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AESTHETIC JOURNEYS AND MEDIA  
PILGRIMAGES IN THE CONTEXTS OF POP  
CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES  
FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 10 – 2021

# MUTUAL IMAGES

## A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

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AESTHETIC JOURNEYS AND MEDIA  
PILGRIMAGES IN THE CONTEXTS OF POP  
CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES  
FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

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# MUTUAL IMAGES

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## ***Ipar Haizearen Erronka:***

# **A boat trip from the Basque Country to Newfoundland**

Maitane JUNGUITU DRONDA | Independent Researcher, Spain

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The nature of animated cinema involves the creation of any realistic or fantastical characters, places, and situations. Animation can be used to take characters far from their hometowns on believable journeys without big budgets used on location shooting.*

*The Basque animated feature film Ipar Haizearen Erronka (The Challenge of the North Wind), directed in 1992 by Juanba Berasategi, illustrates how animation can represent a journey and a historic reality in a plausible way. The movie depicts a Basque whale hunting vessel travelling to the wild coast of Newfoundland, Canada in the sixteenth century. Typically, Basque live action movies in the 80s would recreate foreign locations with nearby settings. Ipar Haizearen Erronka avoids this problem by showing America through drawings.*

*In this paper, we will use the movie Ipar Haizearen Erronka to interpret how animation uses backgrounds and objects to represent a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean and determine the realistic accuracy of the social and historical moments represented in the movie. We will also see how this journey embodies the characteristics of the literary genre of Bildungsroman, as well as the narrative structures pointed out by Vladimir Propp's folktale and Joseph Campbell's monomyth. The study also focuses on how the film depicts the most representative characteristics of the journey, and how they are used as filming narrative resources. A closer look will be taken into the main vessels, the captain's logbook, the map, the historical context of the sailing of the ship, the maritime laws where sexism is abundant, the financing of the trip, and the work on board.*

### **KEYWORDS**

Basque Country; Newfoundland; Animation; Film analysis; Whale Hunting; Basque Cinema.

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## **1. Introduction**

*Ipar Haizearen Erronka (The Challenge of the North Wind)* is the second animated feature film produced in the Basque Country. It was released in 1992 and directed by the Basque animation pioneer Juanba Berasategi.<sup>1</sup> The director previously signed

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<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to mention that there was a conflict over the attribution of the direction duties. Maite Ruiz de Austri and Carlos Varela signed as directors on the first version of the movie. As *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* was based on the project *Balearenak* (1992) by Juanba Berasategi, he claimed to be author of *Ipar Haizeren erronka* too, and won the trial (Junguitu Dronda, 2019: 278-280).

*Kalabaza Tripontzia* (1985), the first animated commercial feature film made in the Basque Country, which is also the first one in Basque language.<sup>2</sup>

This movie is a good example of an adventure that involves a trip from a known world to the unknown. It depicts a specific historical moment and place —Basque whale hunting industry in the sixteenth century— while trying to present an interesting story for children. Furthermore, the movie is a free adaptation of a previously released graphic novel for adults titled *Justin Hiriart* (2015, Fructuoso & Muro Harriet). The original plot of the graphic novel features adults as main characters and tries to be accurate to the depicted historical context. However, the filmmakers aimed at a youth audience, presenting children as the main characters and adding fantasy to the plot. With these decisions, the film tries to emulate the narrative and aesthetic successful formulas used in Hollywood's cel-animated<sup>3</sup> movies, specifically what Chris Pallant calls 'Disney Formalism' (2011: 35-53). The plot is described by the following:

Anne and Peiot are two twins from the Basque town of Pasai Donibane. Peiot becomes part of the crew of the whale hunting vessel Donibane to Newfoundland. Anne joins the journey as a stowaway because they don't allow girls aboard. Meanwhile, the evil Athanasius wants to steal the power of the North Wind, which remains in a ceramic pot. Anne, Peiot and their new Mi'kmaq friend Watuna fight Athanasius in Newfoundland to protect the North Wind and the whales.

In the following lines, we will look over the film's formal and narrative elements, and then focus on how the voyage is depicted. Firstly, we will set animation and indexicality in a theoretical context. This will help us understand the possibilities that this kind of cinema offers, in terms of the ability to differentiate between reality and the representation of reality. Then, we will focus on the use of backgrounds in Basque cinema to represent Basque identity. At this point, we will mention some live-action

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<sup>2</sup> The modern Basque language is spoken in seven provinces divided between France and Spain. Those seven provinces all together are Euskal Herria (Basque Country). This can be mistaken for the Basque Autonomous Community from Spain, which is formed by three of those provinces. The movie was created in the Basque Autonomous Community, hence, in the Basque Country.

<sup>3</sup> Cel-animation is an animation technique that creates 2D images using hand-drawn transparent sheets made of celluloid. Halas and Manvel claimed that this technique was revolutionary as 'it stemmed the possibility of introducing division of work and specialization into animation, and thus effecting improvements in the whole character of cartoon drawing' (Halas and Manvel, 1980: 27).

movies that coincide with *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* showing Basque characters travelling abroad in similar historical contexts. We will take a look at the plot using Vladimir Propp's folktale functions, Joseph Campbell's monomyth and the main elements of the Bildungsroman as references. We will also consider narrative structures, the use of the landscapes, and the voyage from an ecological point of view, as the plot defends the value of natural resources. After that, we will describe some of the most representative characteristics of the journey made in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. Finally, after the theoretical and descriptive approach to the movie we will summarise some conclusions.

This research will allow us to learn more about animated cinema made in the Basque Country. There is a lack of research on Basque animated movies. This paper will increase the availability of academic materials for animation, a problem that Basque live-action cinema does not have. It is important that animated movies are studied within the field of national cinema.

## **2. Animation and the representation of the real**

*Ipar Haizearen Erronka* depicts a Basque whale hunting vessel travelling to the wild coast of Newfoundland, Canada in the sixteenth century. The main characters are the Basque twins Anne and Peiot and their Native American friend Watuna.

This film —as with many other animated features— is based on a previous graphic novel. The movie was inspired by the graphic novel *Justin Hiriart*, whose authors are the illustrator Francisco Fructuoso and the scriptwriter Gregorio Muro 'Harriet'. In fact, Muro is also the scriptwriter of the film. The graphic novel was released in the 80s in French, Basque, and Spanish, and then republished in 2015.

*Justin Hiriart* is a graphic novel that tries to depict sixteenth century Basque and Native American Mi'kmaq society.<sup>4</sup> The authors tried to be accurate about the Basque whale hunting industry and the trades between Europeans and Americans. They used bibliographical sources that added details to the plot. They also used historical graphic representations of the vessels that they depicted. There is much bibliography about

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<sup>4</sup> The Mi'kmaq or Micmac are Native American people that live in Eastern Canada and Maine (United States). European sailors, including Basque, contacted them in the sixteenth century.

Basque whale hunting. For instance, Jerardo Elortza writes about the literature created about Basques in Newfoundland (2010: 147-158).

To understand the aesthetic choices made by the filmmakers of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* we need to understand the basis of the indexicality within the animation technique and the characteristics of the 'Disney Formalism' movies.

In opposition to live-action films, the nature of animated cinema involves the creation of every picture in frame. The author —as an individual or as part of a large team of artists— creates beings and places by drawing, building puppets or creating digitally. Those beings and places can be represented between the two opposite ends of indexicality. Maureen Furniss explains the continuum between live-action pictures and animation, and sets the two ends of indexicality in mimesis and abstraction (2014: 6). On one side, we find extremely indexical and naturalist pictures, such as the hyperrealistic ones created by CGI that try to replace reality. As we approach the other end, indexicality becomes less strong, and the pictures can show different degrees of simplicity until they reach abstraction.

Indexicality is also linked to fantasy as an inherent feature of animation. This allows us to create caricatured, distorted, and metaphorical characters that we are able to easily identify despite their more or less lack of resemblance to our reality. This feature is typically used in comic books. That metaphorical animation is the one that Halas and Manvel defended in their theories. These authors think that animation should not be used to tell stories that can be told by live-action: 'as the animator draws away from naturalism the powers of his medium increase; there is nothing but the limits of his imagination and his technical resources to hold him back' (Halas and Manvel, 1980: 68).

Halas and Manvel pointed out their theory in opposition to the feature films that The Walt Disney Company has released since the 1930s. These cel-animation movies often present characters of human proportions and the use of the rotoscope to emulate movement. Some researchers point out that the narrative construction of those movies and not the aesthetics are 'hyperrealistic':

Hyperrealism also covers the Disney Studio's application of realist conventions of narrative, logical causality and character motivations [...] hyperrealism is a measure not so much of the proximity of the representation to its referent but of the remediation of the codes (and attendant ideologies) of live action cinema. [...] However, given the important role of Disney in the development of popular spectacular culture in general (theme parks as well as movies), and in the pioneering of new cinematic technologies [...], it could be argued that the concept

of hyperreality and the animation aesthetics of hyperrealism are closely connected (Lister, Dovey, Giddings *et al.*, 2009: 138).

Many animation techniques, along with other mechanical and optical effects, are used in live-action movies as special effect resources. Nowadays, Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) allows creators to recreate all kinds of live-action pictures and reach the highest degree of mimesis. That makes it hard to differentiate between the photorealistic animation and the real live-action images. Lately, animation gained evident importance as an invisible resource for live-action. 'It is a visual realism, a verisimilitude, premised not on the indexicality of photography, but on the 'wizardry' of digital synthetic imagery and its designers, that re-introduces that least realist cinematic form, animation, back into the mainstream.' (Lister, Dovey, Giddings *et al.*, 2009:142).

Aside from the discussion of whether animation should be used or not in a hyperreal way, this technique has been used since the early years for documentary purposes. In fact, animated documentaries are a cinematographic genre.

Paul Ward points out that Halas and Manvell's views about animation can fit within this genre: '[...] animated documentary demonstrates clearly how documentary can be the realm of subjectivity, fantasy, and non-normative approaches to understanding the world around us' (2005: 86).

This author also reminds readers that recent animated documentaries are what he calls the creative interpretation '[...] of a real person's testimony or reminiscence' (Ward 2005: 87). In other words, animation can be used not only to accurately recreate past situations, but also to add the subjectivity of the storyteller.

When it comes to fictional stories, we usually have some characters developing certain actions in specific spaces. Maureen Furniss points out that within animation, characters and background are the two main categories of images (2014: 66). According to Furniss, after the professionalisation of animation, 'backgrounds developed into an art form of their own, greatly impacting the animated productions' (2014: 72). That idea, in the context of Disney features, is explained by Casey Riffel as he analyses the animated pictures of *Bambi* (1942, various directors), one of the movies from 'Disney Formalism' style.

Riffel puts together the theories of various authors to understand the contradiction between the flatness of cel-animation and the realistic effort of reaching volume depth

with the multiplane camera. The foreground —the characters— oppose the background as a divergence between reality and fantasy: ‘This second gap occurs in both the foreground —in the tension between Disney’s conflicting desires for emotive anthropomorphism and accurate animal anatomy— and in the background —between romantic depictions of nature and the role of these romanticised backgrounds in “naturalising” the seemingly coherent space of the animated image’ (Riffel, 2012: 4).

As far as we have seen, there is a place in animation for both realistic and abstract pictures, finding a big way in between them. Animated documentaries can be used to recreate a subjective reality. But also, animation —and more specifically cel-animation— can be used in fictional stories with artistic and almost naturalistic drawings.

*Ipar Haizearen Erronka* is made with cel-animation technique and tries to recreate the successful works of the formalist style of the Walt Disney Company. This style is defined by Chris Pallant as a filmmaking approach that prioritises ‘artistic sophistication, ‘realism’ in characters and contexts, and, above all, believability’ (2011: 35).

Of course, the movie we are analysing did not have the same economic or human resources to achieve the same results that Disney did. But, within the limitations of the animation technique, the animators tried to be as accurate as possible and create naturalistic and recognisable pictures.

The main setting in the Basque Country, the port of Pasai Donibane, even if it is a bit simplified, it is clearly recognisable. The aerial shot shows the port’s main square, the surrounding buildings and the mouth of the river that leads to the Cantabrian Sea and after that to the Atlantic Ocean. Newfoundland is characterised by the wild coastline. We see cliffs, beaches, and caves. Meanwhile, the nomadic settlement of the Mi’kmaq lays down on the top of a cliff, close to a precipice. Even though the depiction of the American landscapes is naturalistic, we cannot talk about their realistic accuracy, as we did not find any exact picture of the exact landscapes portrayed in the movie. There is also a shot of the moon that is very realistic. Undoubtedly, they tried to make the places on the long shots or big long shots recognisable. On the other hand, when it comes to more specific shots or closed spaces, the pictures are less realistic. This also happens with character designs, as their figures are not realistically proportional and tend to show physical stereotypes. For instance, female characters are always depicted with exaggerated female features such as non-realistic breast sizes and they always wear skirts (Junguitu Dronda, 2021: 157-158).





**Fig. 1 & 2.** On the left (**Fig.1**) the port of Pasai Donibane as seen in the movie. On the right (**Fig.2**) Newfoundland.

### **3. Basque cinema: Identity, travel and backgrounds**

Stories need characters, actions, and a time-space setting. Chris Lukinbeal points out the importance of the election of a specific place to set the plot, as this provides realism to the narrative (2005: 6). He explains that a location is linked to elements such as a regional sense of place, and the history of that specific area. Lunkinbeal expounds the importance of the cinematic landscapes saying that ‘when cinema retains its sense of place the mise-en-scène spatial meaning remains open to interpretation. In these instances, narrative films may contain a more realistic representation of a landscape where the viewer can begin to establish a cognitive map of the social and physical geography’ (2005: 6).

Traditionally, Basque cinema has been used to underline Basque identity. Roldan Larreta spoke in 1999 about two stages within ‘modern Basque Cinema’ (1999: 19-20). During the late sixties and mid-seventies, Basque cinema was used to fight against oppression. It was symbolic cinema and there was no purpose of creating any industry. At the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties, Basque Cinema started to be funded. That provoked an increase of feature films, while the industry was still precarious. During that time, directors and scholars showed a big concern about defining what Basque Cinema is. The debate involved many characteristics such as the language or the compromise on the Basque national revolution. They did not reach any conclusion, but, as a matter of fact, funding of the Basque Government specified that the movies they helped must be settled in the Basque Country.

As there is not much research about the depiction of the Basque Country in animated cinema, we need to widen our scope and look at live-action movies. Ann Davies explains that the rural landscapes are iconic of Basque nationalism (2012: 61). The city and the industrial landscape are also typical in the movies. Davies adds that the Basque identity usually appears in opposition to the Spanish identity haunting each other, while landscape is used to depict that confrontation.

Marvin D'Lugo explains that in some movies Basque identity appears by confronting the new place that the characters visit (2010:126), as it happens in the movie *Los Amantes del Círculo Polar* (*Lovers of the Arctic Circle*, 1998, Julio Medem). Davies adds that Basque terrorism is also depicted by road movies through rural landscapes (2012: 60).

*Ipar Haizearen Erronka* is a movie for children that avoids deep social and political struggles. It does underline the Basque Identity in contrast to the native American Mi'kmaq tribe, but does not show any reference to the contrast to Spain. Basque and Mi'kmaq identity are mostly defined by their looks, clothes, way of living, and the architecture of their towns. These urban areas and more clearly the natural landscapes help to define these identities, which end up in a common understanding. In the words of Ann Davies, 'the spaces and places depicted in Basque cinema and beyond come to be spaces of distance, displacement and denial appropriate for uncanny identities' (2012: 61).

Moreover, when it comes to the representation of minorities in the American animation industry, Nur Liana Mohd Redzuan Roy and Nora Edrina Sahharil explain that 'was influenced heavily through their historical timeline and the movements these minorities have gone through or have become witnesses of it' (2020: 571). These are two main features represented in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*; two minorised communities depicting a specific moment in time that involves travelling and market-trade.

The relationship between the Basques and foreign places and cultures was represented in three movies close in time to the release of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*: *Agur Everest* (*Goodbye Everest*, 1981, Fernando Larrukert), *La Conquista de Albania* (*The Conquest of Albania*, 1981, Alfonso Ungría) and *La Monja Alférez* (1987, Javier Aguirre).

*Agur Everest* is a documentary that as the name suggests takes Basque mountaineers to the peak of Mount Everest. The pictures of the several attempts of the mountaineers were taken during actual missions in Nepal. As the director explains to Roldán Larreta, they wanted to show the expedition and the places in the most human way (Larreta 1999: 200). They did not want to picture the mountaineers as superheroes completing a heroic deed.

The two other examples are fiction films where the main Basque characters travel abroad. Both movies are historical, and the foreign places were not filmed in the actual places that they represent. *La Conquista de Albania* tells a story about an historic military mission of Basque —or more specifically Navarre— soldiers of the fourteenth century. These soldiers tried to conquer Albania for their King. According to Roldán Larreta, this epic adventure was filmed mostly in Navarre —and also in the well-known castle of Loarre in Huesca, used in the movie *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005, Ridley Scott)—, including the plot set in Albania (1999: 202).

*La Monja Alférez* presents some similar elements with *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. The main character is Catalina de Erauso, a nun that dresses up as a soldier and travels to America. Anne tries to get into the vessel dressed up as a sailor. The director filmed the Andes Mountains in Andalucia. Roldán Larreta thinks that the movie does not accurately portray the historic moment that it is represented in and points out that the location and the clothes were ‘poor’ (1999: 253).

Except for the documentary *Agur Everest*, the rest of these live-action movies filmed the foreign places that they represent in places close to the Basque Country. It is interesting that Larreta considered the setting of *La Monja Alférez* as not accurate enough. This issue is overcome when it comes to cel-animation, as the hand-drawing of the picture allows it to be naturalistic enough to identify foreign places without needing to be hyperrealistic. Even if there are not many animated movies set in the Basque Country, the audience recognises the places easily, and feels closer to the story.

Backgrounds in animated movies, as Chris Pallant reminds us, do not really exist (2013: 183). But the originally static drawings acquire depth and movement through the multiplane camera that allows the backgrounds to become believable (Pallant, 2013:187). It is interesting to point out though that, as Pallant says, this believability suppresses one of the main characteristics of animation, the metamorphic potential of the pictures (Pallant, 2013: 187). As we explained before, *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* reaches some balance between the naturalistic backgrounds and the less realistic characters.

#### 4. A Bildungsroman between the Basque Country and Newfoundland

The graphic novel *Justin Hiriart* was aimed at an adult audience, but the movie was created for a children's audience.<sup>5</sup> The graphic novel was just an inspiration for the film and copied the time-space setting and the name of the main vessel —*San Juan* in Spanish and *Donibane* in Basque. All the violence and the complex and plausible plots were substituted by children as main characters —the twins Anne and Peiot, and Watuna— and a story that involves magic and fantasy.

When it comes to narrative structures, Vladimir Propp points out that every folktale presents the same 31 functions of characters (Propp, 2009: 21-22). These are independent functions, and the sequence is always identical. Within this structure, we find functions that we can clearly identify in the plot of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. Anne suffers the absence of her brother, and she is forbidden to join him. Anne violates the interdiction, and as the rest of the main characters do she leaves home. The villain, Athanasius, gets information and tries to make Anne drown in the sea. The heroes are tested and they get a magical agent, a ceramic pot that contains the North Wind. Anne, Peiot, and Watuna fight and defeat the villain. The heroes liquidate their misfortunes and return the magical object. They do not travel back home, but they return to the adults. Peiot and Watuna are claimed as false heroes, while at the end, Anne gets the recognition of the adults. There is no wedding, but there is indeed a final celebration.

This narrative structure can be also interpreted as the 'hero's journey' defined by Joseph Campbell (2004). The author explains the characteristics of the hero with the following words:

'The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. [...] Typically, the hero of the fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph, and the hero of myth a world-historical, macro-cosmic triumph. Whereas the former—the youngest or despised child who becomes the master of extraordinary powers—prevails over his personal oppressors, the latter brings back from his adventure the means for the regeneration of his society as a whole' (Campbell, 2004: 35).

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<sup>5</sup> Gregorio Muro states that while working on the script of *Balearenak*, Juanba Berasategi asked him to write a 'kids movie' (Junguitu Drona, 2015). The records of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* in Spanish Film Catalogue shows that the film is for General Audiences (ICAA, 2021).

The movie presents Anne as a child of exceptional gifts. She is unrecognised by society just because she is a girl. She defends her values, and she fights the villain to finally become recognised by society.

Monomyth, explained by Campbell, contains three rites of passage of the hero that are clear in the movie: separation, initiation, and return (2004: 28). These same concepts are already mentioned regarding Propp's theory.

Although the film takes the main characters, the twins Anne and Peiot, on a physical journey across the Atlantic Ocean, the twins and the Mi'kmaq child Peiot carry out an inward 'hero's journey' from childhood to adulthood. That frames the plot within the Bildungsroman literary genre, where the characters have an inner evolution.

Manuel López Gallego brings together theories of various authors regarding the Bildungsroman and tries to describe the main elements that defined the genre. The Bildungsroman is an initiation process where the main characters, children or teenagers, develop their personalities, know themselves, and become adults (López Gallego, 2013: 65). These characters do not fit into society —this is what makes an antagonist—, and because of that, they feel lonely. That is why they usually challenge society.

This is especially relevant in the case of the two boys, Peiot and Watuna, who are constantly pressured to become men: they need to become good sailors and good hunters, almost in a ritualistic way. At the end of the movie, they effectively reach adulthood in a ritual in front of all the adults.

The journey is different for Anne; as is typical in the female Bildungsroman, the adults made her stay in the Basque Country —probably to raise her as a stay-at-home-mom— and deprive her of the freedom of a male hero (López Gallego, 2013: 63 and 66). Anne, after spending all of the story hidden from the adults, finally reveals herself in front of everyone, showing that she is as valuable as the boys.

The Bildungsroman theory explains that the success of the characters' adventures and their maturing may change society as well. We could understand that Anne's victory may change the way that society sees female sailors, but the conversation she has at the end of the movie with the captain does not make it clear.

Another main characteristic of the Bildungsroman is the difference between generations (Moretti, 1987: 4-5). Anne, Peiot, and Watuna do not belong to nor understand the values of adults. However, Peiot and Watuna fulfil what is expected from them, leaving Anne as the only one who really challenges adults.

Magic is also an important element of the gap between generations. The new or unknown world the adventure is set in involves a fantastic myth. As the children are trying to get along with the rest of the adults, they realise that one of them, the villain Athanasius, is able to make magic and seeks the legendary *North Wind*. Athanasius and the kids are the only ones aware that the *North Wind* is not only a legend and indeed has magical powers that the rest of adults ignore. This magical being has the shape of a ceramic pot and is the key to find the bay where the whales live. Athanasius wants to take the secret back to the Basque Country and share it with businessmen that will kill the whales to get oil and become richer. The pot represents the balance of the universe, a magic that adults ignore and only the kids understand. Saving the ceramic pot, the kids save the environment. The kids understand and defend that a balanced use of natural resources is necessary.

These ecological values and messages are also represented by the landscapes and animals that the children want to preserve. Ursula K. Heise studies the ecological plots within animated movies and mentions several examples of US-American and Japanese feature films that show the struggle between human, nature, and machinery (2014: 304-305). She claims that 'in some cases, animation has given rise to vivid portrayals of a natural world shaped by perceptions, agencies, and intentions—of animals, plants, even features of the landscape—some of which resemble those of humans, and some of which remain resolutely alien' (Heise, 2014: 316). That means that the fable told in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* is inherent to animation.

That is precisely displayed by the long shots and big long shots of the American coastline that are shown from the beginning of the movie. In this gargantuan and wild landscape, humans and animals need to share their space. This contrasts with the civilised port of Pasai Donibane, with many buildings following the flow of the river to the open sea. The uncertainty and fear transmitted by the American cliffs and the brave ocean coincide with the unknown world of Campbell's 'hero's journey'. This depiction of nature corresponds to the interpretation that Agustín Gámir Orueta and Carlos Manuel Valdés make about cinema landscapes and coincides with Heise's thoughts about ecology:

Nature, through a medium as powerful as cinema, is easily converted into landscape, that is, modified by human perception. In this sense, the view of film towards nature has changed since the ideas of «reverential fear», to other ideas which promote the exploitation of its resources, and more recently showing examples of degradation resulting from the productive activity of modern society, [...] (Orueta & Valdés, 2007: 409).

Finally, we will discuss what Maria Luisa Torres Reyes calls ‘Multicultural Bildungsroman’. This specific kind of Bildungsroman is defined by characters who question themselves about their identity and belonging (2017: 167-168). *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* definitely shows multicultural relationships but does not question the national identity of the Basque and Mi’kmaq societies. In fact, both happen to have the same values regarding the gap between generations, gender rules, and ecology. There is apparently no struggle between them and the movie portrays an idyllic relationship between different people. As mentioned previously, Anne, Peiot, and Watuna question their role in society.

## **5. The depiction of the Journey**

We have already mentioned the importance of the time-space setting in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* and how the boat trip also represents the inner journey of the main characters. Besides these, there are other several concepts that depict the journey not only physically as objects and situations, but also socially and metaphorically. All these elements help to contextualise the journey within the plot and help to understand the historical context. Also, many of them are used as narrative filming resources. In the following section we will take a closer look at six elements.

### **5.1. The captain’s logbook**

Captain Galar, the captain of the *Donibane* vessel, appears twice writing down the ship’s log. At the beginning of the movie, the captain’s voiceover reads the title of the film and while we listen to his words, three shots take us from a long shot of the town to inside the boat where the captain stands. The logbook besides the over voices of the captain is used twice to foretell his plans and the details of the trip that the audience is going to see in pictures.



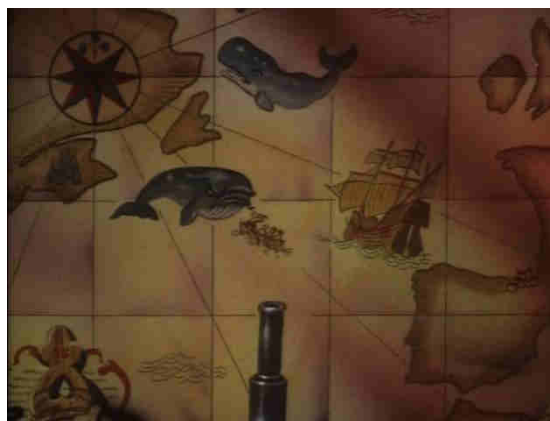
**Fig. 3.** Captain Galar writes in the logbook.

## 5.2. The map

There are two maps in the captain's cabin: a large one that shows the entire world and a small one just with Europe. The large one is used twice besides the captain's logbook. First, the map is used to foresee the trip across the ocean; the picture starts with a zoom out from the Basque Country, and the camera zooms in to Newfoundland. Then, after a shot of Captain Galar, the map is used as a space transition; the plot moves from the Basque Country to Newfoundland as the picture dissolves over America in the map.

There is no doubt that the map is a simplified version of a sixteenth century ornamental cartography map. It includes drawings of boats and whales over the ocean, a compass rose, and a cartouche.

The plot explains that not everyone is able to get to Newfoundland and the Bay of the Whales. That is why Athanasius uses magic to guide his ally across the ocean with shining marvels. Athanasius's dark magic is used as a resource to substitute the map he does not have.



**Fig. 4.** The map in Captain Galar's cabin.



### 5.3. The main vessels

There are two main vessels in the movie linked respectively to the heroes and the villains. The *Donibane* —*San Juan* in Spanish— is a strong big vessel used by the heroes to travel. It is the prize that the pirate Captain Makailu is going to win if he achieves his evil goals. In the seventeenth century, a boat called the *San Juan* that left the port of Pasai Donibane did exist and sank in the Red Bay of Newfoundland.

The pirate vessel has several iconographic elements that make evident that it is the villain's boat. It has a demon as a figurehead, it always appears under shadow —we never see the vessel in sunlight—, and of course, Captain Makailu raises the Jolly Roger when he shows his real character.



**Fig. 5.** The Jolly Roger in Captain Makailu's boat.

### 5.4. Financing the trip

The movie also shows the social layers of the Basque society from the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the main town is crowded with ordinary people; we see fish sellers, a priest, orphan kids, and, of course, sailors. Their houses are mostly made of stone and wood and they are poorly decorated. This is very different from the looking and house of the financiers that helped Athanasius. These three rich men are surrounded by money and jewellery in a big house with tall walls, a lot of space, and nice curtains. They are counting their money, trying to reach even the last coin, and they undoubtedly want to make more. They do not care if they need Athanasius and a pirate's help to achieve their goals. Sound and images also help to ambient the scene, as we listen to the clink of coins and we see the shine of the money and the jewellery.

### 5.5. Maritime Laws, Sexism and Witchcraft

As we have seen, the character of Anne is not allowed to travel in the *Donibane* vessel. She thinks it is unfair that her twin brother can do it just because he is a boy. A girl cannot work as a sailor because the maritime laws forbid it. Besides that, the characters in the movie point out that having a woman aboard brings bad luck to the trip. Traditionally, bad luck during a voyage is caused by a witch. All this suspiciousness represents an inherent sexism that is not just fiction. As José Dueso explains, historically there are rumours that involve witches and Basque whale hunters (1996: 82-84).

All the public spaces in the movie are dominated by men. Even though there are a few female characters on screen, Anne is the only one with a name. As Maitane Junguitu Points out, the rest of the female characters are related to motherhood, feeding and caring for others, not only the humans, but also female animals (2021: 158).

### 5.6. The sailing of the *Donibane* and the work on board

The moment that the boat leaves the port of Pasai Donibane is a big event for the entire town. They create a festive atmosphere that we understand represents the importance that whale hunting has for this society.

We even see some actions that become a performance. The bells ring in the church, and underline that even the religious stratum relies on the sailors. Some men help to take the vessel out of the port in rowboats. Olga Macías points out that in the seventeenth century in Pasai Donibane, there were many women working as boatwomen —*batelari* in Basque and *batelera* in Spanish— (2016: 832-833), but the movie does not feature them. We do see women besides children and men in the port saying goodbye to the sailors that are leaving.



**Fig. 6 & 7.** On the left (**Fig.6**), inhabitants of Pasai Donibane say goodbye to the sailors. On the right (**Fig.7**), rowboats help the vessel to leave the port.

## 6. Conclusions

*Ipar Haizearen Erronka* is a very rich movie that can be analysed from very different points of view. In this paper, we focused on how the movie contextualises the life of the Basque sailors of the sixteenth century on their voyage to Newfoundland from the children's view of the main characters.

It is clear that the authors wanted to show a historical setting, and tried to be as accurate as possible. Knowing that the movie was going to be watched by children, they tried to add elements that would attract their attention, such as young main characters and magic, which is certainly a constant in animation. However, there are many details that show us the history and traditions of the Basque Country, always related to maritime life. This takes us to the underlining documentary approach of the movie, as the plot presents in the background accuracy in the settings, props and the historical reconstruction.

The movie creates a balance between the real setting and the fantasy of the story. That is also underlined with the aesthetic of the films that try to be naturalistic when it comes to real settings that can be easily identified. This is unquestionably an approach to recreate the main features of 'Disney Formalism', especially concerning the realistic backgrounds. The landscapes are part of the definition of the Basque and Mi'kmaq identities, as it helps to define who they are and how they live. The voyage and the different backgrounds represent the inner and outer travels of the main characters, according to the characteristics of the Bildungsroman genre.

Finally, we need to point out that this film allows many other analyses. It would be interesting to research the adaptation from the graphic novel in detail, or the production itself within the European minority languages and small cinemas context.

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