

# Letras Hispanas

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**TITLE:** *El mundo está en todas partes: la creación literaria de Bernardo Atxaga*

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One imperative for minority languages is to have a presence beyond their linguistic and geographic borders, which Bernardo Atxaga has done for decades now, assuring the insertion of Basque-language literature into the pages of universal literature. *El mundo está en todas partes: la creación literaria de Bernardo Atxaga* is not the first volume to pay detailed attention to the work of Atxaga, as previous monographs and collections of essays have been published by Lourdes Otaegi, Mari Jose Olaziregi, and Jose Angel Ascunce, among others. Yet *El mundo está en todas partes* complements earlier criticism by the inclusion of a vast array of genres that Atxaga has cultivated and that are sometimes neglected, such as his poetry, children's literature, animal-centered novels, and short stories.

Several of the articles in this volume center on Atxaga's sympathetic portrait of a vast array of animals. On the relationship between fable and narrative, Xavier Etxaniz indicates that Atxaga combines tradition with modern narratology in children's literature to address serious problems such as "opportunities or the fight for the rights of animals and peoples" (207). This can be appreciated throughout his work: in *Shola, Bambulo, Bi-Anai-Two Brothers, Memories of a Cow*. Different contributors emphasize that the supposed children's literature by Atxaga is an immense laboratory where this Basque author

can operate with maximum freedom. In fact, the profound experimentation at the level of form, content, and language makes several of the contributors deal with the issue of literary genre. *Behi Euskaldun Baten Memoriak* [*Memories of a Cow*] for Veronica Azcue, is not a children's book; the same argument is made by Ibon Izurieta Otazua when analyzing *Sara izeneko gizona* [*A spy called Sara*] (193-205). Animals, though, are not only present in his pseudo-children's literature; they abound in what is usually considered his most serious work, and even become some of the plots' enigmatic characters.

His most acclaimed adult-oriented books are *Obabakoak, Gizona bere bakar-dadean, Zeru horiek* and *Soinujolearen semea*; several articles are dedicated to them. *Obabakoak* has been analyzed many times, yet in *El mundo está en todas partes* the article by José Manuel López de Abaida about "Hamaika hitz Villamedianako herriaren ohoretan eta bat gehiago" ["Nine Words on the Honor of the Town of Villamedia"] caught my attention. Unfortunately, the article is somewhat a miscellanea, but for some pages López de Abaida deals with this short story which is the longest of the collection (78-83). The critic links this Villamedian short story with the revision of "historical memory" in the Peninsula, and the balance between memory and forgetfulness in this literary exercise by Atxaga (86).

On the one hand, I missed the inclusion of memorable and amusing works by Atxaga, such as *List of Madmen and other Alphabets*, in this collection of essays. On the other hand, the reader will appreciate the attention given to his poetry from *Etiopia* by Lourdes Otaegi Imaz and from *Poems & Hybrids* by Juan José Lanz, and the miscellaneous *Lekuak* [*Places*] in the last essay by Elixabete Ansa Goicoechea, where she gives us some guidance to study Atxaga's essays in *Places* from the point of view of the "Culture of the Transition" in Spain (293).

All in all, the volume taken as a whole is a very good introduction to the multiple achievements of Bernardo Atxaga. The bibliography of the essays shows how much Atxaga

studies have advanced; and the information accumulated is a very valuable starting point for any academic interested in writing about Atxaga's work. The articles explain well the content of his works, although some times the summary of the plots might seem excessive to specialized readers. The analytical component helps the reader deepen their comprehension of elusive works, such as "Nine Words on the Honor of the Town of Villamedia," *Memories of a Basque Cow* and *Seven Houses in France*.

All readers interested in the forty years of Iberian culture from the Transition up to now would enjoy and enrich their view of the many nuances of Iberian cultures and literatures with this volume about Bernardo Atxaga's language, voice and writing.