

# MEMORIES OF TOMORROW

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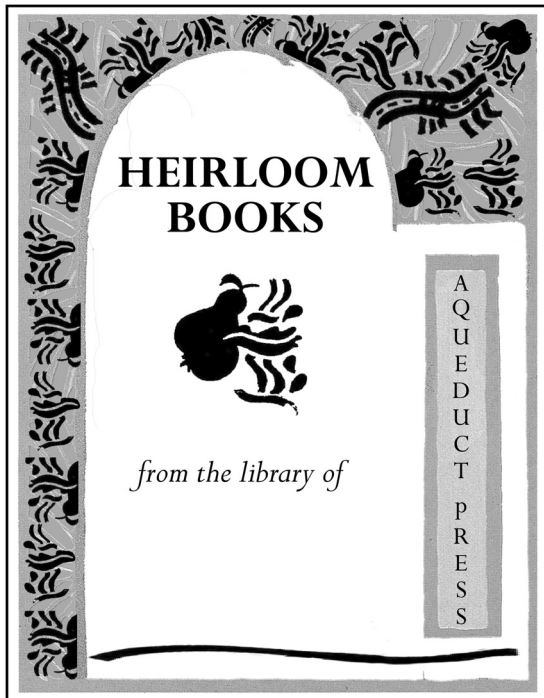
*Memories of Tomorrow*

by Mayi Pelot

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Aqueduct Press's series of Heirloom Books aims to bring back into print and preserve work that has helped make feminist science fiction what it is today — work that though clearly of its time is still pleasurable to read, work that is thought-provoking, work that can still speak powerfully to readers. The series takes its name from the seeds of older strains of vegetables, so valuable and in danger of being lost. Our hope is to keep these books from being lost, as works that do not make it into the canon so often are.

~ L. Timmel Duchamp





Heirloom Series

Number 6

MEMORIES OF TOMORROW

by  
Mayi Pelot

translated by  
Arrate Hidalgo



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ETXEPARE  
EUSKAL  
INSTITUTUA The translation of this book has been  
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To Txomin Peillen  
and also  
to a spider  
gifted with cunning





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## Translator's Foreword

MAYI PELOT WAS an innovator, in more than one sense. This is something I began to realise years ago, when I first came across her work in my attempts to locate whatever heritage there was in terms of Basque speculation. And the range of Pelot's innovation soon grew before me as I delved deeper into her imagination as well as into her forging new forms of expression in the Basque language itself.

It has been thanks to the opportunity to translate these short stories that I have come to understand the dimensions of her expansive, playful attitude towards the way words form and interact in Basque. It has often been mentioned about her that she was a newcomer to the language she wrote in (not unlike me, she began to use Basque as a medium for living in her twenties), and that she wrote science fiction, at that. Northern Basque Country author and queer literary icon Itxaro Borda has talked about unified Basque or *euskara batua* — the standardized variety of the language now used in media, government and education — in the context in which Pelot was writing, pointing out that it was considered metallic, technical, even science fictional. But, as Borda notes, in contrast to the style favoured by the wave of social commentary in which she developed as an author, Pelot was in search of a different kind of Basque to that used by her contemporaries, and she found it by creating her own kind, one on which her worlds could find solid ground.

Borda once mentioned to me, in fact, that back in the 1980s technical dictionaries did not exist yet for Basque. And so Pelot took advantage of the language's fondness for compounding, not only to name imaginary devices, but also to provide alternatives to the many words being imported into Basque — mainly from English — for existing technology. My translation decisions

around this aspect of Pelot's work can be roughly divided into three groups, which I will briefly describe below.

The first includes existing technologies that might or might not have had their own working Basque terms at the time, such as “elevator.” Pelot uses *berigan*, a term she invented—as far as I know—instead of the official term, *igogailu*. *Ber* might possibly be related to *behera* (“down”), while *igan* means “to elevate” in the northern Basque dialects. *Igogailu*, on the other hand, literally means “device to go up,” which is what “elevator” means, of course. In those cases, I have gone for the accepted term in US English.

The second group encompasses all non-existent technology at the time of writing, such as *arroltzmatico* (wheel-free, hovering individual vehicles), which I have translated as “ovamobile” (*arroltz* meaning “egg”); or *eskutel* (a small radio device that is worn on the wrist), which I have translated as “handphone” (*esku* meaning “hand”). In these cases, Pelot's neologisms have given me the chance to create my own in English.

And finally we have some very special examples of technology that already existed in the 1980s, in fields where the *lingua franca* was and is English—most notoriously computer science. In these cases, Pelot apparently decided to come up with Basque terms and concepts to replace the global English term. One renaming I really enjoyed was a computer button called *lot/buka*, which, after some head-banging, I figured could well refer to the on/off button. *Lotu* means to link, to connect, to tie up. *Bukatu*, on the other hand, means to end, to finish, kill, or break. While I could have gone for “on/off,” which would have been accurate enough, I believed that it missed transmitting Pelot's way of thinking in her construction of language. Therefore, you will find it as “Link/Break” in the text.

Technology, however, is not the only thing with which Pelot had fun when it comes to pushing the limits of Basque. Short stories such as “Choppy Water” and “The Exchange” attest to the pleasure she took in the lyrical possibilities of her elliptical, synthetic style of writing.

As a reader who has been inspired all her life by translated books—which outside of the English-speaking world we simply call “books,” to paraphrase an Italian colleague who made this point at an International Translation Day conference in the British Library years ago—I would not want to direct your eyes too much toward the nuts and bolts sustaining the stories and away from the stories themselves. May this note just add to your enjoyment of Mayi Pelot’s science fiction, not distance you from it. I hope the work I have done will reach its ultimate goal to let you, readers, be absorbed and carried away by the stories.

Arrate Hidalgo, December 2, 2021





Miren





MIREN GOT HOME at 17:00. She was exhausted, but there was no time to lose. She stood at her front door and waited for the electronic eye to recognize her. The door opened quietly. After taking a carnation-scented bath, she chose a green robe and put it on. She combed her thick auburn hair for a long time and even put make-up on, carefully. She wanted to look distinguished and beautiful that evening.

She slowly re-read the durable message that was on her studio desk (a sheet of hyperwax; the other messages self-destructed if left outside their box for longer than five minutes). Then she put it in her bag. For a moment, Miren looked at Gorka's 3D portrait on the table.

The cameras at the doors of both her home and the elevator let her out onto the street, where the blue moving sidewalks took her to the station. Once there, she got into an ovamobile, a wheel-free vehicle that hovered 20 inches above the ground. Every main and side street had its own fleet of ovamobiles, which meant that people switching streets also needed to switch vehicles. Travel was covered by taxes, but all ovamobiles belonged to the Sigma society. Miren took off.

The building was ten miles away from the city. It was blue and spherical in shape.

The lobby had a purple hue. She entered the office to the left. There, a blue-haired android handed her the papers. It took her five minutes to fill out the file, thinking that they really didn't leave anything out in this place.

Afterwards, Miren made her way to the cafeteria. It was a space filled with white tables and seats that came in all sorts of shapes. The carpet muffled the sound of her footsteps; instead, she could hear a soft melody in the blue-lit air. Miren ordered a tea. She drank it calmly. It was delicious.

A while later, a pink android walked her to her room. There, the android set up the "mood-making" tape Miren had brought. The bed was propped against the wall to the right. It was legless,

made of green viscose. Miren lay down. She was sleepy. She pressed a button.

Suddenly, the bedroom was replaced by a lush green mountain; on it stood a little cabin. Next to the cabin, a boy was playing txistu. She could see sheep, too. Miren closed her eyes.

Further out, by a river, a dog was frolicking. An eagle glided against the vivid blue sky.

Little by little, Miren's heart stopped.

The bedroom came silently back right away. The wall on the right opened, toppling the bed inside, in order to send the body out for incineration.

It was done as Miren had wished.

In the Entries office, the indicator for room number 11 lit up. The android fed the file into the carrier tube.

**NAME Etxegorri, Miren 0600536779**

**MENTALLY HEALTHY yes no**

**CAUSE OF DEATH euthanasia**

**PERMISSION FOR EUTHANASIA ISSUED BY Dr Mello**

**REASON FOR EUTHANIZATION incurable illness**

**ILLNESS breast leprosy**

**CAUSE OF ILLNESS Patient worked on the coast,  
by the Anti-Pollution Wall**

**SEND NOTICE TO Lasa, Gorka 662236711**

**EUTHANIZATION requested before the due date in  
accordance with the law**

**THIS IS MY TRUE WISH 07/26/2040**



Row, row



THAT MORNING, LITTLE Leyre saw the sea for the first time. She rushed into the V-school's long passageway and threw her cape into her little closet—it was a mystery how she hadn't destroyed it yet—hearing the doors of the small rooms slamming shut one after the other. She was *finally* going to see the sea!

Now, alone in her own tiny classroom, with her aural on and the mic in front of her, she was staring at the teacher's 3D face.

“As we have seen, in the 20th century, our country was divided into two parts. Each was under French and Spanish rule. Nowadays, the entirety of Spain belongs to Iran, while Western Europe is part of the United States of the World. We're going to watch a film now. Pay attention! It's in 2D, so you might find it difficult to follow.”

The teacher's face turned off with a click and, in its place, an old photograph appeared. Leyre thought it was too blue. A flat robotic voice said:

“This is the coast of the Bask Country in the 20th century. See the people lying on the sand.” Click. “People swimming in the sea, like in today's swimming pools...” Click. “Here are a handful of boats in the open sea.” Click, click, click.

Each student, in their individual rooms, stared at one picture after another, astonished by the unbelievable green color of the sea.

“This is a fountain. Back then, the water from many of those fountains was good for drinking. Nowadays, we do not waste water in this way: our cities purify their contaminated water and put them back to use. In 1995, the Atlantic Ocean was so contaminated that it was walled off. Some rivers were treated and redirected. The rest—that is, the ones that flow into the sea—have been buried.” Click. “The ones you are looking at right now, Aturri and Errobia, run beneath our feet, in Byorn.” Click. “Sigma society homes were built on top of them.”

An old map of the Bask Country appeared on screen.

“In the countryside, which on this map is shown as the regions called Baxenabarre and Xiberoa, drinking from rivers has

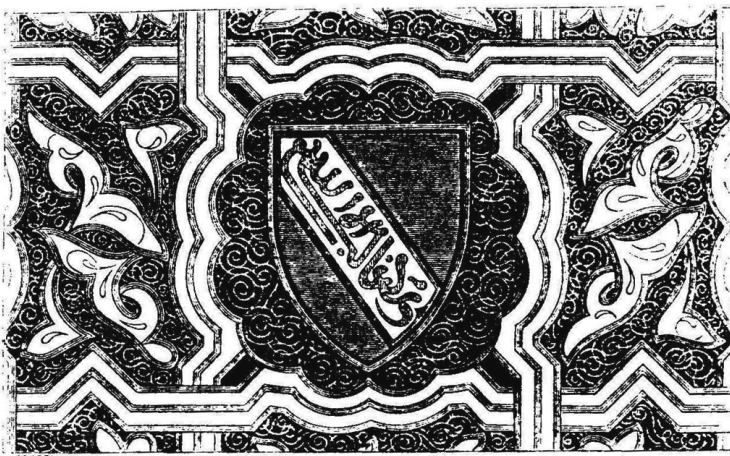
remained a practice until today. This is thanks to the Anti-Pollution Wall, of course. The Wall may block the sea from view, but it also protects us from it.”

Some numbers began to appear and disappear on screen one by one. They said that in the countryside there was a 30% chance of contamination; on the coast, up to 3 miles from the Wall, the chance was 90%. In most cities of the United States of the World, there was a 50% chance of contamination. Leyre didn’t understand.

“Therefore, the Wall is not enough. The Sigma society, always at your service, is preparing a big experiment in Byorn so that everybody can have a better life. Perhaps you, the youngest ones, will live again in a clean world. Now look at the sea today.” Click.

Leyre choked back a scream. The water, from the horizon to the shore, was completely covered in waste, violently breaking in waves against the Wall. The little girl began to cry. Gazing at the oily black water of the open ocean, she remembered her late aunt’s face, her father’s words: *If she hadn’t worked on the coast, she would still be with us.*

That morning, little Leyre saw the sea for the first time.



## Feedback





CORDOBA WAS HOT under the spring sun. Were it not for the fact that the sidewalks moved, year 1417 in the old city could well look like the 20th century. (Hijri year 1417, that is; 2039 in the Christian calendar.) The streets were bustling with people walking here and there, some looking at their watches: there wasn't much time, but why rush? Allah would give them as long as they needed. Words, jokes, laughter, children's screaming floated in the air. The city's breath.

The clock hit fifteen hours. In the new neighborhood, in one of the buildings of the Sâd society, a 35-year-old man was lying on the floor. There was nobody else in the room. As the blinds fell delicately, like sleepy eyelids, a pleasant woman's voice began to guide him toward relaxation.

Lying there, Nizam tried to empty his mind. A break, at last! It made him happy to think of the well-earned 40 minutes of peace he had after five hours of work. His eyes were now free from all the craziness of the screens dancing about. They were empty. He forgot about his legs next. Like all societies of the world, here too Sâd had incorporated relaxation exercises into the daily schedules. Thanks to this method, that last sixth hour of work was an absolute pain.

"Be conscious of your left arm...your hand is resting on the ground.... It feels increasingly heavier...and heavy...er..." intoned the pleasant voice. Nizam's mind knew the exercise so well that it easily obeyed the voice. It actually knew the exercise too well, so Nizam couldn't push his worries aside.

*Muslims get a 20-minute break; the rest of the world gets half an hour. There's no way I'll relax today.*

And the 20 minutes passed, giving way to the next 20 of prayer. The pleasant sounds and voice quieted little by little. In the Mosque of Córdoba (which in Christian times was a Cathedral), the fourth program switched awake, halting the ovamobiles and

the moving sidewalks. In Nizam's office, the blinds rolled up automatically, and a yellow arrow lit up in a corner over the wooden floor, indicating the direction of Mecca. Nizam sighed, walked towards the prayer rug placed under the arrow, and knelt down. The sound of a silver bell grew louder over the city—the recording of an ancient bell, now exhibited in a glass cabinet in Teheran.

Meanwhile, the protection robots activated and the electronic automuezzin began to sing the third prayer.

Then, all of Spain bowed at once.

It wasn't time for prayer in Tehran. Reza Ayatollah, President of Iran, was thinking. Bad news: the government of India, under Iranian power, had fallen. It was quite the blow for Iran. An unacceptable one. What's more, he could not forget about the Muslims of India and Pakistan—brothers must not kill brothers. What could he do? There were the micromissiles, he'd have to use them. But from where? Maybe he could just confiscate some other country's missiles and use those...

He'd need a new secret launching platform for that, Reza thought, as his hands hit the keyboard. He checked the time in Cordoba. It would have to wait.

In Cordoba, the automuezzin had gone silent. People were standing up, getting back into ovamobiles, walking on the—once again—moving sidewalks; the light arrows in homes, offices, and shops died. The Grand Ayatollah's 3D portrait appeared for a moment and soon disappeared again. Nizam was already standing, reading over his notes on the small screen of his typer.

"Peace be with you, brother!"

Nizam started, not having heard the door opening, and felt something darkening inside him as he replied to Sadegh with a "And with you, brother." *Peace*, he thought. But said nothing.

"Have you drawn up any conclusions?" Nizam asked.

"Well, in my opinion, anyway—"

Nizam stretched out his arm to stop Sadegh in his tracks.

“Allah gave us one tongue and two ears, brother, so that we listen twice before we speak. I’ve written up a summary of the documents I’ve been researching. This is what the telememory says: *In the 20th century, in the region we now call the Desert, there were four provinces belonging to the Bask Country: Nafarroa, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, and Araba. In the year 1370 (1992 AD), an unidentified accident took place in a Bizkaian nuclear power plant. The computer hasn’t been able to give me any details. After that, the southern part of the Bask Country was officially declared a ‘no-go zone.’*”

“That’s impossible!” exclaimed Sadegh. “We know that no-go zones are one of the consequences of the Third World War.”

“Well, this one, at least, is not. Access was forbidden in 1992, that we know for sure.”

“And what’s the reason listed? You haven’t looked it up?”

“There’s no point. The Third War happened, both we and the enemy entered Spain, and many documents were destroyed. We don’t even know what happened in that nuclear plant. A small explosion? An experiment? It could have been anything. I would certainly like to know. These days Iranians are in control of the whole peninsula, but nobody ever ventures into the desert any more. Not even on a small plane. Some hypotheses claim that the entire population died a long time ago; others say that there are still people living there. What could they be like? According to the telememory, the ones who did go there to find out never came back. What do you think? It’s probably just a dead land. Nothing more.”

“Let’s at least try. We can send some androids.”

“That we can do.”

It was ten minutes to eighteen, almost time for the fourth prayer. Nizam had already washed his head and hands. The water hadn’t helped with the headache. His head was throbbing with the words he didn’t dare say out loud. He spoke to himself, trying to calm down.

*Yes, we have built a great nation. All Muslims under the same flag: a crescent moon, decorated with nine stars. It's true. We must refuse the blind capitalism and inequality of non-Muslim countries. We live in Allah's equality and brotherhood, at least for now. Christian faith is waning, ours grows day by day, thanks to the new thinkers who helped reform Islam. And now, what? Instead of our technologist ayatollahs of the past, we have this one who is trying to wage holy war with micromissiles. Some wise man! He is not serving Allah, just himself—*

The arrow lit up on the wood: it was time for fourth prayer.

In Teheran, Reza Ayatollah was mustering his patience. He pressed the **Link/Break** button to enter his password and then pressed **1**. As the Quran's index appeared on the small screen, Reza heard a weak clicking noise: the printer was working.

He pulled the sheet from the machine and read the message on it:

**CAN'T BUILD MICROMISSILE LAUNCHING PLATFORM IN DESERT  
NO NEWS FROM ANDROIDS DISPATCHED**

**NIZAM**

Reza put the paper on the table and sat looking at it. He watched it as it burned without fire or smoke, turning to dust and floating away.