonym of Jelalde, which means a supporter of *Jel* (*Jaungoikoa eta Lagi Zaharra*, God and Old Law), the motto of the PNV. The 'Warning' that preceded the text stated that the original

was written in Biscayan Basque, but that it had been published in Spanish 'because regrettably, cultivated Basques have a better command of the external language than of their own'. It also announced that the Basque text would be published at a later stage.[27] The backdrop against which the story of *Libe* is set is another battle, the battle of Munguía (1471 CE). Libe was a young damsel, the daughter of a Biscayan Lord descended from heroes who had fought in battles for their Homeland. Despite her honourable bloodline, Libe made the mistake of rejecting her Basque suitor Andima and falling in love with Count Salinas, a Castilian knight who also loved her. Even though Salinas fought for the troops of Henry IV, King of Castile and Leon, enemy of the Biscayans, Libe decided to marry him, prioritising her own desires over the greater good of her Homeland. However, in the second part of the story, Libe regretted her decision, radically changed her attitude, left home and joined the battle, together with other women. When she saw that the Biscayans were losing the fight, Libe prayed to the Virgin Mary for help. After fainting from weakness, facing the scorching sun, she managed to stand on top of a rock waving a flag and encouraged soldiers to fight for their Homeland.[28] In this way, Libe represented the weak, fickle and sinful woman who had betrayed both her Homeland and her father. She had allowed her emotions to rule her, thinking only about her own desires. Libe's first mistake illustrated Arana's belief that women were innately weak and sinful.[29]

Nevertheless, Arana needed women to disseminate the nationalist doctrine. In the process of building a national identity, he assigned a key role to women as keepers of racial purity and the Catholic idiosyncrasy of the Basque people. The perfect Basque woman was a rough – even masculine – strong, rural, resilient woman, an image/model nurtured in the narrative of writers, anthropologists and travellers; in fact, 'the purer the racial essence was maintained, the more virile Basque women were'.[30] Basque women had to prevent the deterioration of the Basque race and avoid marriages to outsiders, especially Spaniards.[31] This was the main message conveyed in *Libe*. The same message was portrayed through the character of Libe's father: patriotic Basque fathers were not to allow their daughters to marry men of other races. Consequently, *Libe* has been considered 'a true symbolic manifesto on the role to be played by nationalist women'.[32]

Libe provided an opportunity for the vulnerable and sinful woman to participate in the male role and join the battle. The heroine's redemption from sin came through her death. Through this sacrifice, Libe became the maker of Biscayan success and, therefore, the 'warrior', the 'Basque virile heroine' who died for her Homeland. Now Arana had his heroine and by this time she was no longer anonymous. She was a national martyr who would be very valuable in involving women in the nationalist project. Libe sacrificed her life for her Homeland and her religion simultaneously.[33] The final scene, where Libe was injured and close to dying, has a deep religious significance. Andima exclaimed, 'Oh, Libe! God is taking you to Heaven, because no man on Earth is worthy of you!'. Meanwhile, the soldiers knelt before Libe, a woman who was dying for her Homeland.[34]

However, how can it be explained that women were somewhat glorified in *Libe*, since they were weak and impulsive, according to Arana? On the one hand, the nationalist project, despite aiming to recover an idealised past, managed to combine the defence of tradition with a programme that looked to the future. Arana sought to turn

his party into a party of the masses; and women's participation was crucial in achieving this. On the other hand, it should also be taken into account that Arana wrote *Libe* in 1902, in the period that has become known as 'Spanish evolution', one year before his death. Over the previous years, he had undergone a significant change, both politically and personally. Arana had started a relationship with Nikole Atxika-Allende, whom he would marry in 1900, and this experience probably drove him to soften his concept of women. By marrying Nikole, Arana turned theory into practice. He had decided not to court a girl from Bilbao who had Castilian surnames. He preferred to marry a peasant woman with a low social status who was the daughter of a *baserritarra* (farmer) but whose surnames were all Basque. His misogyny was mitigated after commencing this relationship. Yet, despite using kind, loving words to address Nikole, Arana made her duty very clear to her.

> One of your main duties is to submit to my commands and obey me in everything that does not go against God. One of my main duties is to love my Homeland, to love my race, which is our great family … I will never fall for you more, I will never admire you more, behold you with greater pleasure and feel more passionately in love with you than when I see you fulfil your duty at the expense of sacrificing yourself to some extent.[35]

As well as this romantic relationship, Ugalde noted that another factor that could account for Arana's new perspective on women could have been the valuable involvement of some women in the Basque nationalist from its very beginning.[36]

The first reference to Arana's heroine was made in the nationalist newspaper *Patria* in April 1902, before the official publication of the play script (1903). A poem by journalist José María de Orrantia entitled 'The Virgin from Euzkadi', devoted to the heroes of Munguía, spoke about Libe without explicitly naming her. It is striking that Orrantia wrote this poem at such an early date. The only explanation is that he must have already known Arana's script. Libe can be easily recognised in the verse 'the beautiful golden–haired virgin / who was watching the battle from a high hill'. The writer shared Arana's view of the woman who, despite her weakness, was ready to fight for her Homeland. He also referred to her old father and to her loved one, and clearly conveyed a similar message relating to self-sacrifice for her Homeland:

> But I am generous, my love, do you want / my love? More than my love, oh Homeland! I will give you / you are my mother, my existence: / I will also die for my mother.
>
> Having said that, she descended the green hill / released her beautiful blond hair / like a candid homing pigeon / that carried a message of innocent pain / engaged in harsh combat / taking a virile soul from the deceased / and infused with the vigour that throbbed inside her / she turned indomitable and began to kill their enemies.

Orrantia's poem ended by criticising the weakness of the youth during his time: 'Let me cry for my homeland / let pain break my heart / as Biscayan men of this day / are less than weak damsels'.[37]

Libe was published in the first quarter of 1903 and started to be sold in April. An advertisement was placed in the press during 1903 and 1904.[38] In July 1903, Orrantia again wrote a review of *Libe* in *Patria*. He regretted that 'no other writer more capable than me' had conducted a critical study of the play, which he qualified as 'a commendable work of art'. His article argued that women are 'more apt for feelings

than us men', but criticised that 'they had failed to channel their feelings, … as they had not understood their educational mission'. Orrantia stressed that *Libe* had an exemplary and didactic purpose, as every drama arising from history should have; this is why it showed an archetype to be imitated by women. Orrantia praised how the characters in the play were portrayed and drew a parallel with Greek theatre by comparing the choirs with those in Aristophanes' and Aeschylus' plays, and comparing Libe with Lysistrata (while noting the difference between comedy and drama). He also disparaged Spanish theatre. However, his review concluded that, if it was ever performed, Arana's play would be a failure, 'as the audience of today are the same kind of people who asked for poison hemlock for Socrates'.[39]

Libe and the Basque heroine after Arana's death (1904–1930)

Arana died in November 1903. It is striking that only a few of the innumerable articles published by the nationalist press upon the death of the 'Master' mentioned his play *Libe*. One of these few references was one by *Baserri*. At the end of a brief biography it stated that, while Arana underwent a lot of suffering in the final stages of his life, he 'published the magazine *Euzkadi* and also, as if he were taking a break, he also published *Libe* in 1903'.[40] The small number of allusions to this play may be due to the fact that only a few months had elapsed since its publication, and it was not widely known yet.

In February 1904, *Mendiarte* published a long, laudatory article about *Libe*. It highlighted the third scene in Act Three, in which the protagonist displayed her patriotism. But the message stressed by *Mendiarte* was how *Libe* encouraged people to fight. Andima's scream 'War on the invaders!' was quoted several times in the article. It strongly recommended reading the play and suggested that it might be performed with music: 'And if merely reading the play makes such a strong impression, I can only imagine what impact it would have if music was incorporated into the performance'. Yet, he acknowledged that finding suitable music for it would not be an easy task, not because of the lack of good Basque musicians, but because either they would not know the play or 'they would not dare to do it'.[41] Echoing this sentiment, in April 1905, the newspaper *Euskalduna* published a call for proposals to incorporate music into the script of *Libe*. The best composition would be awarded a prize of 10,000 pesetas.[42] However, this initiative did not come to fruition.

In August 1906, *Aberri* reported that the copies of the script of this historical melodrama had been sold out. Therefore, *Libe* would be published and 'serialised for anyone who would like to collect the instalments and have them bound'.[43] Nevertheless, eventually this did not happen, in order to prevent the melodrama from being 'mutilated' by censorship.[44] From that point until 1922, there were very few references to Arana's play in the nationalist press. In April 1913, *Juventud Vasca* (Basque Youth, the youth wing of the PNV) announced that they would be publishing a new magazine, and the first issue would have a 'most notable original drawing' by Tellaetxe that would be based on Arana's play. *Libe* was also read in an event held in April 1915 to honour the memory of those Basques who had died in the battle of Munguía. In a similar vein, *Aberri* reproduced a scene from Libe on its front page in April 1921 as a memorial for those killed in that battle.The play was also mentioned in the lists of

Arana's works that were published from time to time. But that was the extent of its dissemination.

What can be found in the nationalist press from 1905 onwards are some male voices advocating that women should participate in the patriotic endeavour, which sometimes included references to their heroic features. Emphasis was made on the point that Basque women could 'contribute to the expansion of the Basque Country' and that they should hold 'a preferential place' but not like female socialist and anarchist orators did, by engaging in male endeavours that were not appropriate for them as women; 'instead, nationalist women should rely on Christian values, and be placed in their home and the family's bosom.' Basque women's characteristics were described as 'love of God, love of their home, love of their culture and love of the good customs of their elders'. Those women 'know how to make their sons great men'.[46] Therefore, apart from being the custodians of the race (as Arana claimed), now they had to pass Basque nationalist ideology (traditions, customs, culture and, above all, the Basque language) on to their children, the future nationalists; in other words, as mothers, they were required to teach men to love their Homeland, thus becoming mothers to the community.

Some columnists also praised women who attended political rallies, but not as orators (not yet); they underlined their resignation and ability for self-sacrifice.[47] Interestingly, their involvement in the nationalist movement was valued as an 'example of virility and patriotism' and of humility; as argued in *Euzkindarra*, women did not want 'men's incense, did not mind being anonymous heroes, as their beauty hid a beautiful soul'.[48]

An unsigned article is particularly relevant to the issue at stake here. It referred to other heroines and made a distinction between politics and patriotism for the first time. This distinction would be drawn often from thereafter: 'We do not want women to be concerned with politics, but we want them to be patriotic. They have always been Judith, Joan of Arc, Agustina of Aragon … sublime examples of female patriotism from History of all times and among all the peoples'. The article's author mentioned the 'masculine Biscayan woman' from Padura, referring to her as 'Basque Judith' and stated that in the Basque Country 'patriot women appear in legends, in the rugged Hirnio [sic] with a dagger hidden in her bosom'.[49]

As a result, the two spheres of patriotism and politics became clearly distinguished from then on: political leadership corresponded to men, while affective relationships were women's domain. The former, related to reason and intellect, continued to be the prerogative of men. But in the latter, women could complement the work performed by men, thanks to their innate emotional skills. In the leaders' view, women were the ideal conveyors of the essence of Basque soul, given their ability to act upon the subjective side of people.[50] As mothers, wives, fiancées, sisters or daughters of men, they could be just as patriotic as them. This argument was included in the discourse produced by the Catholic Church in order to integrate and contain feminism.

In this way, some women began to send patriotic articles to the press. They always did so by using only their first names or with pseudonyms such as *Mirentxu* (María Barbier), *Garbiñe* (Purificación Gorostiza), *Bartirtze*, *Katalin* (Raquel de Alda), *Peol*, and so on. One of them even signed with the sobriquet of *Libe*.[51] Some other regular writers did not like this, but these female columnists argued that contributing to

nationalist tasks did not entail that they had to 'abandon their domestic responsibilities or their sewing'.[52] Some of them repeated Arana's slogans about the role of women in maintaining racial purity and as anchors of virtue and morality in Basque society.[53] Others, however, while not questioning the supreme authority of the founder in terms of doctrine, used the Basque press to reproach men for their belief that women were only good for housework. The person who signed as *Libe* stated that they were 'looked down on by men because they felt that women were engaging in these issues that were the remit of men' and argued that women were 'mocked if they left their sewing room and their domestic chores'.[54] In the same article from August 1907, *Libe* proposed the idea of creating a Basque Wardrobe. One month before, *Katalin* had suggested creating a Basque nationalist female association 'for patriotic purposes only'.[55] The proposal was welcomed, and the Basque Wardrobe was officially founded in Bilbao in February 1908.[56]

This initiative was highly appreciated by some writers in *Aberri*, who were glad that Basque nationalism had 'penetrated in the heart of Basque women …, who had filled it with sweet hope by bringing a form of enthusiasm that led to heroism'. In fact, they extolled these women's participation by using heroic language: 'Fight, always fight for God and the Homeland, as there is no victory without fighting, and there is no heroism unless dangers are overcome! … advancing at the head of the victorious legions and acclaimed among hosannas'.[57]

Still, not many women wrote in the press. In 1910, their contributions continued to be requested for two reasons: male reticence, and some women's fear of or embarrassment about participating in these nationalist efforts. To encourage other women, *Gotzone Miren* appealed to 'those ancient Basque females' who helped their men 'by preparing their weapons as soon as there was a sign of alarm, and by giving example in the battlefields'.[58]

It was precisely to promote female participation in Basque nationalist tasks that references to heroines proliferated in the press. Who were considered heroines? On the one hand, those women who had carried out actions that were out of the ordinary. Women who had saved someone's life in a disaster or adverse circumstances would be included in this group (for instance, a mother who had saved her children in a storm; a young woman who had rescued a child from drowning; and another woman who managed to survive on an island for several days, among others).[59] Likewise, women who had demonstrated an extraordinary achievement were also portrayed as heroines. In the Basque context, Aurora de Ugarte was praised for her 'heroic behaviour by carrying a banner in the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Begoña'.[60] In addition to religious reasons, what was highly valued in this case was the strength that a *weak female* showed. Female members of religious congregations who had performed honourable service and embodied the values and features of the Basque race were also often included in this group.[61] As well as performing heroic feats, the image of the heroine was nearly always accompanied by qualities such as abnegation and sacrifice.

On the other hand, there was a group made up of national heroines who had fought for their Homeland and religion, whose example was to be followed by Basque women who wanted to support the Basque nationalist cause. Without any doubt, Joan of Arc, the warrior whose prowess and tragic destiny are strongly embedded in French national memory, was the most celebrated heroine in the Basque press.[62] In Warner's

view, people identified with her generation after generation and adopted her 'as a palladium of their cause'.[63] This also happened in the Basque case. Her image combined the two main causes of Basque nationalism: Catholicism and patriotism. The Basque nationalist press reported on annual celebrations that took place in France and used these events to promote the image of a heroine who fought 'for the independence of the homeland and for the honour and salvation of the race. The glorification of our sacred heroine of yesterday exalts the fighters of today'.[64] 'She strengthened their spirits, kept the pledge of triumph … Ultimately, she saved France, which was at the feet of England, powerful and strong'.[65] In addition, heroic women who had shown exemplary or patriotic behaviour in the First World War were also praised, including Edith Cavell, Émilienne Moreau and Marie-Leonie Van Houtte.[66]

I found the first reference to a real heroine of Basque nationalism in October of 1919. A young woman named Maria Aizpuru was considered 'the first heroine of the Basque Homeland' in the nationalist journal *Euzkadi*. Young Maria had been imprisoned for proudly defending Basque nationalist ideology; she was reported to have been sent to prison 'only for loving too much'. Tribute was paid to Aizpuru in the inauguration of *Juventud Vasca* for being the first woman to be persecuted and imprisoned due to her great love for her Homeland. At the event, Aizpuru was rendered 'a symbol of Basque womanhood, the heroine who wears the badge of honour and dignity of the race, and who will someday be adorned with the unfading crown of victory'.[67]

From then on, the conceptualisation of the heroine repeated the ideals of the Basque nationalist woman. She was a woman who loved her people, her race and Catholicism. The religious component was very important, as it clearly differentiated the Basque nationalist women's movement from left-wing feminism. In the Basque case, the real heroine was the Christian heroine: 'The Christian–romantic civilisation … is the only one that can give us truth and earthly happiness, by dignifying women and making them the genuine heroines of our great endeavours'.[68] This heroine did fit the profile of the subservient women who was at the service of men and behaved differently from them. The paradigm of the Basque nationalist female activist was a Catholic, righteous, devoted, caring and controlled woman; a woman who loved her home and fought to safeguard the essence of the Basque people. They were women who proudly and fearlessly showed their nationalist ideology.

The year 1922 was an important one. After the First World War, some women who had already defended their right to participate in public affairs founded Emakume Abertale Batza (EAB), undoubtedly influenced by the European movements that had supported the gradual involvement of women in public life. In so doing, they left behind their passive role, which had been long restricted to care and domestic tasks. It was a women's organisation created from the Irish example of *Cumann na mBan*. The EAB was founded under the aegis of the most radical section within Basque nationalism and, specifically, of PNV leader Elias Gallastegi.[69]

It does not seem to be a coincidence that a new version of *Libe* was prepared in the same year that the EAB was founded. The play was adapted by the journalist and playwright Alfredo Etxabe, and music was to be composed by father Luis de Irurritzaga, from the Order of Missionaries of the Heart of Mary, whose music would 'beautify Arana Goiri's literary feat'.[70] To adapt it to the new times, the aspects of

Arana's Libe that seemed unfortunate were disguised and its features were smoothed. As EAB member Carmen Errazti put it:

> Sabino did not conceive [the character] to be in the style of a warrior woman, like that woman from Araba called Barona of whom medieval stories spoke, nor like Catalina de Erauso, from San Sebastian, famous for her man-like adventures, for which she was bestowed the nickname of 'La monja alférez' [The Lieutenant Nun], much discussed by Spanish critics and poets alike …
>
> No; Libe, the main character of Sabino's melodrama, was a young Basque woman, full of beauty and charm, who gathered in her generous, modest heart all the virtues of the race; the most tender and loving of the Basque damsels who, when the time came, was able to honour the blood of a hundred of Basque generations that ran in her veins.[71]

Whereas the press announced that 'the opening would be a high-profile event with international scope and a strong impact on the art world', the truth is that it had very little follow-up. There is no record of the musical version of the play having been performed, nor is there any certainty that father Iruarritzaga ever composed the score. This silence may have been due to the onset of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. In fact, no references were made to *Libe* in the nationalist press between 1923 and 1930, apart from it being occasionally mentioned in the lists of plays written by Arana.[72]

Libe and the Basque heroine during the Second Republic (1931–1936)

During the 1930s, a further step was taken towards encouraging the entry of women into the public sphere. The Constitution of the Spanish Republic, approved in December 1931, recognised women's right to vote. As a result, a political window of opportunity opened up for women, which meant that some of the PNV male leaders felt obliged to allow women to join the party. They adopted a discourse to somehow adapt to this new situation, but without changing the status quo. *Kizkitza* conceded: 'In normal circumstances women must not leave the home; but these are not normal circumstances'.[73] The aim was to take advantage of the public activity of nationalist women, while rejecting the feminist claim for unrestricted access to public life, which was considered to be against God's design. The political contribution of women was only accepted under certain conditions and for specific purposes.

To compensate for the secondary place assigned to women, Basque nationalism extolled motherhood and attributed to women the role of being the motherland's symbol. This was intended to persuade women that their role as mothers enabled them to have as much or even more social power than men. Mothers were elevated to the pinnacle of power in a rather exaggerated manner.[74] Through the glorification of the 'Basque Mother', nationalist men wanted to fight 'what were considered modern extravagance and the threatening current of change that … intended to eliminate the differences between men and women'.[75]

With the gradual participation of some women in public events and their increasing involvement as orators, women started to play a prominent role in the mass nationalisation process and the construction of a collective identity, specifically by making an impact on subjectivity and emotional exaltation. To enable them to participate in public life while maintaining the existing gender hierarchy, the male leaders of the PNV used the distinction between political action and patriotic action.

EAB saw its activities significantly reduced during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. However, it became reorganised in 1931 and once again, women had a greater public role, which was reflected in the treatment of females as heroines. Particularly, it was Basque nationalist women (called *emakume*) who were called to contribute to the salvation of Euskadi. Heroines were no longer individuals but became collective in nature. This can be described as the socialisation process of the heroine.

The highest point of this praise of Basque women as a group took place at the beginning of 1933, due to the imprisonment of the *emakume* Haydée Agirre and Polixene Trabudua. They were arrested after making a speech and charged for their radical beliefs and for slandering Spain. Yet their arrest further reinforced the role of women and their strength as symbols in the defence of Basque identity. The PNV attempted to gain political leverage out of the situation and, as soon as the women were released, a tribute event was organised in Bilbao.

The event was initially to be held under the name of 'Tribute to Basque Women', but it was finally entitled 'Tribute to Basque Mothers', even though neither of them was a mother. In this way, the leaders of the PNV tried to recover the rhetoric and symbol of the Motherland. The Spanish Second Republic had given women the right to vote and, consequently, the focus was now on them for the first time, making them necessary as agents of patriotic efforts and targets of election propaganda. The overestimation of the maternal factor was a means to cover up the fear that gender roles might shift. However, in her speech at the event, Trabudua spoke about women who were ready to fight.[76] In so doing, she clearly and radically challenged the arguments that linked women to emotion and to the home, and men to the intellect and the public sphere. The women who spoke at the tribute also stressed their sacrifice, an element that was tied to heroism in nationalist movements.[77] The imprisonment of these *emakume* was perceived as a kind of martyrdom. They were heroines who had suffered persecution and sacrificed themselves for the Motherland.[78]

Therefore, by 1933, the PNV had attempted to rectify the situation and redirect women's demands towards the rhetoric of the mother figure. But female identity was taking on a new meaning due to women's participation in the patriotic fight, as there were women who were intent on challenging the limits imposed. Winds of change were blowing. Was it time to renew some ideas? Perhaps a time to go back to basics, look to the founder and recover Libe as a heroine? This was probably what the nationalist Manuel de la Sota thought in 1934.

Theatre was an effective instrument to further the process of mass nation building. Nationalist authors wrote plots that immediately aroused emotional responses among audiences.[79] Manuel de la Sota was a writer who subscribed to the more pro-independence wing of Basque nationalism. A lover of literature, he wrote poetry and plays. His scripts were at the service of nationalist doctrine. As was, of course, the new version of *Libe*.

De la Sota continued recreating the imaginary independent and blissful Homeland that was portrayed in the original *Libe*. However, the changes in the PNV's gender discourse were reflected in the symbolic meaning of the heroine, a character who underwent a significant transformation. De la Sota himself explained that Arana's play was not 'fit to be staged … because [Arana's] instinct had never been to write literary drama'. What De la Sota intended to do was turn the play into a tragedy by introducing

new characters and scenes, modifying the text and, above all, introducing a large dose of misfortune and death. The author said: 'I was obliged to bring to the viewer all the horror of that heroic episode of our history'.[80] Thus, the element of sacrifice that had already appeared in the first *Libe* was maintained and heightened.

But the protagonist also contained new symbolic and political content. In Arana's version, *Libe* was a masculine heroine, a young virgin who redeemed her guilt by giving her life on the battlefield. She was a woman who assumed traditionally male values such as courage and patriotic action. However, in the 1934 adaptation, Libe – as Carmen Errasti had imagined her in 1922 – was a charming damsel, very young, 'full of love, totally feminine … who oozed lush passions and feelings.' As Aresti said, 'in the new version, Libe was feminised, without her femininity implying ignominious weakness, and she was sexualised without her sexuality being sinful in itself'. In this case, her love for the Homeland was not inconsistent with her love for her husband. Libe was now the subservient heroine, a family and maternal version of her, the woman who was at the service of her man, but who did not hesitate to fight alongside him.[81]

This later Libe did not hesitate when it came to breaking up with her previous suitor, a member of the Castilian nobility, and she went to fight of her own free will. In the middle of the battle, she held the lifeless body of a soldier in her arms. This image evoked the *Pietá*, the Christian image of the Mother of Sorrows. The historian Llona saw this as a distinguishing element compared with the first Libe. According to Llona, the female ideal of Arana's *Libe* was the Immaculate Conception, a symbol of purity. In the 1934 version of *Libe*, the heroine was the mother of Sorrows, who comforted the soldiers, suffered next to them and shared the glory of those who had sacrificed their lives for the Homeland.[82]

Henceforth, the new Libe was the mother who fought for her sons, for the Basque nationalists of the future; she was the one who protected and took care of them. In order to highlight this maternal quality, De la Sota included a new character in the last scene. His name was Kuliska, a little orphaned boy who came closer to Libe when he saw her dying. This was the source that the author used for the final message contained in the play, which was directed to all the sons of the Basque Homeland: you are not orphaned; the Homeland, the Basque Country, is your mother. Libe's example and words gave such courage to the soldiers that this led to the success of the Biscayans.

Another difference from the original version related to the fact that in Arana's *Libe*, the heroine was the single protagonist of the plot. Andima, the Basque man who was in love with her, did not have an important role. However, in the new script, he became a protagonist as well. He was the one who embodied the male values that had been initially attributed to Libe, the warrior who put his life at risk to defend his sons. And Libe gave her love, her body and her soul to him. Therefore, the new Libe was the 'submissive heroine', innocent and sweet. However, the *emakume* who wished to participate in political activities understood that de la Sota's play endorsed their liberation from the household and supported their political activity. They felt that the new *Libe* had promoted them to the status of *gudari* (soldier). In spite of the rhetoric of the Mother being very much alive in the plot, they identified with the symbolism of the warrior heroine, the Libe that represented their position and the emotions they experienced at the time, which were difficult to express in words. These women recognised those feelings when they identified themselves with Libe.[83]

The first performance of *Libe* took place at the Teatro de los Campos Elíseos in Bilbao by the theatre group *Oldargi* (attached to *Juventud Vasca*) on 3 March 1934. EAB made the costumes for the play. Libe Billala was played by Rosario de Gardeazabal; Andima de Ugarte was played by Lucio de Aretxabaleta; and the Count of Salinas was played by Vicente Iriondo. The leaders of the PNV attended the premiere, headed by the then member of parliament José Antonio Aguirre.[84] The play was enthusiastically welcomed by the nationalist press. On the days preceding and following the premiere, *Euzkadi* published news and articles relating to the play (considered to be 'the most successful one in Basque theatre') and the heroine ('the incarnation of the Basque woman who passionately loves her Homeland), who was compared to heroines from Greek classic theatre ('the character of Libe may bring back echoes of Antigone or Lysistrata'). The music and the props prepared by the women in the EAB were also praised.[85]

The only negative review was provided by nationalist poet Esteban Urkiaga *Lauaxeta*. While he saw the symbolic value of Libe in a positive light ('she is our Joan of Arc') and praised the role of theatre in disseminating nationalist ideas, he pointed to some defects in the performance and remarked that the play was to be regarded as 'political or patriotic theatre', not as Basque theatre. *Lauaxeta* noted that Manuel de la Sota had found a 'beautiful plot (Arana's), but that it was no more than an outline or a sketch'. He highlighted the 'lively and fluid dialogue in the first acts' and its 'ironic nuances'.[86] One of Urkiaga's criticisms was that Libe was actually the least developed character in the play, because of the abrupt transition she experienced from one love to the next. But he ended his review with a positive note, by stating that '*Libe* inaugurated a kind of historical/political theatre that should be enthusiastically promoted'.[87]

Libe had never had such strong response before. Neither when Arana wrote it, nor when Etxabe rearranged it. It was a very optimistic moment for the PNV which had expanded both in number and geographically, and the Spanish Republic gave it new opportunities to reach its aims -- above all, the Statute of Autonomy. In addition, the fact that women were able to participate in politics led them to believe that their participation would bring about new outcomes.

People in the nearby villages organised bus trips to see the performance.[88] It was so well received that the youths in Oldargi decided to take the play to other Basque towns and villages. It was performed in Vitoria-Gasteiz and in San Sebastián. The premiere in the Victoria Eugenia theatre in San Sebastián was qualified as a 'formidable success'.[89] Prominent Basque nationalist leaders from the province attended, as well as people from different social statuses from nearby villages. It was announced that Libe would be translated into the Basque language.[90] It was not the first time this was announced, but to the best of my knowledge, the play was neither translated into, nor performed in Basque, despite the fact that competitions were organised that encouraged the use of Basque in theatre scripts by offering greater funding.

In April 1936, a few months before the start of the Spanish Civil War, *Libe* was performed again at the Campos Elíseos theatre in Bilbao 'at the request of numerous *abertzales* (patriots)' and to commemorate the battle of Munguía. However, it did not attract the same interest as it had when it was first performed, and attendance was poor.[91] The last performance of *Libe* before the outbreak of the war took place in Nuevo Teatro-Cine in Bermeo on 2 May 1936, and was highly successful. Some

scenes had to be performed more than once and the members of *Oldargi* were cheered and received warm greetings.[92]

Conclusion

Heroic figures, both male and female, have been crucial components in the construction of national identities. Many nationalist movements have resorted to them, and Basque nationalism is not an exception. In view of the lack of real Basque heroines, the founder of Basque nationalism, Arana, created the fictional heroine Libe, a warrior who defended her Homeland from foreign invasion. His script contains a clear message for Basque women: they were to keep the Basque race pure, as this was a key element in protecting the Basque people. Later, due to changes in the historical context, to the greater role demanded by women and to the discursive development of Basque nationalism, Libe's physical features became softened until she became a sweet, submissive heroine and her maternal characteristics were promoted in order for her to fulfil the main role of inculcating patriotic feelings in men.

However, an analysis of the press shows that the features of the original heroine remained over time. Basque women were encouraged to join the battle and urge soldiers to fight. Libe continued to represent the model to be imitated by Basque women: a woman who exalted patriotic sentiments, loathed racial mixing and did not hesitate to defend her beliefs. Her heroic characteristics coded as female were those related to the heart: virtue, Christianity, devotion and humility (not seeking laurels, but being anonymous heroines) and above all, abnegation and sacrifice. Sacrifice was the most common feature attributed to heroines.

There were three occurrences when the Basque press paid special attention to *Libe*, and this greater or lesser interest in *Libe* can be explained by the context of the time. The first time occurred in 1903 (when the play was first published) and 1904. After Arana died in November 1903, his followers wanted to disseminate and socialise the heroine's role through the Basque press. Despite the impact that this symbolic figure would have on Basque nationalism at a later stage, it was barely reported in the press in the first months after the play's publication. There were only a couple of laudatory reviews, some advertisements to announce that the script was for sale and a thwarted attempt to publish it in collectible instalments. As would be later noted by *Lauaxeta* and Sota, perhaps the text was simply not suitable for this type of dissemination. Moreover, right after Arana's death, his followers' aim was mainly to establish and expand the doctrine and the structure of the party. This was not the time to think about women.

Yet, *Libe*'s shadow would appear in the press. In contrast to the lack of references to the play from 1905 onwards, there were increasingly more allusions to the heroic nature of Basque women. When some women began to voice their demands for participation in the patriotic struggle, they were increasingly regarded as heroines. There were two types of heroines: those who went beyond the boundaries of the quotidian and those *national heroines* who sacrificed themselves for their Homeland. *Libe*'s influence was clearly seen in this second group.

The second occurrence was when the nationalist press gave more space to Arana's heroine in 1922, when the women's organisation EAB was created. It has been suggested that the bigger role that women had at the time helped to bring *Libe* back. The

press announced a new version by Etxabe including a musical arrangement by Iruarrizaga. The setting up of the EAB would have been the most appropriate time to reinforce and extend the image of Libe, but the lack of news about any performances seem to point to the fact that their intentions were thwarted by the advent of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.

The third occurence when *Libe* was particularly noticeable was in the year 1934. In my view, this was the peak of its socialisation process. The Second Republic had encouraged women's greater participation in politics in Spain, which was also demanded by some Basque nationalist women. This was when Manuel de la Sota, a specialist in stirring emotion, decided to re-write *Libe*. After several attempts, it was eventually performed with great success, as shown in the press. Women actively joined the movement and played an important role in the dissemination *of Libe*. It was in this period that it was performed the most. The historical melodrama was staged for the last time a few months before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

During the war and the ensuing dictatorial regime, the image of the heroine Libe gradually faded until it practically disappeared. Even though the magazine *Euzkadi* stated that the name of the heroine 'had achieved everlasting glory in Euzkadi', and despite the fact that approximately one thousand women bear the name Libe, its meaning and symbolism are barely known.[93]

Notes

1. http://www.ine.es/widgets/nombApell/index.shtml
2. Research project carried out thanks to the support provided by the Spanish Department of Research, Development and Innovation (HAR2015–64920–P, MINECO/FEDER). It was conducted by the Communication Research Group of the University of Deusto.
3. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: MJF Books, 1949); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).
4. Research on the topic of heroic figures of note includes: Robert Gerwarth, *The Bismarck Myth. Weimar Germany and the Legacy of the Iron Chancellor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta, 2005); Lucy Sudhir Riall, *Garibaldi. Invention of a Hero* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007).
5. Marina Warner, Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism (London: Vintage Edition, 1991); Venita Datta, Heroes and Legends of Fin–de Siècle France. Gender, Politics, and National Identity (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Boyd Cothran, Joan Judge and Adrian Shubert (eds), Women Warriors and National Heroes. A Global History (London: Bloomsbury Publishing UK, 2020); María Cruz Romeo, 'Españolas en la guerra de 1808: Heroínas recordadas', in Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo and Ignacio Peiró Martín (coord), Heterodoxas, guerrilleras y ciudadanas. Resistencias femeninas en la España Moderna y Contemporánea (Zaragoza: Instituto Fernando el Católico, 2015), pp. 63–83; Nerea Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles a madres de la patria. Las mujeres y el nacionalismo vasco (1893–1937)', Historia y Política 31 (2014), pp. 281–308.
6. Teresa del Valle, *Mujer Vasca. Imagen y realidad* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1985); Mercedes Ugalde, *Mujeres y nacionalismo vasco. Génesis y desarrollo de Emakume Abertzale Batza (1906–1936)* (Bilbao: EHU/UPV, 1993); Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles'; Miren Llona, 'Patriotic Mothers of Basque Nationalism: Women's Action during the Spanish Second Republic in the Basque Country', in Mari Luz Esteban and Mila Amurrio (eds), *Feminist Challenges in the Social Sciences. Gender Studies in the Basque Country* (Reno: Center for Basques Studies - University of Nevada - UPV/EHU, 2010).
7. Campbell, *The Hero*.
8. Tonhy Gailey, 'Gender Roles and Hero Myths: Can Gender Inequality Ever Be Justified?', 2017. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317237452_Gender_Roles_and_Hero_Myths_Can_Gender_Inequality_Ever_Be_Justified
9. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet and Mathilde Dubesset, 'La fabrique des heroines', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 30 (2009), pp. 7–16.

10. Gailey, 'Gender Roles', p. 25.
11. Warner conducted an in-depth study on Joan of Arc and the different meanings attributed to her after her death. Warner, *Joan of Arc*.
12. Cassagnes-Brouquet and Dubesset, 'La fabrique', p. 14.
13. Rick Wilford, 'Surveying the ground', in Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller (eds), *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism. The Politics of Transition* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 14.
14. Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Gender and Nation', in Wilford, *Surveying the Ground*, p. 29. See also Rosalind March, 'Women in Contemporary Russia and the Former Soviet Union', in the same book, p. 94. In the Irish case, it is very interesting to see that as British sovereignty weakened from the nineteenth century onwards. Hibernia was no longer portrayed as a young, fragile woman, and began to be represented as a stronger woman with dark hair, dressed in typical clothing of rural Ireland. This was intended to underline the difference from the colonisers. Aida Rosende Pérez, 'La iconografía femenina de Irlanda. Creación y re/construcción de una nación en femenino', *Lectora* 14 (2008), pp. 252–3.
15. Teresa del Valle, *Mujer Vasca;* Joseba Zulaika, *Basque Violence. Metaphor and Sacrament* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1988).
16. For more on Sabino Arana, see José Luis De la Granja, ¿Ángel o demonio? Sabino Arana. *El patriarca del nacionalismo vasco* (Madrid, Tecnos, 2015); Jean-Claude Larronde, *El nacionalismo vasco. Su origen y su ideología en la obra de Sabino Arana-Goiri* (San Sebastián: Txertoa, 1977); Javier Santamaría, Sabino Arana. Dios, Patria, Fueros y Rey. ¿Un Dios o un loco? (Bilbao: Kirikiño, 2004); Sabino Arana Goiri, Obras Completas (extended edition) (Donostia-San Sebastián: Sendoa, 1980). For more on the history of the PNV, the most complete study is that by Santiago de Pablo, Ludger Mees and José Antonio Rodríguez Ranz*, El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Barcelona: Cátedra, 1999–2001).
17. Ugalde, *Mujeres*; Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles'; Miren Llona, 'Patriotic Mothers'.
18. Arana, *Obras Completas*, vol. 3, p. 1984.
19. Quoted in Policarpo Larrañaga, *Emakume Abertzale Batza. La mujer en el nacionalismo vasco* (Donostia-San Sebastián: Auñamendi, 1978), vol. 3, p. 18.
20. I totally agree with Aresti that 'Sabino Arana's ideas are rooted in Catholic traditionalism, and his understanding of sexual difference must be analysed in light of this kind of worldview'. Aresti also stated that for Arana, 'some aspects related to a profound Catholicism softened his misogyny' Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles', pp. 284 and 286.
21. Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles', p. 284.
22. Sabino Arana Goiri, *Obras Completas*, vol. 1, p. 113.
23. While Arana's exaltation of some exceptional women may seem contradictory with his generally misogynistic views, Nerea Aresti clarified that no such contradiction exists, because in Arana's thinking, 'gender did not address the entire cultural and social meaning of female bodied human beings'; other elements such as race could be more decisive. Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles', pp. 288–9.
24. Agustina of Aragon is the clearest example in the Spanish case. In Basque oral and written tradition, the bellicose actions of Maria Pérez de Villanañe, *La Varona*, and of Catalina de Erauso, *La Monja Alférez*, were the most remarkable.
25. According to *Euskaltzaindia* (the institution that regulates the use of the Basque Language), 'Libe' is the 'form that is proposed in the saints calendar published by Sabino Arana and Koldo Eleizalde, as the equivalent of the Castilian name "Libia"'. https://www.euskaltzaindia.eus/index.php?testua=libe&option=com_eoda&Itemid=792&lang=es&view=izenak&bila=bai
26. José Luis de la Granja, 'Batallas de Arrigorriaga y Munguía', in Pablo et al. (eds), *Diccionario ilustrado* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2012), p. 198. Similarly, in connection with the Spanish case, María Cruz Romeo asserted that 'if Agustina of Aragon or a similar figure had not existed, the 1808 patriotic discourse would simply have had to invent her'. The presence of women was essential for the war rhetoric of the Spanish people'. Romeo, 'Españolas', pp. 68–9.
27. *Jelalde* (nickname of Sabino Arana), *Libe* (Bilbao: Tipografía Universal, 1903), p. 38.
28. *Jelalde*, *Libe*, p. 38.
29. On this point, Mercedes Ugalde said: 'Eve's shadow implicitly reappeared here, remembering the danger entailed in leaving female free will uncontrolled'. Mercedes Ugalde, *Mujeres*, p. 48. Nerea Aresti also identified Libe with 'Eve, the fragile woman who was unable to resist the temptation and the condemnation of her people'. Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles', p. 290.
30. Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles', pp. 281, 284 and 285.
31. This was not the first work in which Arana had addressed the theme of the prohibition of mixed marriages. Between 1897 and 1898, he had written *De fuera vendrá … Comedia en tres actos*. The ideological content

was the same. But, unlike this first play, in *Libe*, the main character changed her mind and ended up sacrificing her life for her Homeland.

32. Ugalde, *Mujeres*, pp. 47–50.
33. The idea of sacrifice has been a constant element in nationalist movements. As Fernando Martínez Rueda affirmed, the call to sacrifice for the Homeland characterised Basque nationalism from the onset, particularly considering that in the religious component was crucial: 'The nationalist narrative has understood dying for the Homeland as a way to achieve the destiny which the nation was called for … Dying for the Homeland becomes a heroic sacrifice, thus making sense of death, and in this way nationalism plays a similar role to that of religious traditions'. Fernando Martínez Rueda: 'La muerte por la patria en el nacionalismo vasco: una indagación desde el sujeto', *Historia Contemporánea* 56 (2018), pp. 189–90.
34. *Jelalde*, *Libe*, p. 45. In a previous scene, another character exclaims: 'Oh, you are a worthy daughter of Biscay! … Now, if you die, your memory will be even more venerable to us than that of a wife and a daughter: it will be the memory of a woman who dies for her Homeland'. *Jelalde*, *Libe*, p. 40.
35. Letter written by Sabino Arana to Nikole Atxika-Allende, Bilbao, 2 November 1899, Archivo del Nacionalismo Vasco, Fondo Sabino Arana, Section 1, quoted De la Granja, *Ángel o demonio*, p. 399.
36. Ugalde, *Mujeres*, p. 48.
37. José María Orrantia, 'La Virgen de Euzkadi', *La Patria*, 27 April 1902, p. 2.
38. *La Patria*, 19 April 1903, p. 3. The price was 1.25 pesetas for the general public, or 0.74 cents for subscribers to *La Patria*. It was advertised as follows: 'Libe. Musical drama in four acts with six scenes. Original author: Jelalde. The subject that served as inspiration was the battle of Munguía (Mungia), which took place in the fifteenth century, on the 27th day of that month'.
39. José María Orrantia, 'Libe,' *Patria*, 5 July 1903, p. 1.
40. Although there is no certainty about the meaning of 'rest' as referred to by Baserri, it is likely to have meant that despite his workload as a county representative (a position he had held since 1899), he managed to devote some time to literary endeavours.
41. Mendiarte, 'Libe', *Patria*, 21 February 1904, p. 3.
42. *Euskalduna*, 1 April 1905, p. 6.
43. *Aberri*, 18 August 1906, p. 4.
44. *Aberri*, 1 September 1906, p. 4.
45. *Euzkadi*, 25 April 1913, p. 2; *Euzkadi*, 28 April 1915, p. 1; *Aberri*, 30 April 1921, p. 2.
46. Ikurpen, 'La mujer Vasca', *Patria*, 17 June 1905, p. 3.
47. Betonia, 'Patrióticas jóvenes', *Patria*, 12 November 1905, p. 3.
48. Euzkindarra, 'La mujer', *Aberri*, 1 August 1906, p. 2.
49. 'El Nacionalismo y la mujer vasca', *Aberri*, 11 August 1906, p. 3.
50. I analysed the relationship between the efforts of Basque nationalist women and emotions in Leyre Arrieta, 'Desde las cunas y los fogones: "Emakume" y emociones en el nacionalismo vasco', in Geraldine Galeote, Maria Llombart and Maitane Ostolaza (eds), *Les identités nationales au miroir des émotions: La Catalogne et Le Pays Basque en perspective comparée* (París: Éditions Hispaniques, 2015), pp. 197–201.
51. Mercedes Ugalde suggested that it might have been Victorina de Larrínaga. Ugalde, *Mujeres*, p. 60.
52. Batirtze, 'Carta abierta', *Aberri*, 25 August 1906, p. 3.
53. 'Mi Euzkadi', *Aberri*, 8 December 1906, p. 3.
54. Libe, 'Carta abierta a Katalin', *Aberri*, 3 August 1907, p. 3.
55. Katalin, 'Después del homenaje', *Aberri*, 27 July 1907, pp. 1–2.
56. For more on the Basque Wardrobe, see Ugalde, *Mujeres*, pp. 62–77.
57. Antolín, 'Bien, Katalintxu, muy bien!', *Aberri*, 10 August 1907, p. 3.
58. *Bizkaitarra*, 17 June 1911, p. 3; *Bizkaitarra*, 23 September 1911, p. 3; *Bizkaitarra*, 22 July 1911, p. 3.
59. It is remarkable that in 1924, the magazine *Euzkadi* called the daughter of Benito Mussolini a heroine for saving a boy from drowning. 'In Italy: Mussolini's daughter is a heroine', *Euzkadi*, 7 August 1924.
60. In January 1904, there was a collection of funds to award a medal to that lady. *Patria*, 31 January 1904, p. 3.
61. For example, when she died, the nun Ascensión de Guridi e Iturrieta was distinguished as a heroine for helping in a cholera epidemic. *Euzkadi* highlighted that she was a woman 'shaped in all her being according to the purest profiles of the Basque race, whose glory blossomed beyond our land due to her great virtues and unique merits'. 'A great Basque Woman: Sister Ascensión de Guridi', *Euzkadi*, 4 February 1915.
62. For more on Joan of Arc, see the studies by Warner (1991) and Datta (2011) (endnote 5).
63. Warner, *Joan of Arc*, p. 3.
64. 'Una carta de Castelnau', *Euzkadi*, 3 December 1914; 'Santa Juana de Arco: La fiesta en honor de la heroína nacional', *Euzkadi*, 12 May 1925.

65. Enrabiri, 'En Bayona se va a erigir un monumento a Santa Juana de Arco', *Euzkadi*, 17 June 1928, p. 1.
66. Edith Cavell was an English nurse who saved the lives of soldiers from both sides and housed French, Belgian and English soldiers in her hospital in Brussels. She was captured by Germans, sentenced to death and executed in 1915. Emilienne Moreau was awarded the British Military Cross for her brave acts during the occupation of the French village Loos-en-Gohelle. Marie-Léonie Vanhoutte, whose nickname was *Charlotte*, was a spy who worked for the British near the French–Belgian border during the First World War. She was imprisoned and released when the war ended. Even though all these women were on the Allies' side, it is remarkable that in 1924 the daughter of Mussolini was deemed to be a heroine (see endnote 59).
67. 'Inauguración de Juventud Vasca de Begoña: Un día de triunfo para la Patria', *Euzkadi*, 6 October 1919.
68. 'El Dr. Pujal y Serra en el Ateneo', *Euzkadi*, 24 January 1919, p. 6.
69. The foundation of the EAB in chapter 2 of Ugalde, *Mujeres*, pp. 125–178.
70. Albokari, 'Un acontecimiento. El Padre Iruarritzaga y el estreno de "Libe"', *Aberri*, 16 September 1922, p. 2; Albokari, 'El padre Iruaritzaga [sic] y el estreno de "Libe"', *Aberri*, 23 September 1922, p. 2.
71. Words by Carmen Errazti in *Aberri*, 30 November 1922, pp. 5 and 6.
72. There are references to *Libe* having been partly re-published by *Hermes* in November 1919 and by *Irrintzi* in Bilbao in 1922. But there is no further information about these re-published versions. *Euzkadi*, 24 November 1928, p. 5.
73. Aranzadi, Engracio, 'La mujer vasca', *Euzkadi*, 28 October 1931.
74. Ugalde, *Mujeres*, pp. 572–573.
75. Aresti, 'El gentleman y el bárbaro. Masculinidad y civilización en el nacionalismo vasco', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 86 (2017), p. 91. The anthropological studies by Teresa del Valle (1985) and Joseba Zulaika (1988) have been significant contributions to the image of the 'Mother' in the Basque Country.
76. Words of Engracio Aranzadi in *Euzkadi*, 5 February 1933, p. 1, and words of Polixene Trabudua in 'El homenaje a la Madre Vasca', *Euzkadi*, 7 February 1933, p. 3.
77. 'El homenaje a la Madre Vasca', *Euzkadi*, 7 February 1933, p. 2.
78. Trabudua also used the word 'martyrdom' regarding their imprisonment. According to Miren Llona, by using this language, she elevated herself to the status of warrior. Llona, 'Patriotic Mothers', p. 89.
79. Llona, 'Polixene Trabudua, historia de vida de una dirigente del nacionalismo vasco en la Vizcaya de los años treinta', *Historia Contemporánea* 21 (2000), pp. 466–7.
80. Manuel de la Sota, 'Libe. Unas consideraciones sobre su realización dramática', *Euzkerea*, 1 February 1934.
81. Manuel De la Sota, *Libe*, p. 12. Sentence of Aresti in 'De heroínas viriles', p. 299.
82. Llona, 'Polixene', pp. 472–73.
83. In the words of Polixene, 'Manu Sota, in writing *Libe*, stimulated women's involvement [in the Basque nationalist cause]. He had a very humane appreciation of women and of their potential role … [His Libe] is a strong woman – someone who struggles shoulder to shoulder with men – even on the battlefield if necessary. She is not a passive creature who sits in the kitchen weeping or piously reciting the rosary, but an active woman who ventures out into the real world'. Llona, 'Patriotic Mothers', p. 90.
84. *Euzkadi*, 4 and 6 March 1934.
85. Ibon Uribitarte: 'Igandian be bai', *Euzkadi*, 8 March 1934, p. 12.
86. *Euzkadi*, 17, 20, 21, 22 February 1934.
87. *Lauaxeta* (Esteban Urkiaga), 'En torno a "Libe"', *Euzkadi*, 8 March 1934, pp. 1–2.
88. *Euzkadi*, 8 March 1934, p. 11.
89. 'La primera representación de *Libe* en Donostia constituyó un éxito rotundo para la obra y para Oldargi', *Euzkadi*, 13 May 1935, p. 3. Also pp. 8, 11 and 12.
90. In December 1935, Juventud Vasca de Bilbao organised three theatre competitions. The awards were greater if they were written in Basque. 'Un certamen de obras teatrales', *Euzkadi*, 14 December 1935, p. 6.
91. *Euzkadi*, 21 April 1936, p. 8 and 'La última representación de "Libe"', *Euzkadi*, 28 April 1936, p. 4 and 14.
92. *Euzkadi*, 28 April 1936, p. 4 and 3 May 1936, p. 4.
93. 'Libe en la escena', *Euzkadi*, 21 February 1934. p. 1.

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