
Mirrored Narrations and Basque Nationalism: Literary Folds in José Javier Abasolo's *El aniversario de la independencia*

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*[T]he multiple is not only what has many parts
but also what is folded in many ways.*

—Gilles Deleuze

The multiplicity of tensions between the Spanish state and Basque regions in the Iberian Peninsula forms the foundation of José Javier Abasolo's (Bilbao, Spain, 1957) 2006 novel *El aniversario de la independencia* ("The Anniversary of Independence").¹ The story takes place a year after the fictionalized secession of Basque regions from Spain and focuses on the relationship between Jokin Etxaniz, a police officer (*ertzaingia*) in the newly sovereign Basque Country, and Alexander (Alex) Pedrosa, an ex-member of ETA who joins the police force and is partnered with Jokin. The novel's multiplicity is found in its narrative folds—its multiple voices and perspectives—and in its engagement with contemporary Spain's complex sociohistorical context.

The diversity of narrative voices includes three chapters where Jokin directly addresses himself in second person and eleven chapters related by an omniscient narrator. The most conspicuous example of multiplicity is the double first-person narration by two character-narrators who narrate twenty-one of the thirty-five chapters in first-person singular. This use of dual first-person character-narrators not only establishes symmetry between them—their past lives and their present existential reflections—but also sets the scene for other multiple constructions, mirrored images, and dichotomies that are based on the tensions between the Spanish state and Basque nationalist movements. The split narration enables exploration of binary constructions, including the past versus the present, the concept of enemy versus partner, and the construction and development of Sara and María, the two female characters in Jokin and Alex's lives. The dialogue between the two main character-narrators in the separate first-person narrations unifies and strengthens the novel's content and textual architecture. I propose that the separation of the two first-person narrators creates one of the folds in the story, which allows other mirrored constructions that explore alterity and multiplicity in the context of Basque nationalism.

Seven provinces across two European countries comprise Euskadi, the Euskera name for the Basque Country: Alava, Guipuzcoa, Navarra, and

Vizcaya in Spain, and Labourd, Basse Navarre, and Soule in France. The Basque Country in Spain, which refers to the autonomous community of the same name as well as a wider geographic area that is culturally Basque, has a tumultuous political relationship with the Spanish state. Basque nationalism is deeply rooted in peninsular history. In Basque regions, strong sentiments of political and social identity exist in daily interactions, cultural products, and in political statements. Although the region remains divided by political boundaries since the creation of the autonomous community of the Basque Country (*El País Vasco*) in 1982, the region retains a strong sense of nationalism. After the end of the fascist dictatorship, the Spanish government granted them regional political autonomy through the Statute of Autonomy. Josep Zulaika explains the complicated state of this so-called autonomy, noting that “nothing expresses better the open-ended and antagonistic relations between the Spanish state and the Basque autonomous institutions than the fact that the Spanish Constitution was approved by only 33 percent of Basque votes. . . . [T]he Basque nationalist position is that the Spanish Constitution lacks legitimacy on the basis of that percentage” (131). The struggle between the nation-state and the stateless nation is based on this unstable political framework, that is, on the validity of the Spanish Constitution.

Tensions between Spain and the Basque Country sparked the onset of violence during Franco’s dictatorship. The separatist group ETA (Euzkadi ta Askatasuna, or Basque Homeland and Freedom), founded in the summer of 1959, declared an armed struggle against the Francoist state. The group carried out demonstrations and violent attacks with the objective of secession from Spain.² ETA announced a seemingly permanent cease fire in October 2011 after almost fifty years of violent attacks. Exact numbers are difficult to pinpoint, but most sources report over 800 victims from acts of violence (see Cavero and Eusko News).

If we unfold the Basque National Liberation Movement, the name given to the constellation of organizations (including ETA), the “never full constituted” position of the concept of Basque identity is revealed (Zulaika 116). Basque regional nationalism stands in opposition to European homogenization. Zulaika writes, “With Europeanization and globalization moving in one direction, and the reemergence of substate-level nationalisms in another, historical hegemonic relations are being challenged and new hegemonic formations are in the process of being created” (113). This subaltern space between hegemonic political structures (Spanish government) and marginalized communities (Basque regions) exposes the paradigm where the Basque nationalist movement resides. Zulaika explains:

National subalternity consists, obviously, in the feeling of double-binding entrapment vis-à-vis the hegemonic state. Double binds

are formally the result of two contradictory injunctions: If you do A—say, obey—you will be punished; if you do the opposite, B—say, rebel—you will also be punished. (125)

The Basque question of identity—national and individual—reveals a split, or a sort of oscillation between two states of being (e.g., national/regional, affirmative/negative). In the novel, the description of the double bind of the no-win situation is reflected in the dual narrator-characters and in other multiple constructions.

Multiple folds—numerous narrations and mirrored constructions—emphasize the complexity of the tension between Basque nationalist movements and the Spanish state. My sense of “fold” here suggests multiplicities and alterity. The fold not only implies “consisting of or characterized by many parts, elements, etc.; having several or many causes, results, aspects, locations, etc.,” but also retains the original Latin meaning of the root “pli,” meaning “to fold” (OED). The image of folding a piece of paper several times offers us a visual representation of the novel’s multiplicity as it represents the sociohistorical situation between marginalized Basque communities and the hegemonic center of the Spanish state. If we imagine that the first fold in *El aniversario de la independencia* is the division of the two character-narrators, each narrating in first-person singular, we can visualize this division as an ink-blotted piece of paper that has been folded in half: the image on each side of the fold reflects the image on the other side, yet there are slight differences between the two images. This visual representation is useful in analyzing the folds, multiple constructions, and dichotomies of the narrative structure, as well as the sociopolitical context of the tension between Basque nationalism and the Spanish nation-state.

Likewise, in the epigraph cited above, Gilles Deleuze suggests, “the multiple is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways” (3). His statement is illuminating in relation to the multiple narrators and the other folds as well as in the understanding of the complexities of the Basque nationalist movement. The multiple parts of the structure and content—anchored in its multiple narrators—stem from the division of the two homodiegetic character-narrators. The combination of the many chapters told from their perspective plus the chapters with second-person focalization and those told by a third-person omniscient narrator creates a tightly folded narrative. Rather than fragment the novel, the folds form a cohesive whole. The multiple folds form one complete unit just like the folded piece of paper with the ink-blotted image: although the whole is divided into sections, it still retains its original state as one product. Deleuze confirms this by commenting that “a flexible or elastic body still has cohering parts that form a fold, such that they are not separated into parts, but are rather divided to

infinity into smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion” (6). This definition of the “fold” permits us to examine the multiple creations throughout the novel and to observe how they function as commentary about contemporary Spain.

El aniversario de la independencia takes place almost one year after the fictionalized independence of the Basque Country from Spain. The now sovereign nation causes tension between the past, when violent acts were prevalent, and the present, when the Euskadi citizenry struggles to define their independence. Though the main temporal marker that anchors the plot is the celebration of the first anniversary of the country’s creation, past and present are not so easily distinguishable since past actions and the present struggle of individuals to define themselves within a new nation intertwine with, and fold into, one another. In a sense, the past is folded onto the present, and the conceptualization of subjectivity within this temporal space remains difficult to define.

The novel begins as Jokin recounts the death of Iker, his friend and partner in the police force, who was killed by a car bomb set off by ETA: “El coche iba a estallar en cuestión de segundos. Gritaba y gritaba en un titánico esfuerzo por avisar a Iker, pero nadie oía mis chillidos, ni siquiera yo, situado en un punto desconocido en el espacio y el tiempo, era capaz de oír mi propia voz.” “The car was going to explode at any second. I shouted and shouted in a gigantic effort to warn Iker, but no one heard my screams, not even I myself, placed in an unknown point in space and time, was able to hear my own voice” (7). In this flashback, the violent terrorist act forces Jokin into an ambiguous position. He is pushed into the fold, into the figurative crease that lies between past and present, and his subjectivity is unrecognizable even to himself, as revealed in the description of his inability to hear himself. In this ideological crease, he vacillates between his previous career as a Spanish police officer who fought against the Basque nationalist movement and his current position as a police officer in Euskadi. He is unable to define his role in the new nation adequately. Functioning as a synecdoche of the sociohistorical context, the car bomb represents the violent past. As Jokin recalls the explosion, he remembers that he watched the horrific act while holding a “hamburguesa con mucho ketchup y mayonesa” ‘hamburger with lots of ketchup and mayonnaise’ that he had just purchased for Iker (7). The juxtaposition of the act of terrorism and the everyday act of eating lunch at a fast food restaurant reminds us of one of the paradoxes of terrorism: often the victim of a terrorist act does not directly relate to the objective. Irony ties together two disparate actions, eating lunch and the deadly event, and sets the scene for other paradoxical constructions to follow.

Jokin narrates eight chapters in first-person, focusing on himself

and his sentiments about Basque independence and his recent partnership with Alex. In the first chapter, we learn about the *ertzaintza* through auto-focalization: Sara, his wife, left him six weeks before, he relies on alcohol to calm his nerves, and is becoming increasingly “obsesionado por los recuerdos” ‘obsessed by memories’ (7). The present is folded onto the past since what happened then manifests itself in the here and now through Jokin’s obsession with recalling the past and reconciling Iker’s murder.

Jokin’s personal past—Iker’s death and his own failing marriage—and the Basque County’s past as it celebrates its first anniversary of independence provide the backdrop for Jokin’s first-person reflections. Events in his life reflect collective events: ETA murdered Iker and, now, almost a year later, his new partner, Alex Pedrosa, is an ETA ex-member.³ At the end of the first chapter, Jokin admits that he is unhappy being partnered with Alex, previously an enemy of the Spanish state: “Decididamente era un hijo de puta, un hijo de puta con el que iba a estar el día más horas de las que solía estar con Sara cuando aún no nos habíamos separado” ‘Of course he was a son of a bitch, a son of a bitch with whom I’d be spending more time than I did with Sara before we were separated’ (17). This is also the first allusion to their partnership as a marriage, a contextual mirrored construction that will continue to duplicate itself throughout the novel.

The second chapter reflects the first in structure and content. Now it is Alex’s turn to narrate in first person. Alex discloses that he too is dissatisfied with his new partner, and mulls over the situation, “Los tiempos habían cambiado, por suerte para el zipaio de mierda que me había tocado por compañero. En otra época nada me hubiese impedido arrojar un cóctel molotov sobre su vehículo o ametrallarle en cualquier esquina.” ‘Times had changed, luckily for the piece of shit that I got for a partner. Back then, nothing would have kept me from throwing a Molotov cocktail at his car or machine-gunning him down on any corner’ (19). Just like Jokin, Alex wonders how he will ever be able to work with a person who, just one year ago, was his so-called enemy. If in the first chapter Jokin recalls the violent act that killed Iker, Alex begins the second chapter describing that, likewise, he could have easily killed Jokin before Basque independence. The structural folding and the content are complex: past/present space and time fold on to each other in both first-person narrations; furthermore, the paradox created by the other, whether enemy or partner, dialogues with the multiplicity of the historical tension between the Spanish state and Basque nationalism. Alex and Jokin’s antagonistic relationship reflects this tension.

Operating as a repeated mirrored motif, the enemy/partner dichotomy parallels the two first-person perspectives and forms yet another fold in the story. Antagonism establishes what Zulaika calls a “bipolar framework”

(120), opening up the metaphor of mental illness to describe interpersonal and international tensions. Both Jokin and Alex recognize the irony of their new situation as police partners and reflect on their former and current positions in society, yet neither can reconcile the other's past activities. "Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence to myself" (Laclau and Mouffe 125). Such is the protagonists' case. In one instance, Jokin reminds Alex, "aún no han pasado dos años desde que compañeros míos fueran asesinados por tu antigua organización" 'it hasn't even been two years since my colleagues were murdered by your old organization' (21). Jokin views Alex as a terrorist and as his personal enemy. Similarly, Alex views Jokin as his personal enemy and as an enemy to the former objectives of Basque nationalism. He questions the possible enemy-to-partner evolution when he and Jokin arrive at the scene of Encina Rabanal Gutiérrez's murder: "Junto a la muchedumbre había unos cuantos compañeros uniformados--aún se me hacía raro llamar así, compañeros, a quienes hasta no hace mucho habían sido mis enemigos." 'Alongside the crowd, there were some uniformed colleagues—it still seemed odd to me to call them "colleagues" because not long ago they were my enemies' (22). In the first two chapters, which exemplify the dual first-person narration in the rest of the novel, both characters have a negative impression of each other for two reasons: first, although they are now partners, they define each other as the enemy, an antagonism based on a false concept of autonomy. Zukaila writes that "Basque separatists deride the very meaning of 'autonomy' as being one of complete subservience to the state" (131). Second, despite living in the present, both Alex and Jokin are highly motivated to act according to their opposing past judgments and moral codes.

The enemy/partner dichotomy continues in the third chapter, narrated by Jokin in first-person. The body of the murdered Encina has been discovered and the two partners must work together to solve the case even though they view each other as enemies. Jokin muses, "procuraría centrarme en el trabajo, aunque mi compañero, ¿compañero?, de momento fuese más una rémora que una ayuda." 'I'd try to focus on my work, though my partner—partner?—might be more of a hindrance than a help' (32). The ironic partnership is described as a failing marriage on several occasions, a folded construction that reflects Sara and Jokin's own unsuccessful marriage and serves as a metaphor for the antagonistic relationship between the contemporary Spanish state and Basque nationalist movements. Nestled in even more repetition, the marriage-divorce dichotomy continues to multiply throughout the novel. Gontzal Zabalbide, the police chief who murders several ex-ETA police officers also uses the civil-union metaphor to describe the social situation when he compares Euskadi's independence from Spain to a divorce (72).

With yet another murder—a car bomb kills Roberto Saratxo, a new policeman and former ETA member—Alex wonders how he will ever be able to solve any crime with Jokin, his enemy/partner, and declares, “El caso es que ahora estábamos juntos, el segundo día de nuestro extraño matrimonio, y teníamos trabajo que hacer, por lo menos hasta que me concedieran el ansiado divorcio.” “The thing is, now we were together, the second day of our strange marriage and we had work to do, at least until they might grant me my longed-for divorce’ (49). The “failing marriage” metaphor functions effectively to portray the uneasiness of the new partnership between Jokin and Alex. Again, in the architecture of first person narrations, both men worry about working with the enemy, concerned about whether their partnership will last, or if it will end in a metaphoric divorce. Their shifting perspectives enable the division of the textual space, or the folds of the novel, to mirror their personal sentiments.

Jokin and Alex’s parallel viewpoints and shifting autofocalizations divulge more about each other through their own direct discourse. Readers not only know each character-narrator’s self-perception, but also his perceptions of the other. In fact, although Jokin and Alex seem to be polar opposites, they are more similar than either would admit. Their reactions reflect one another. Each is initially hesitant to trust the other, but, as time goes by, both learn that the other is not so different from himself and that they are really just reflections of each other (like the ink-blotted image of the folded piece of paper).

Most of the narration (21 of 35 chapters) fluctuates between the two first-person perspectives of Jokin and Alex, creating contextual and structural reflections that unfold throughout the story. Yet, after they meet and express their mutual disdain, in an intriguing narrative move, Jokin proceeds to address himself in second-person in Chapters 4, 7, and 10. Abasolo’s use of the second-person singular enriches and complicates the characterization of Jokin and functions as an analogy of the antagonistic relationship between the Spanish state and the Basque regions. The reference to the Lacanian mirror stage does not seem to be a mere coincidence: as Jokin struggles to define his identity in the newly formed nation, he metaphorically gazes at his own image in the mirror and talks directly to himself.⁴ This narrative technique exposes the creases in the “us vs. them” paradigm. In his discussion of the stateless nation’s struggle for nationhood, Zulaika evokes the Lacanian mirror:

The negativity that prevents such nations from obtaining their fullness gets translated into the form of nation-states as the Lacanian big Other, the central locus of ideological antagonism and political fantasy. Ideological fantasy has to grind the panoply of paradoxes,

dependencies, and epistemological confusions that are continually generated by this collusion of domains between the impossibility of the fullness of Society and the impossibility of the historical obstacles. (126)

The narrative technique of addressing himself in second-person singular reflects the existential crisis that Jokin experiences on national, professional and personal levels: nationally, he ponders his place in the newly sovereign Basque nation; professionally, he detests having to collaborate with those he perceives to be the enemy; and personally, he struggles to cope with marital and mental health issues.

The striking part of these second person narrations is that Jokin confronts this crisis only after having met the other, the paradoxical figure of the enemy/partner. By being forced to work with a person he views as his opposite, and his enemy, Jokin is compelled to recognize his own personal, professional, and national other as he talks to himself:

Not all murderers or terrorists are going to end up in jail, some are going to be your colleagues, you are going to work with them, you are going to have to smile at them in the morning, shake their hands in the afternoon, and have a couple of beers with them at night, and you know that you're not going to be able to stand it.⁵

This narration highlights Jokin's professional crisis and exposes his personal loneliness: his subjectivity is unveiled as he sees his reflection in the literal mirror and in the Lacanian one. Addressing himself directly, he wonders if he will ever be able reconcile the enemy-partner dichotomy of his relationship with Alex that so vividly represents the struggles between the Spanish state and Basque separatist movements, leading readers to ponder if the violence of the past can ever be reconciled for him to live and interact with the other in the present. Jokin's personal crisis may be defined as a synecdoche of the sociohistorical situation in the Iberian Peninsula between the nation-state and separatist sentiments in Basque regions.

Abasolo aptly employs the *novela negra*, a subgenre of detective fiction, to reflect the tension created by ETA and the novel's fictionalized terrorist group, FUL (Frente de Unidad y Liberación or the Unity and Liberation Front), led by David Salguero and Luis Pereira. The *novela negra* genre presents an ideal canvas on which to examine dualities and multiple constructions. José F. Colmeiro's seminal study of Spanish detective fiction, *La novela policíaca española: Teoría e historia crítica*, explores the polarizing structural, thematic, and ideological elements of the *novela negra*, highlighting the notion that binary opposites are what make up the grammar of detective fiction (72). He focuses on opposing universal categories such as good versus bad, order versus chaos, the criminal versus the investigator, and so on. His ideas may be

expanded to include the multiple constructions and dualities in *El aniversario de la independencia*, such as the varied perspectives of the narrators, the tension between the past and the present, and the paradoxical relationship between enemy and partner.

The *novela negra* genre emerged in Spain in the late 1970s after the end of the dictatorship and during the first years of the transition to democracy, and functions as a response to Spain's sociocultural context. Colmeiro affirms that in the *novela negra* "se ven reflejadas en ellas los problemas más acuciantes de la sociedad contemporánea, las contradicciones del sistema y del individuo." 'the most acute problems of contemporary society are reflected, the contradictions of the system and the individual' (213). With Spain's transition to democracy came social, economic, and political instability and skepticism. Colmeiro fittingly notes that, among other reasons, high unemployment and an increase of illegal drugs led to more crime in the post-dictatorship years, a fact reflected in *novela negra* stories of this period (212).

El aniversario de la independencia depicts this unstable sociohistorical landscape between the Spanish state and Basque nationalist movements. Georges Tyras notes that Abasolo's detective fiction "tiene en todo caso el inmenso mérito de enfrentarse con una problemática mayor de la España contemporánea" 'has, in all cases, the huge merit of confronting modern Spain's major problems' (105) by creating a believable situation: the independence of a Spanish region. Abasolo explores the fold between the literary and the political in the dual textual images and structural reflections of the *novela negra*. *El aniversario de la independencia*, like all good contemporary detective fiction, presents an intriguing, mysterious crime (Encina Rabanal Gutiérrez's murder is the first crime in the novel, and its *McGuffin*⁶) and a marginalized investigator (here, a pair of marginalized police officers) assigned to solve it, not merely by focusing on the resolution of the crime, but also by highlighting the investigator's existential journey. Colmeiro affirms:

Detective fiction supposes an inversion of the order and signs of ethical and esthetic principles. Here the crime theme is maintained as an esthetic game (suspense, mystery, ingenuity) but its importance is displaced or reduced with respect to the ethical component that generally tends to occupy a predominant place.⁷

The crime of *El aniversario de la independencia* is neither its most important nor most interesting aspect; the existential journeys of the two character-narrators, evident in their exposition of the dichotomies of past versus present and enemy versus partner, anchor the story to the sociohistorical foundation of Spain in the twenty first century.

Since the urban area is the ideal space where the *novela negra* takes place, many of Jokin's reflections in first and second person occur as he walks

through the city. Bilbao (also the author's hometown) may be defined as a folded city, as the space of dichotomies and multiple creations. Past and present converge as the city's characters, namely both character-narrators—especially Jokin—struggle to define themselves within the urban sphere. Bilbao's dark, slippery streets permit this type of self-reflection and frequently function as the mirror where Jokin figuratively gazes at himself. During Jokin's second narration when he directly addresses himself as "you," he ponders his relationship with the city and his anonymity: "La noche es tu aliada . . . No paseas por la ciudad vacía pero sí por una ciudad sin pulso, sin vida . . . Paseas tranquilo, sin preocupaciones. Sabes que nadie te reconocerá, nadie te delatará." 'Night is your ally. . . You don't stroll through an empty city, but through one without a pulse, without life. . . You pass tranquilly, without worries. You know that no one will recognize you, no one will turn you in' (61). Strolling through the dark city, he is alone; a self-described "Batman sin su compañero Robin, un mutante, tal vez" 'Batman without his sidekick Robin, a mutant, perhaps' (61). This self-reflection pictures Jokin as a lonely character whose solitude makes him feel like a "mutant," like a monster, like somebody who is different from the other(s). Jokin recognizes that he is a marginalized person within society, which may be attributed to the newly independent Basque Country and to the intrusion of the other—Alex, the ex-member of ETA—into his space.

In one exceptionally provocative self-reflective scene, Jokin describes the dreary landscape of the city and his position within it:

The morning was gray and rainy. Bilbao's trademark drizzle was back, but I didn't feel like enjoying it. In the past, perhaps foolishly, I realize, I welcomed this fine rain gratefully, like a part of the identity of the city where I was born and where I felt attached, as if an unbreakable umbilical cord joined us, but this morning I only saw what any newcomer would see, a leaden, gray sky that threatened to convert our lives into something leaden and gray as well.⁸

In this reflection, Jokin admits his strong connection to the city, employing the metaphor of a fetus that is connected to his mother by an umbilical cord. This metaphor, along with the description of the city as "heavy" and "gray," highlights his contempt for the new society (in a double sense) to which he belongs. The independent Basque Country and the new police force comprised of ex-ETA members and Spanish antiterrorist officers form a space that is difficult to define as his homeland.

We have seen that Jokin juxtaposes himself in relation to the other, the enemy/partner, Alex. Jokin also contrasts and compares himself to Alex, while simultaneously constructing his own identity as he directly addresses his reflection in the mirror. In this double construction of Jokin's other

through Alex as the paradoxical enemy/partner and his own reflection, Jokin struggles to define himself within the ambiguous space and time (the crease of the fold) that he inhabits. Thus, Jokin's two others may be defined as reflections and as shadows. In an unclouded reflection, the reflected image may easily be seen; however, if a shadow obscures it, it becomes blurred, undistinguishable and undefined. Jaime Aguilera García comments on this ambiguity:

Each of us carries a shadow and a mirror reflection that are forever attached to our bodies. It could be considered a somewhat expressionist and symbolic manner of accentuating the characters' "other I," of splitting a personality along moral lines (good and bad), in time (past and present in particular), and in relation to other characters who seem a "reflection" of the first character.⁹

The game of mirrors and shadows then seems to be essential to Abasolo's fictional portrayal of the tension between Basque nationalist movements and the Spanish state.

Jokin and Alex's dual autofocalizations also open up a textual space where their female counterparts may be developed. Like Jokin and Alex's parallel characterizations, Sara Ortega (Jokin's estranged wife), María (Alex's current girlfriend and a prostitute), and Elixabete Urrutia (Alex's girlfriend who was murdered by ETA) are constructed according to contextual and structural folds and dichotomies. Although their voices are not explicitly heard, readers learn about these female companions and their relationships in chapters narrated by Jokin and Alex and in those narrated omnisciently where other characters indirectly offer information.

Jokin first discloses details about Sara five weeks after their breakup. More is revealed in Chapter 8, the first instance of the omniscient narrator. Through this overt lens, readers learn that she still loves Jokin: "Seguía queriendo a Jokin, o al menos sentía algo parecido al amor" 'I kept loving Jokin, or at least I felt something like love' (65), obviously a sentiment that Jokin cannot divulge since he himself does not know it. Sara is a magazine journalist working on an article on the evolution of terrorism in the Iberian Peninsula. In one instance, Íñigo Herranz, a "good cop" in the mostly corrupt Euskadi police force and a colleague of Jokin and Alex, notes that "Sara no es una cualquiera, es una periodista que se ha especializado en terrorismo. Eso, unido a que ha estado casada muchos años con Jokin Etxaniz y que no es de esas mujeres que se limitan a preparar la cena a su marido" 'Sara isn't just anybody, she's a journalist who specializes in terrorism. That, in addition to the fact that she has been married many years to Jokin Etxaniz and isn't one of those women who limits themselves to preparing dinner for their husbands' (309). Here the folding of the content is complex: before independence, Jokin used to hunt ETA terrorists as part of his job, and his partner

Iker was murdered by ETA; after independence, he is forced to work with a former ETA member, and his wife chronicles the evolution of terrorism. Sara is writing an article on the same element that Jokin and Alex are investigating—the same issue that causes them to despise each other. Consequently, she is also in dialogue with both male character-narrators.

Again, Alex's life mirrors Jokin's with the appearance of María, a prostitute who becomes Alex's girlfriend. In later chapters, other characters and the omniscient narrator insist that María is "more than just a prostitute." Proof of this comes when Herranz and Mendieta (two good cops on the force) ask Sara and María to help them figure out what exactly is going on with Salguero, Pereira and FUL. Functioning as yet another mirrored construction, Sara and María, whose backgrounds and professions are different, unite to help solve the case before the anniversary of Euskadi independence, a day when Mendieta and Herranz are convinced that a monumental FUL terrorist attack against Spain will take place. Mirroring the relationship between Jokin and Alex, the narrator notes that even though the two female characters seem to be opposites, they are really not so different: "Todo en su aspecto delataba que procedían de mundos y vivencias diferentes cuando no opuestos, pero la lividez de sus rostros, la preocupación que podía vislumbrarse en sus ojos las hermanaba de algún modo." "Everything in their appearance betrayed the fact that they came from different, even opposite, worlds and lifestyles, but their ashen faces and the anxiety in their eyes somehow connected them" (310). When they meet with the two policemen, readers expect Sara, the terrorist expert, to be the most helpful one; however, it is María who provides the information that ultimately helps them thwart the planned terrorist attack. The omniscient narrator notes that "María no estuvo hablando tanto tiempo como Sara pero sus palabras fueron aún más impactantes" 'María didn't speak as much as Sara, but her words made more of an impact' (315). Thus, María's development reflects Sara's portrayal: both end up intimately connected to the terrorist them and collaborate with the police.

On yet another folded level of the story, Elixabete, Alex's ex-girlfriend and ETA member murdered by ETA, represents Alex's past and his obsession with the past. Alex does not know where she is, or if she is even alive, but he does know that if he can get over her, he can get on with his life. Symbolically, then, he can leave his sordid past behind and embrace his present situation as a Basque police officer. María undoubtedly plays an important role in this dichotomy: if Elixabete represents the past then María may be defined as the embodiment of the future. In fact, after Alex tells María that he still has not gotten over Elixabete, he asks her if she will visit him again, to which she replies, "Quizás . . . cuando dejes de estar enamorado de una mujer muerta." 'Perhaps. . . when you stop being in love with a dead woman' (247).

Metaphorically, the dead woman is the past that haunts him; again, the folded and intertwined past and present create an ambiguous position for Alex, just as for Jokin.

Another contextual and structural fold appears in the eleven chapters narrated by the third-person omniscient narrator, who becomes a lens that widens the focalization of the story and allows a more objective and intrusive perspective, while concurrently permitting the view to zoom out and reveal other characters. Since the scope of the narration expands from the autofocalization of two single characters to a more heterodiegetic perspective, readers learn more about secondary characters, including Sara Ortega, Jokin's wife; Gontzal Zabalde, Jokin and Alex's boss; Luis Goienetxe, the antiterrorist brigade's director and new police chief after Zabalde's death; Carlos del Vado, Jokin's friend and police inspector in Madrid; and David Salguero and Luis Pereira, the two FUL leaders.

In the last four chapters, the omniscient narrator finishes the story. The culmination of the omniscient narration is the only one of its kind in the entire novel; nowhere else is a block of chapters narrated. In this sense, the folded dual first-person narration unfolds as the omniscient narrator takes over. Deleuze aptly notes that “[f]olding-unfolding no longer simply means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution” (8). The omniscient narrator at the end does more than just try to relieve the tension. In these chapters, the perspective widens: the folds unfold, expanding to incorporate more information about a variety of characters and to tie up the story's loose ends. Jokin and Alex's voices are pushed aside—Jokin is kidnapped by David Salguero, and Alex is in a coma after fighting off Imanol Landaluze, his ETA ex-partner—to make more room for other character development and, more importantly, to allow the novel's story to unfold, albeit ambiguously in an anticlimactic ending. The final chapter transcribes a report by a Spanish National Radio announcer, noting that the independence anniversary celebrations have gone off without a hitch: “Aunque las fuerzas de la *Ertzaintza* permanecieron en estado de alerta, portavoces del Ministerio del Interior de la República Vasca han comentado a esta emisora que no se ha producido ningún incidente.” “Though *Ertzaintza* forces remained on alert, spokesmen for the Basque Ministry of the Interior have reported no incidents’ (326). However, details of how the terrorist attack is thwarted are not explicitly disclosed.

Moreover, the terrorist acts and the investigation of the cases are not the most intriguing facets of the novel. In fact, such acts are “McGuffins” in the story; the true intrigue lies within the first fold of the dual first-person narrators that consequently opens the space for the construction and development of contextual dichotomies: past versus present; enemy versus

partner; and the juxtaposition of the two female characters, Sara and María. The ending, perhaps because an omniscient narrator tells it, is ambiguous. Readers are left wondering whether Jokin and Alex will ever reconcile their relationship, whether they will ever destroy the enemy/partner dichotomy, and whether the two will ever feel like a part of the newly created nation. Furthermore, readers wonder whether Sara and Jokin will get back together and how Alex and María's relationship will turn out.

The ambiguous ending may reveal the problematic "hegemonic interpretation given to the Basque problem by post-Franco democratic Spain in opposing 'democracy' to 'terrorism.'" (Zulaika 133). In *El aniversario de la independencia*, labeling Alex as the enemy and Jokin as part of the hegemonic state reveals the folds within the paradoxical tensions between the Spanish state and Basque nationalist movements: the struggle is based on the false assumption of antagonism. Abasolo challenges the misleading narrative of "us vs. them" in the dual narrations of Alex and Jokin and in other mirrored constructions, including the examination of the crease enemy/partner and obedience/opposition binaries, which represent the creases between the Spanish state and Basque nationalism.

Notes

¹ Abasolo is a well-published author who has received attention in Spain, but who has still to receive the international acclaim he deserves for his detective fiction and *novelas negras* (noir novels), perhaps in part due to limited distribution and the fact that none have been translated into English to date, though several have appeared in French and Italian translations. I met Abasolo when he spoke at the University of Colorado, Boulder on a tour that included an appearance at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language annual convention in Snowbird, Utah 2009 and again at CU Boulder in the summer of 2015. During his talk, "Javier Abasolo: Escribir novela policiaca en el País Vasco," he discussed his motivation for writing detective fiction and the tensions between Basque regions and the Spanish state. These meetings with the author motivated me to conduct this research. He mentioned that he often inverts traditional literary *topoi*, which encouraged me to explore other inversions and folds in the content and the structure of *El aniversario de la independencia*. All translations are mine. For an index of narrators by chapter, see Appendix 1.

² For a clear and in-depth explanation of the history of ETA until 1988, Clark's *Negotiating with ETA: Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country* is a must-read.

³ It is noteworthy that after the novel's fictional independence of the Basque Country, all members of ETA were granted amnesty; some were

admitted into the police force.

⁴ Lacan considers the mirror phase to be a permanent structure of human subjectivity in which a person recognizes his reflection as an object that is both a part of his self and a fragmentation of his self. Thus, the mirror phase produces a paradoxical gaze in which the self feels both jubilation at seeing a glimpse of its so-called complete ego and crisis because it also recognizes the separation of the reflection of the self and the physical self.

⁵ “No todos los asesinos, ni todos los extorsionadores, van a acabar en la cárcel, algunos van a ser colegas tuyos, vas a trabajar con ellos, vas a tener que sonreírles por la mañana, estrecharles la mano por la tarde y tomar con ellos unas cervezas por la noche, y sabes que no vas a poder aguantarlo” (Abasolo 37–38).

⁶ “McGuffin,” a term coined by Alfred Hitchcock, refers to a literary device that advances the narrative, but whose details are unimportant to the development of the storyline and may, in fact, function as a device to detour attention from the main plot.

⁷ “La novela policíaca negra supone una inversión del orden y signo de los principios éticos y estéticos. Aquí se mantiene la temática criminal como juego estético (suspense, misterio, ingenio) pero su importancia queda ahora desplazada o reducida con respecto al componente ético, que tiende a ocupar generalmente un lugar predominante” (Colmeiro 61).

⁸ “La mañana era gris y lluviosa. El clásico sirimiri típico de Bilbao volvía a hacer acto de presencia pero yo no me encontraba con ganas de disfrutarlo. Antiguamente, quizás de modo más bien tonto, lo reconozco, solía acoger esa fina lluvia con agrado, como parte de las señas de identidad de la ciudad en la que había nacido y a la que me sentía unido como si un irrompible cordón umbilical hubiera decidido instalarse entre ella y yo, pero esa mañana tan sólo veía lo que veía cualquier recién llegado a la urbe, un cielo plomizo y gris que amenazaba con convertir nuestras vidas en algo también plomizo y gris” (Abasolo 93).

⁹ “Todos y cada uno de nosotros llevamos una sombra y un reflejo en el espejo irremediable adheridos a nuestro cuerpo. Se trataría de una manera particular, y un tanto expresionista y simbólica, de resaltar el ‘otro yo’ de los personajes, el desdoblamiento de una personalidad en lo moral —el bien y el mal—, en el tiempo —sobre todo el pasado y el presente— y con relación a otros personajes que parecen un ‘reflejo’ del primero” (Aguilera García 230).

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Appendix 1: List of narrators of *El aniversario de la independencia* by chapter

Ch. 1	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 2	Alex, first-person
Ch. 3	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 4	Jokin, second-person
Ch. 5	Alex, first-person
Ch. 6	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 7	Jokin, second-person
Ch. 8	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 9	Alex, first-person

Ch. 10	Jokin, second-person
Ch. 11	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 12	Alex, first-person
Ch. 13	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 14	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 15	Alex, first-person
Ch. 16	Alex, first-person
Ch. 17	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 18	Alex, first-person
Ch. 19	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 20	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 21	Alex, first-person
Ch. 22	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 23	Alex, first-person
Ch. 24	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 25	Alex, first-person
Ch. 26	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 27	Alex, first-person
Ch. 28	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 29	Alex, first-person
Ch. 30	Jokin, first-person
Ch. 31	Alex, first-person
Ch. 32	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 33	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 34	Omniscient narrator
Ch. 35	Omniscient narrator