

‘Un personaje genuinamente español’: National Discourses in Jorge Martínez Reverte’s *Gálvez en Euskadi*

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This paper seeks to explore different and competing Basque and Spanish nationalist discourses as they are articulated in Jorge Martínez Reverte’s 1983 crime novel, Gálvez en Euskadi. This novel is significant in that it has been interpreted by critics and the author alike as an attempt by a non-Basque to communicate sympathetically some understanding of the Basque situation to ‘Spanish’ readers, and hence to bridge the gap between these two groups. Drawing on Michael Billig’s reading of nationalism as ‘banal’, this paper argues that, although Martínez Reverte may have sought to understand the complex Basque situation through a fictional form, the novel in fact conceals an unarticulated Spanish nationalism and ‘Spanish’ attitudes towards the conflict which ultimately subvert his very aim to promote cultural awareness.

Perhaps the greatest failure of Spanish democracy has been the inability to find a peaceful resolution of the Basque conflict.¹ At the heart of this struggle, according to William Douglass, ‘is the fundamental disagreement between *vasquistas* (Bascophiles) and *españolistas* (Hispanophiles) [...] over a Basque claim to political sovereignty’ (2000: para. 4). This disagreement, Douglass suggests, centres on alternative and opposing discourses of nationhood. For Basque nationalists, the Basque Country constitutes a separate nation which willingly accepted incorporation within the Spanish nation-state, and thus has the right to leave the union.² For Spanish nationalists, on the other hand, the Basque Country is, according to the 1978 Constitution, simply one region of an indivisible Spain, albeit a region with a very different cultural and linguistic tradition. While it appears that these two discourses are mutually exclusive, Douglass argues that the high profile conflicts of the late twentieth century — Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland and

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² Such a reading is of course historically dubious, as it presupposes the existence of a nation-state during a period when no such entity existed. The fact that a distinct Basque (or even Spanish) nation is used anachronistically by nationalists does not, however, detract from its importance in the national imaginary. As Homi Bhabha argues, ‘nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye’ (1990: 1).

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South Africa — have progressed some way towards resolution only through a process of compromise and negotiation (2000: para. 1). Unfortunately, in the absence of an independent peace broker, there is little spirit of compromise and any attempts at an equitable solution either by ETA or the Autonomous Basque Government, such as the Lizarra Declaration and ETA's subsequent unilateral ceasefire, have been rejected if not attacked outright by successive Spanish governments (Douglass 2000: paras 16 & 34-36).

In this paper I wish to examine these different and competing national(ist) discourses as they are articulated in a work of Spanish crime fiction, Jorge Martínez Reverte's *Gálvez en Euskadi* (1983), which is one of a handful of novels that deal with radical Basque nationalism, particularly ETA.³ Moreover, this work is particularly significant because, as a work of Spanish, not Basque,⁴ crime fiction, it is seen by critics as an attempt by a non-Basque to communicate sympathetically some understanding of the Basque situation to Spanish readers, and hence to bridge the gap between these two groups (Deacon 1992: 176-77; Hart 1987: 136).⁵

This is no easy task and Martínez Reverte is conscious of the difficulties and cultural sensitivities at play in dealing with this topic. In the 'advertencia del autor' to *Gálvez en Euskadi*, he begins by listing a series of stereotypes about the Basques: their nobility; their supposedly unintelligible language deliberately designed, as some argue, to trick foreigners; their robust physique, large noses and ears; and the predominance of Rh negative blood, amongst other characteristics. According to the author, his aim in highlighting these stereotypes is to save the reader the unnecessary effort of searching for them, by implication suggesting that he does not peddle in crass stereotypes. He then goes on to state that 'esta narración [es] una novela en la que un señor va a un sitio y le pasan cosas' (1989: 11). If this is a story about anyone and any place, then the reader may be forgiven for being confused about the title of the book. It appears that, despite the importance of protagonist and place in the title, Martínez Reverte wants the reader to believe that these two elements are not crucial to understanding the story itself. So what exactly is the relationship between Gálvez and the Basque Country?

Martínez Reverte himself goes some way to answering this question when he explains his decision to write crime novels. In an interview with Esteban Hernández, he states that the genre 'encajó en un momento un personaje que me fue útil para hablar de cuestiones como la situación de Euskadi o la transición, pero era un pretexto' (cited in Deacon 1992: 169). While this statement appears to be at odds with his previous affirmations that the story is about a man who goes somewhere and to whom things happen, I wish to suggest that these two apparently contradictory statements form part of an unresolved tension within the novel itself. That is to say, although *Gálvez en Euskadi* may be interpreted as an attempt to understand the complex Basque situation through a fictional form, I shall argue that his second statement in fact conceals an unarticulated Spanish nationalism

³ Other works include Fernández Urbina 1994, Atxaga 1994 and 1996, Abasalo 1998, and Blas 2001. For an analysis of the representation of Basque activists in crime fiction written in Basque, see Cillero Goiriastuena 2000.

⁴ By this I mean a work of fiction written by a non-Basque.

⁵ I do not wish to suggest that 'Spanish' constitutes a monolithic entity in itself, as cultural and national identities operate on multiple levels in various parts of the Spanish state, and are particularly problematized in the *nacionalidades históricas*. Rather, for the purposes of this paper, I use the term to refer to the ideal reader as imagined by Martínez Reverte, that is to say, someone — most probably a monolingual Castilian-speaking citizen from central Spain — who identifies with the protagonist, Julio Gálvez (Hart 1987: 142).

and Spanish attitudes towards the conflict which in the end subvert his aim to promote cultural awareness.

Julio Gálvez is the protagonist of a 'series' which to date encompasses four novels written over some twenty years. Gálvez is not a typical private investigator; in fact, he is a journalist. Philip Deacon argues that Gálvez's profession offers the crime writer greater flexibility, as the stories do not have to revolve around a murder (1992: 168). Although Deacon perhaps entertains a rather limited idea of crime fiction — as murder is not always a necessary ingredient — Gálvez's journalistic activities do allow for a more open narrative structure, as he can investigate issues of public interest that, in the first instance, do not appear criminal. Like the professional detectives of the North American hardboiled tradition, Gálvez's journalistic activities allow him to move, in his own words, 'como pez en el agua por los ambientes más diversos', a statement which should be read ironically, as Gálvez does not appear to be comfortable in his own home, let alone in any situation (Martínez Reverte 1995: 187). A journalist with a strong sense of personal integrity, without being moralistic, Gálvez seeks the truth and to expose wrongdoing, particularly corruption, in all the cases in which he is involved. The first book, *Demasiado para Gálvez: el caso Serfico* (1979), deals with dodgy business practices during the last years of the Franco regime. The third text, *Gálvez y el cambio del cambio* (1995) explores government corruption and the question of media independence. The final book in the 'series' to date, *Gálvez en la frontera* (2001), delves into the so-called 'new economy' companies and the affairs of the growing Moroccan immigrant community in Spain.

In the novel that concerns us, *Gálvez en Euskadi*, the protagonist works as a press officer for KBB, a Swedish multinational ballbearing company. The mystery ostensibly revolves around Alberto Unzueta — the manager of the Bilbao branch of KBB — who has disappeared after having paid ten million pesetas in so-called revolutionary tax to ETA. The company does not appear to be overly concerned with Unzueta's fate, but they do want him released before the Spanish government discovers they have been paying ETA and, as a consequence, lose important financial concessions. Gálvez is reluctant to get involved, although he does agree to travel to the Basque Country and arrange for Unzueta's release when threatened with losing his job.

As author and critics alike have noted, the principle objective of the Gálvez 'series', like other crime novels produced during Spain's transition to democracy (Colmeiro 1994: 169; Craig-Odders 1997: 417), is not to write crime novels *per se*; rather the formula provides a narrative structure through which Martínez Reverte can explore different social, political, and moral issues confronting contemporary Spain, in this case the Basque conflict. Given that this is his express intention, it is worthwhile examining how he does represent this complex and sensitive political and cultural situation.

Gálvez's journey can be seen as a sort of in-country education trip. By travelling to the Basque Country, Gálvez experiences first-hand the problems facing the Basques as well as its cultural dimensions. As such, understanding is a central motif in *Gálvez en Euskadi*. Even before the novel begins, Martínez Reverte highlights the importance of understanding, when he thanks those who have helped him, as well as those who tried to dissuade him from writing about the Basques on the grounds that '¿Y tú qué sabes de eso?' (1989: 12). Given that the book seeks to promote awareness, it is significant that Gálvez at first displays a remarkable ignorance of, and lack of interest in, the Basque Country. When Patxo Garmendia, an old colleague and *ex-etarra*, attempts to explain to Gálvez a few elementary points of Basque culture and history, he pays little attention and cannot leave his office fast enough (1989: 46). On meeting Sara Goicoechea — the young and attractive daughter of one of KBB's bankers who has been sent to assist him — for the first time, he

draws attention to his ignorance when he asks if the book she is reading is in German, when it is of course written in Basque (1989: 68). Gálvez's lack of knowledge with respect to the very situation that Martínez Reverte seeks to explore leads him to assume at the beginning that there is little need to understand the complexities of the Basque Country to operate there effectively. His ignorance of Basque matters early in the novel is, nevertheless, simply a device which permits the author to articulate a Basque point of view about the current violence, the recent past and the cultural dimensions of the Basque Country.

Despite his initial ignorance, Gálvez — almost against his will — does become aware of the complexities of the Basque Country. Like doubting Thomas, Gálvez must experience things for himself before he can accept them. One such example occurs when he is detained following a violent street demonstration between police and Basque youths. Believing him to be involved, the police arrest him and, instead of being read his rights, he is insulted, refused access to a lawyer, charged with assaulting a police officer, when in reality he was the victim of an unprovoked assault, and ends up sharing a cell overnight with two Basque youths who are tortured by the police. When the police realize their mistake the following day, Gálvez is informed:

Ha sido un error, un error lamentable lo de detenerte. Pero ya te imaginarás cómo son las cosas por aquí, no da tiempo de distinguir a unos de otros. Eso lleva a pequeñas equivocaciones sin importancia. Pero verás que no te han pegado, que todo eso que se dice sobre las comisarías es un bulo tras otro. Porque no te han tocado el pelo, ¿verdad? Aquí la Constitución se respeta al pie de la letra. (1989: 62)

Instead of upholding the Constitution, the police are shown to be little more than violent thugs who have no limits imposed on their authority. Although the version of events as recounted by the police officer does not correspond in the slightest to his experience, Gálvez has no choice but to accept the official line, as he had been threatened moments before with spending 'un par de días en la comisaría hasta que estemos razonablemente seguros de que no tienes nada que ver con agresiones a la fuerza pública' (1989: 62). While the post-Francoist police may feel that their reputation is unsullied, any trust that Gálvez (and, especially the reader) may have placed in them disappears. Furthermore, this relatively minor cover-up brings into doubt the moral authority of the State as the victim of radical Basque aggression and the reader is left to ponder the extent to which the police may in fact be contributing to violence in the Basque Country.

Although his experience at the hands of the police offers Gálvez a lesson in contemporary Basque-Spanish relations, it is Sara Goicoechea who provides him with the historical dimensions of the conflict when she takes him on a journey through the countryside and townships:

Cada pueblo por el que pasábamos iba adquiriendo una tétrica historia de muertes y humillaciones. Sara conocía cada una de las emboscadas, el nombre y la fecha de cada muerte, de cada vida truncada. El detalle del cuerpo arrastrado sobre una bolsa de plástico para contemplación y escarmiento de todo un pueblo; [...] enfrente del cuartelillo que parece una fortaleza de cartón piedra, el bar en el que entraron varios vestidos de paisano y dejaron al dueño cosido a balazos. No era una historia heroica, era una historia de acosos la que Sara contaba.

Guernika, Lekeitio, Ondárroa, Ispáster, Mundaka, Mutriku. Los nombres se sucedían plagados de cadáveres, repletos de sangre y hechos violentos sobre un paisaje idílico. (1989: 89)

If a nation is a group with a shared history (Smith 1991: 14), then Sara provides Gálvez with ample reasons for the Basques constituting a different nation, as their experience within the Spanish State is very different from that of other areas, including those which have also suffered significant violence at the hands of the central government, such as Catalonia (Conversi 1997: 222-26). The journey — a veritable history lesson from a Basque perspective — shows Gálvez that the Basques do not have a monopoly of violence nor are they the originators of violence on many occasions. This historical journey through a landscape of repression and violence, however, does much more than blame the Spanish State for the Basque conflict. Sara's narrative highlights the violence inherent in the formation of the Spanish nation-state itself. As Michael Billig has argued, 'nations forget the violence which brought them into existence, for, as Renan pointed out, national unity "is always effected by means of brutality"' (1995: 38). While the brutal origins of nation-state formation clearly cannot be invoked in all cases, Renan's assertion can be applied to the processes through which the Spanish state came progressively into existence, like the numerous conflicts with the central authorities, such as the Reapers' War of 1640–52, the War of Spanish Succession of 1701-14, the Carlist wars of the nineteenth century, and more recently the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. In this sense, the origins of the Basque problem cannot be reduced exclusively to the Basque desire for independence but, in fact, can be understood as the result of the violence associated with the very formation of Spain. Yet violence is not limited to the period of nation-state formation. It is an ongoing reality in the Basque Country, as Gálvez's night in jail testifies. Sara's voice in this context serves to articulate an alternative point of view, one which cannot concord with the official discourse, because the latter denies the existence of the former. With no common ground there seems to be no end to the cycle of violence in the Basque Country.

Ironically, as many critics have noted, the repressive measures used against the Basques by the Franco regime and by successive democratic governments in fact created a new Basque identity 'based on the self-perception of [...] a heroic people fighting bravely for their survival against a powerful tyranny' (Conversi 1997: 231). Thus, the violence that Renan claims is inherent in the formation of nation-states in fact planted the seeds for Basque resistance. When faced with examples of State violence, even Gálvez, a non-Basque, identifies sympathetically with the Basque struggle. His treatment at the hands of the police produces 'una especie de difuso sentido de la solidaridad' with the Basque youths who were throwing stones at the police (1989: 57), and Sara's alternative history deeply affects Gálvez, who states that 'sin estar de acuerdo con ella, [...] era muy difícil mantenerse impertérrito frente a sus argumentaciones' (1989: 89).

Gálvez's third lesson covers the cultural geography of the Basque Country. In his first interview with Garmendia, the ex-ETA operative uses the expression 'el otro lado'. When Gálvez inquires about its meaning, Garmendia responds:

Euskadi está dividida en dos por la acción de otros tantos estados imperialistas, España y Francia. El otro lado es Euskadi norte. Con eso se indica que hay que pasar la frontera, pero que se está en el mismo sitio, en Euskadi, ¿entiendes? Euskadi lo forman las cuatro provincias anexionadas por el Estado español y las tres anexionadas por Francia. (1989: 46)

Here the text again highlights the violence that forms part of the processes of nation-state formation, as the Basque Country is separated in two by France and Spain and also within Spain into two different autonomous communities — the *Comunidad Autónoma*

Vasca and the *Comunidad Foral de Navarra*. While at the time of telling, Gálvez is not particularly interested in what Garmendia has to say, he does experience first hand the cultural and geographic dimensions of the Basque Country when he crosses the Franco-Spanish border. This crossing does not bring about the change he had expected. Instead, he notes that 'el paisaje urbano de estas poblaciones seguía siendo genuinamente vasco, con la particularidad notable de estar mucho más cuidado. Era una especie de Euskadi ajardinado' (1989: 94). It is significant that Gálvez recognizes that the political borders between France and Spain do not coincide with the national and cultural ties that link Basques from both sides of the Pyrenees. According to the national imaginary, nations do not merge into each other. Rather, national sovereignty ends at clearly identified borders that separate one culture from another (Smith 1991: 74). Gálvez's experience contradicts such thought and, in doing so, the text ultimately undermines established notions of Spanish nation-statehood. It is also significant that Gálvez now uses the term *Euskadi* instead of the Castilian terms *Vascongadas* or *País Vasco*, which he had employed earlier (1989: 71). His use of the toponym *Euskadi* seems to point to his growing awareness of the Basque Country as a national unit, unlike the Castilian terms that perpetuate the provincialization of certain territories within Spain. This difference is completely assimilated by the protagonist in the next book, *Gálvez y el cambio del cambio*, when he refers to the Basque Country exclusively as *Euskadi* (Martínez Reverte 1995: 176).

Despite these lessons, there is a limit to Gálvez's understanding of the Basque situation. At the end of the novel, when he realizes that Sara is an ETA militant while also being a member of the very bourgeoisie she criticizes so often for its betrayal of the Basque cause, Gálvez heads home more confused than ever, confessing 'no entiendo nada de Euskadi' (1989: 156). Even though Gálvez does not understand the Basque Country, according to Philip Deacon 'the reader may begin to appreciate the alternative perspectives' (1992: 177). While this may be true on one level, I would argue that *Gálvez en Euskadi* ultimately circumscribes the reader's understanding of the Basque perspectives by privileging a Spanish nationalist discourse.

It is important to recognize that Spanish nationalism has undergone a profound change since the death of Franco in 1975. Spanishness is no longer predicated on the notion of a monocultural 'España, una, grande y libre' as it had been during the almost forty years of the Franco regime, but rather on the recognition of Spain's cultural and linguistic diversity, as represented in articles two and three of the 1978 Constitution. While this cultural change may be seen as heralding the death of Spanish nationalism, this is far from true. According to Michael Billig, nationalism has come to be associated with separatist movements such as the Basques, and with extreme right-wing nationalism such as Nazi Germany, or in the Spanish context, Francoism. Nationalism then does not correspond to established Western nation states. As such, 'those in established nations — at the centre of things — are led to see nationalism as the property of others, not of "us"' (Billig 1995: 5). Nationalism, then, is a discourse through which 'complex habits of thought naturalize, and thereby overlook, "our" nationalism, while projecting nationalism, as an irrational whole, on to others. At the core of this intellectual amnesia lies a restricted concept of "nationalism", which confines "nationalism" to particular social movements rather than to nation-states' (Billig 1995: 38). For Billig, this unspoken nationalism is 'banal', a concept which he contrasts with the 'hot' nationalism that creates nation states or belongs to separatist groups, such as ETA (1995: 43-46).

The process that Billig identifies in the previous quote is clearly evident in *Gálvez en Euskadi*. In order to explore this process, it is necessary to analyse Gálvez's nationalism.

Those familiar with the novels may be surprised to hear me speak of Gálvez as a nationalist, as he does not appear to exhibit nationalistic tendencies. Although his is obviously not a nationalism of the *cara-al-sol* variety, Gálvez can be seen as an example of Billig's 'banal nationalism'. In an interview with Patricia Hart, Martínez Reverte describes his protagonist as 'un personaje genuinamente español', by which he means that Gálvez 'es un señor de la calle, normal, de aquí, de un sitio geográfico que es Madrid en concreto. [...] Es alguien muy normalito, lo cual le produce una identificación bastante notable en los lectores' (1987: 142). I shall return to the question of the reader's identification with the protagonist later. It is, however, important to note that this Spanish Everyman just happens to be from Madrid. Coming from the centre, Gálvez appears to be unaware of his cultural and national identity. In Madrid, his identity is taken for granted. In fact, it is not even commented upon in the first novel, *Demasiado para Gálvez: el caso Serfico*. As Kobena Mercer argues, 'identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (1990: 43). When Gálvez leaves Madrid, he leaves behind his unspoken cultural references and he enters a world which is for him unusual.

On entering the Basque Country, Gálvez's previously latent identity is constantly foregrounded. He becomes 'el madrileño'. For example, Nekane is impressed with his punctuality considering he is a 'madrileño' (1989: 43). Similarly, Patxo Garmendia comments that 'los madrileños siempre os perdéis con esto de Euskadi' (1989: 47) and Sara states that 'los madrileños no pueden entender nada de lo que aquí sucede' (1989: 86) and his identity as 'madrileño' or outsider is repeated on numerous occasions throughout the novel (1989: 78-80, 86, 97-101, 104, 153-56). In the Basque Country, Gálvez finds himself a cultural Other in what is considered to be Spain.

The fact that his identity is thrust upon him by Basques, for whom the question of identity is obviously an issue, is significant. Gálvez just wants to go about his business and not get caught up in nationalist recriminations. He is simply 'un señor [que] va a un sitio' (1989: 11). Nationalism then is seen as the preserve of the Basques. Nowhere is this more clear than in his relationship with Sara.

For Patricia Hart, Sara is one of the most 'contradictory and endearing' female characters in Spanish literature since Teresa Serrat in Juan Marsé's 1966 novel *Últimas tardes con Teresa* (1987: 136). Sara can be seen as Gálvez's opposite. She is young, attractive, independent, professionally competent and passionately committed to Basque independence. The contradictions which Hart finds so endearing are her distrust and savage critique of the Basque bourgeoisie from which she comes, her attraction and affection for the *madrileño* Gálvez although she is a devoted Basque nationalist, and her dislike of killing while also belonging to an armed organization which promotes violence.

Although Sara is by no means a cardboard cut-out, I disagree with the emphasis Hart places on her contradictory character. The figure of Sara can best be understood in the context of her function within the narrative conventions of the crime genre. While Gálvez is himself not necessarily a symbol of orthodoxy, as an ETA militant and a woman, Sara represents transgression. In a study on women in ETA, Carrie Hamilton argues that 'the stereotype of the rebellious woman represents an identity based not so much on individual character as on the performance ("acting") of certain roles which subvert traditional gender norms' (1990a: 228). Following Hamilton, it can be argued that Sara is in fact a stereotype that threatens the established masculine and nationalist order. Furthermore, her character can be interpreted as a Spanish fantasy of radical Basque

nationalism. Hamilton calculates that women make up approximately 8% of ETA militants, a figure based on the percentage of female *etarras* incarcerated, yet they are largely absent from ETA self-representations, such as the organization's newsletter *Zutik* (Hamilton 1990b: 160). In contrast to their relative absence in ETA's writings, in the Spanish popular imagination, such as Juan Antonio de Blas's *¿Hay árboles en Guernica?* (1987), Matías Antolín's pop-history *Mujeres de ETA: piel de serpiente* (2002), and to a lesser extent in *Gálvez en Euskadi*, the female *etarra* looms large as a sexually charged, anti-feminine killer who produces 'miedo y fascinación' (Antolín 2002: 19). Far from being contradictory, Sara can in fact be read as a trope of the hard-boiled genre: that of the 'aggressive, sexually avaricious, and dangerous women [who] are usually perceived at first by the detective to be highly desirable, and are later "discovered" to be perverted and immoral' (Ogdon 1992: 77). Although Sara is not considered initially to pose a threat to Gálvez, and despite the fact that it is perfectly understandable that she should want to hide her membership of an illegal, clandestine organization, her exposure as an *etarra* at the end of the novel highlights her deceitfulness. By exposing her secret only at the very end, Martínez Reverte leads the reader to identify with, and feel sympathy for Sara and her cause, just as Gálvez has done. The revelation of her militancy in the final chapter, however, suggests a duplicitous character, thereby undoing the reader's identification with her and, consequently, the injustices suffered by the Basques that she articulates throughout the novel. In this context, Sara's constant attempts to express her Basque point of view and to convince Gálvez of the justness of her cause only serve to reinforce her marginalization. While he had once fantasized about a possible relationship with Sara, the discovery leads Gálvez to conclude that 'nuestros mundos no se parecían en nada, estaban separados por un abismo' (1989: 156).

In contrast to Sara, at no point does Gálvez have to articulate his nationalism, as it is unspoken, taken for granted, 'banal'. Following Michael Billig, the difference between Gálvez's silent nationalism and Sara's nationalist utterances distances "'us" [the Spaniards] from "them" [the Basques], "our" world from "theirs". And "we", writer and readers, are assumed to belong to a reasonable world, a point-zero of nationalism' (1995: 49).⁶ Similarly, Joseba Gabilondo argues that in the Basque case 'till the mid 1990s, most terrorism discourse kept a distance from its object of study by mobilizing a historical and scientific apparatus that analysed "rationally" the "irrational" and "barbaric" activity of terrorism' (2002: 65). Gálvez can clearly be seen within this discourse. His lack of interest and knowledge at the outset of the novel characterizes him as the classic disinterested observer of detective fiction. Furthermore, as the figure of narrative authority throughout the novel, Gálvez becomes the judge of Basque nationalist claims, such as when the reader is presented with Gálvez's qualified approval after Sara takes him on the historical tour of the Basque Country: 'sin estar de acuerdo con ella, [...] era muy difícil mantenerse impertérrito frente a sus argumentaciones' (1989: 89). This rationality, according to Joseba Gabilondo, is a characteristic of the 'new nationalist [subject] of the enlightened Spanish state', an idea which is developed in the work of Basque Spanish philosopher, Fernando Savater (2003: 375).

⁶ This is supported by a casual glance at most Castilian-language newspapers of all political persuasions, in which one can see how Spanish nationalist discourse ascribes nationalist tendencies only to peripheral nationalists in the Basque Country and Galicia, while José María Aznar's conservative, Spanish nationalist government is considered the norm against which everything else is measured (Resina 2000: 110-12).

Despite the fact that *Gálvez en Euskadi* can be read as an attempt to foster understanding of the complex problems facing the Basque Country amongst non-Basques, the inherent, unspoken nationalism of the text, in fact, undermines such an attempt, as the ideal reader — a non-Basque Spaniard and most probably a monolingual Castilian-speaker — identifies with the reasonable stance taken by Gálvez. In contrast to Gálvez's 'enlightened' rationality, it is the Basques who are considered to be irrational and to be acting improperly. Rather patronizingly, Martínez Reverte begins the novel with an epigram from a popular source which reads 'Sin mezclarse con viles criminales / que siempre van armados / de mísero puñal, / así bailaba el euskaldún, / raza viril, al son del txistu y tamboril' (1989: 9). In using this quote, the author seems to suggest that the activities of ETA are criminal and that it is the militants who have lost their way and their traditions. In a similar fashion within the narrative proper, Martínez Reverte articulates explicit criticism of the Basque militants via the figure of the mad Basque who appears intermittently throughout the novel. In apocalyptic language, he describes himself as the 'redentor de mi desgraciado pueblo' before going on to preach that 'matar es pecado, robar es pecado. Si mi pueblo no aprende eso, una tormenta de fuego y ceniza lo exterminará. ¡Hijos de la ira! ¡Arrepentíos!' (1989: 114). Although considered to be mad by all, in the final scene he expresses solidarity with Gálvez's incomprehension with regard to the Basque Country. Thus the madman and the voice of reason coincide, giving added weight to the legitimacy of his previous statement.

While *Gálvez en Euskadi* may be a brave attempt at tackling a 'national' problem, it tells us more about unspoken Spanish nationalist discourse and Spanish attitudes towards the Basques than it does about the Basque Country itself. As long as Francoism continues to act as a 'smokescreen for the national question' in contemporary Spain (Resina 2003: 390), Gálvez's nationalism remains transparent while continuing to exert its hegemony as the national norm. This new Spanish nationalism, according to Resina, 'poses as something else: as constitutional patriotism, state universality, the defence of individual rights, an inclusive project, territorial solidarity and other exalted things' (2003: 384). Spanish nationalism in the text dare not speak its name as it would be forced to recognize its own part in the 'defeat of alternative nationalism and other ways of imagining peoplehood' (Billig 1995: 28), and hence threaten the legitimacy of the Spanish nation-state. Ultimately, for all its sympathetic posturing, *Gálvez en Euskadi* subverts the very subversive intention of the narrative itself by suggesting that it is the Basques who must change, give up their nationalism and become more reasonable (and more Spanish), like Gálvez.

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Este artículo intenta explorar los diferentes y conflictivos discursos nacionalistas vasco y español en una novela negra, Gálvez en Euskadi (1983) de Jorge Martínez Reverte. Esta novela es significativa en tanto que ha sido interpretada por los críticos y por el autor mismo como un intento por parte de un escritor no vasco de comunicar desde un punto de vista comprensivo un entendimiento de la situación actual vasca a los lectores 'españoles', y de tal modo salvar las diferencias entre estos dos grupos culturales. Utilizando la interpretación de Michael Billig del nacionalismo como 'banal', este artículo sostiene que, aunque Martínez Reverte haya intentado entender la compleja situación vasca a través de la ficción, de hecho Gálvez en Euskadi oculta un nacionalismo español y unas actitudes españolas no explícitos en relación al conflicto, los cuales en última instancia socavan el propósito principal de la novela: el de promover una conciencia cultural entre un público español.