

# Father, Son, and the Oedipal Metaphor in J.Á. González Sainz's *Ojos que no ven* (2010)

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**Abstract:** *Ojos que no ven* (2010) examines the Basque Conflict via the microcosm of a family caught up in its division. This work reads the father-son tension between Felipe and Juanjo, an ETA member, via an oedipal lens, and employs the national family metaphor to argue that they represent the national struggle between ETA and the Spanish State. It proposes, therefore, that ETA repeats the crimes of the national “father” (i.e. the Spanish State) within their environment of violence.

**Keywords:** ETA – Spain – *Ojos que no ven* – oedipal narrative – national family.

The conflict between the Spanish State and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), a radical Basque nationalist organization fighting for full independence from Spain, raged within Spain (and the French Basque Country) from 1968, when ETA began armed activities against the State, until the permanent dissolution of the organization in 2018. Throughout its five decades of violence, ETA killed well over 800 people, including many civilians. *Ojos que no ven* (2010), the fourth novel of J.Á. González Sainz, is the story of a family caught up in this conflict<sup>1</sup>. When Felipe Díaz Carrión loses his job at a local printing press, he is forced to move his family from their small town in the interior of Spain to the Basque Country. Within a few years of their new life, however, Felipe’s older son, Juanjo, and his wife, Asun, become involved in a group that is never explicitly named, but is understood to be ETA<sup>2</sup>. Their participation in the organization tears apart the family, with Asun abandoning Felipe and their younger son and Juanjo eventually being arrested for murder. Throughout the novel, though, the father-son struggle embodied by Felipe and Juanjo comes to stand for the struggle at the national level between the Spanish State and ETA. In this way, *Ojos que no ven* is a

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<sup>1</sup> González Sainz’s third novel, *Volver al mundo* (2003) also explored the theme of terrorism, but this is the first of his works to deal so openly with a criticism of ETA. See *Terrorismo, ética y compromiso en la obra de J.Á. González Sainz* by Gonzalo Martín de Marcos for a critical study of both works.

<sup>2</sup> This explicit association has been confirmed by González Sainz himself—see “En España nos hemos acostumbrado...” for one such confirmation—as well as by reviewers such as Jon Juaristi, Alejandro Gándara, Luis Prádanos, and others.

condemnation of the violence perpetrated by ETA and, via a mirroring of the oedipal narrative between Felipe and Juanjo, suggests that ETA's crimes ultimately continue the cycle of violence they accuse the national "father" (i.e. the Spanish State) of having committed against their community.

As his involvement with ETA deepens, Juanjo demonstrates growing animosity towards his father and younger brother, neither of whom align with the organization or its cause. In this way, Juanjo's rebellion against his father can be read via an oedipal lens<sup>3</sup>: the adolescent violence against his father in an attempt to establish his own manhood. Drawing from Sophocles' classic tragedy, Freud himself writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that "It was perhaps ordained that we should all of us turn our first sexual impulses toward our mother, our first hatred and violent wishes against our father" (202). The oedipal nature of the familial conflict is further evidenced by the especially close relationship between Juanjo and his mother, who supported his initial social interaction with Basque nationalist youth and with whom he is completely politically aligned by the time he leaves the family home. Felipe, by contrast, stands in total opposition to their sympathy for and participation in ETA and, as Leonardo S. Rodríguez describes in "The Oedipus Complex from Freud to Lacan", this moral prohibition forms part of the "paternal metaphor" present in Lacan's reading of the Oedipal drama (22). Particularly as the situation escalates and Felipe voices his opposition more clearly, his character comes to exist as "the agent of fundamental prohibition" as "the one who supports the law" (L. Rodríguez 22). Felipe's objection to a cause to which both his son and his wife have passionately dedicated themselves and the attempted destruction of the basis of their close bond, then, represents a metaphorical castration of mother and son.

Juanjo associates himself with the oppressed Basque nationalists and his father, metaphorically, with the oppressive Spanish State; in this way, their division becomes systemic and each individual character moves beyond realm of the private family home to stand for the tensions within the larger national family. Anne McClintock affirms in "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family" that "Nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space" and explains that this "family trope...offers a 'natural' figure for sanctioning social *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interests" (63, emphasis original). George Lakoff's nation-as-family metaphor breaks down this social hierarchy into specific roles for the family members. In *Whose Freedom: The Battle over America's Most Important Idea*, Lakoff writes that "In the nation-as-family metaphor, the family corresponds to the nation, the children correspond to adult citizens, and the parent corresponds to a national leader" (66). Extending Lakoff's metaphor to Felipe's family members, Felipe's role is two-fold—representing not only the head of his own family but also (and especially in Juanjo's opinion) the head of the national family. Lakoff furthermore proposes two models to describe the ways in which

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<sup>3</sup> The oedipal narrative present in *Ojos que no ven* is an established literary trope in the *oeuvre* of Gonzalez Sainz; Alain-Richard Sappi examines its presence in *Un mundo exasperado* (1995) and Gabriel Cereceda Oyón traces parallels between the original myth of Oedipus Rex and *Volver al mundo* (2003).

these families operate, and it is his Strict Father model that aligns with Juanjo's criticism of Felipe and—by extension—ETA's criticism of the Spanish State.

In the Strict Father model, "There are two parents, a father and a mother. Morally, there is absolute right and absolute wrong. The strict father is the moral authority in the family; he knows right from wrong, is inherently moral, and has the authority to be head of the household" (Lakoff 96). Furthermore, "A family need a strict father because...Children are born bad, in the sense that they want to do whatever feels good, not what is right" and "Children learn right from wrong and become moral beings in only one way: punishment when they do wrong—punishment painful enough, either physically or psychologically, to give them an incentive to do right" (96-7). Spain at the time of the novel—and particularly in the radical Basque nationalist perspective—operates under a Strict Father model, wherein the Spanish State is the Strict Father and radical Basque nationalism (ETA) is the rebellious child that must be disciplined and taught how to be a "proper" member of the national family. In Juanjo's perspective, discipline of the Basque nationalist "son" takes the form of oppression—both from his own father and, by extension, by the Strict Father Spanish State—and this view is supported by the ongoing (at the time of the novel) persecution of both suspected and confirmed ETA members and the continued denial of recognition of the Basque Country as an independent nation—the ultimate objective for which ETA claimed to fight.

Employing the nation-as-family metaphor permits the continued oedipal references at the national level. Within their home, Felipe and Juanjo stand in opposition as father and son; within the Basque country, they represent the division between the Spanish "father(land)" and the radical nationalist "sons" of ETA. Ana Vivancos and Marsha Kinder have both written on the pervasive nature of the oedipal narrative within works dealing with the Spanish Civil War and resulting Franco regime in Spain, using the metaphor of the national Spanish family. Vivancos echoes Lakoff's terminology in her description of the familial elements of Franco's rule, writing that the Francoist regime sustained itself partly with "the cultural politics of the representation of the Spanish people...ruled by an all-powerful, uncontestable masculine dictator, often portrayed as a strict father for the Spanish people" (877). Kinder writes, as well, on the popularity of what she terms the "Spanish oedipal narrative" in Spanish cinema, and notes the frequency with which "oedipal conflicts within the family are used to speak about political issues and historical events that were repressed from filmic representation during the Francoist era, and the way they continue to be used with even greater flamboyance in the post-Franco period after censorship and repression had been abolished" (67). Written nearly twenty years after Kinder's publication, the oedipal narrative in *Ojos que no ven* does not necessarily align with the specific characteristics of the "Spanish oedipal narrative" that Kinder outlines and examines, but it is employed in the same way to speak about polemic political issues.

It seems to be no coincidence that the oedipal narrative, which Kinder and Vivancos both find in works that deal with the Spanish Civil War, also appears in a work

that centers itself on the violence of ETA. Readers know that Felipe's own father was killed during the civil war, and the cyclical structure of the novel implies that both this original loss of the father and the violence surrounding the loss are finding echoes in the present day. Additionally, as will be discussed below, for many members of ETA, the violence and oppression suffered by the Basques during and after the civil war continued after Franco's death under the guise of democracy. This is a point emphasized in Juanjo's defense of his participation in ETA. With the specter of the Guerra civil so present in the work itself, the persistent presence of a national oedipal narrative is no surprise.

In *Ojos que no ven*, Felipe's family emigrates to "uno de los grandes pueblos industriales de una de las verdes y neblinosas cuencas guipuzcoanas" after he loses his job in a local printing press<sup>4</sup> (González Sainz 26). Though the town is never identified, the Guipúzcoa region is a consequential location for the novel and signals the family tensions to come, since, as Florencio Domínguez Iribarren writes, "la presencia de Batasuna es dominante y asfixiante" at this time in this region for those who do not share in its ideology (234). More concretely, Jesús Rodríguez situates their move in 1967, a significant year "no solo porque Juanjo tiene solo diez años, sino porque al año siguiente ETA inicia la lucha armada y se recrudece la represión franquista contra los nacionalistas vascos" (234). Moving to the Guipúzcoa region at this time means that Juanjo grows up through the last years of the Franco dictatorship, and therefore witnesses the repression and retaliation leveraged against ETA—and the Basque Country in general—during that time. Additionally, he would have been a young teenager during such incredibly significant moments as the Burgos Trial (1970), the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco (1973), and the Cafetería Rolando bombing in Madrid (1974). There is no indication in the novel of Juanjo's level of involvement with ETA or any of the radical Basque youth groups during this time, but, as Rodríguez suggests, "se educa, por lo tanto, en un ambiente radicalmente nacionalista" and this will influence his future behavior (234).

At first, Felipe's family's lives in the Basque Country seem to pass relatively unaffected by the existing tensions around them. As Juanjo's new friendships develop, however, Felipe begins to notice the first push back against him as a father. Apart from spending nearly all his time with his "pandilla de amigos", Felipe notes that, for Juanjo, "las opiniones de casa, o por lo menos las de su padre, tenían el menor valor si se comparaba con el que ostentaban las de sus amigos (González Sainz 29). Felipe also explains that Juanjo begins to not publicly recognize his father when he is with this new group of friends. In each of these interactions, it is the father-son relationship that suffers: Juanjo stops caring about Felipe's opinions and stops recognizing his father in public. Although he first attributes this to normal teenage behavior, it is apparent that Felipe also notices something deeper in these moments; speaking about Juanjo he says that "no podía

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<sup>4</sup> Martín de Marcos quotes an interview with González Sainz in which he discusses the significance of Felipe's participation in the phenomenon of internal emigration in Spain during this time (*Terrorismo* 207). Likewise, Prádanos notes that Felipe's move to the Basque Country comes as part of the "desarrollismo" which occurred in Spain during the 1960s (225).

por menos de verlo cada vez más distante, cada vez más ajeno, volando lejos en enigmáticos y seguramente seductores círculos inasequibles para él” (30). Furthermore, Felipe explains, “al poco de mudarse allí, empezó a despreciar los estudios y a la gente que estudiaba—no se comen ya ni una rosca, decía—y un carácter cada vez más agrio y arisco, normal si se quiere en la adolescencia, pero que ya tenía todos los visos de ser cualquier cosa menos pasajero, se había ido apoderando poco a poco inexorablemente de él” (31). Further driving the division between father and son, Juanjo often enjoys the “apoyo o comprensión de su madre” during his outbursts, which leads his father to only tolerate his presence in the house and hope that the phase passes (31). Felipe not only sees his attempts at parenting frustrated by Asun’s parenting style, which is much more permissive for Juanjo, but this difference in parenting also highlights Felipe’s status as the Lacan’s “agent of fundamental prohibition” and deepens the bond between Juanjo and Asun, uniting them in opposition to Felipe.

Part of Juanjo’s rejection of his father certainly stems from Felipe’s status as an immigrant, which adds an additional barrier to the integration of the family into the social fabric of their town. Jon Juaristi illustrates Felipe’s placement on the social hierarchy in describing “una jerarquía social tácita que subordina la emigración de la España pobre a quienes, en las regiones industriales, se tienen por anfitriones legítimos y ponen a los recién llegados ante el dilema de asumir sus obsesiones identitarias o resignarse a un ostracismo que, tarde o temprano, derivará hacia situaciones no disimuladas de persecución política y acoso violento” (“Novela”). At the same time, Juanjo begins to bring home newspapers discussing bombings, assassinations, and other crimes ostensibly committed by ETA. As Asun’s support of the cause also deepens, these types of news stories serve as discussion between mother and son and an additional source of connection between the two. Felipe notices, for example, that Asun begins to discuss more and more “esos atentados—o acciones, según decía el hijo” and, though he does not agree with the way they talk about these events, he limits himself to respond simply that “Me parece que no sabéis muy bien lo que decís”, explaining that he does not want to argue with people who he assumes will not listen anyway (González Sainz 34). The increasing, shared enthusiasm between Asun and Juanjo stand in stark contrast to Felipe’s perspective on the matter and serve to further distance him from his son and wife. In this way, the news stories serve as a catalyst that allow Juanjo and Asun to separate themselves from their immigrant status by choosing the first of the options described by Juaristi: sympathizing with, and then later participating in, ETA.

During this period of increased involvement by Juanjo and Asun, Felipe’s favorite neighborhood bar becomes a metaphor for the changes in his personal life and in the society around him. Though he was accustomed to spending time at the bar while Asun was out of the house with her friends, a new owner brings in a wave of changes and “algunos de sus amigos, tanto los venidos también de otras tierras como los de por allí, fueron poco a poco dejando de ir” (González Sainz 34). This new ownership of the bar, once a neutral zone, mirrors the way in which ETA begins to exert additional social

pressure. Felipe continues to frequent the bar even amidst these changes, and the reaction of his friends is one which is echoed throughout many moments of the novel: “Tú es que no te enteras” (34). Along with this moment of foreshadowing, Felipe’s account of the more specific changes in the bar give a foreboding image of what is to come:

Las paredes del bar se fueron llenando de banderas, de fotografías de desconocidos para él, de convocatorias a esto y lo otro y eslóganes...Por cambiar también cambió hasta el café, que era casi lo único que él tomaba; lo notaba más ácido y más fuerte, o a lo mejor sería la leche o el modo de prepararlo, que, como el resto de las cosas, parecía haberse transformado allí de un plumazo de la noche a la mañana (35).

Again, Felipe does not stop going to the bar and, for a short period of time, it seems like the owners are even friendlier to him than before. Coincidentally, during this period of friendly treatment from the new ETA-sympathizing bar, Juanjo is preparing to leave home and move to France for “work”, and so readers are to understand the hospitality enjoyed by Felipe is based on the belief that he is supporting his son’s participation in ETA.

The changes in the bar mark an important impending shift to the locus of the oedipal conflict, as well. What had, until this point, been a private, familial strain begins to take on a new, public quality that will mirror the clear shift of Juanjo’s criticism from father-son adolescent tension to one housed at the organizational level between ETA and the Spanish State. As the coffee in Felipe’s neighborhood bar grows more acidic and strong, so does Juanjo’s personality, and Felipe’s recollection of their last conversation before Juanjo left for France reflects both a stark change in Juanjo’s behavior and also a more targeted criticism of his father. Felipe recalls noticing that Juanjo appeared to be bothered by something and, in an attempt to help, asked what was wrong. Juanjo had reacted violently to his father’s offer, though, asking: “Qué me vas a ayudar tú, si eres un paleta de mierda...un paleta de mierda y además uno de ellos” (González Sainz 37). When his father, obviously shocked by Juanjo’s vitriol, asked him to elaborate, Juanjo explained that Felipe was “[d]e ellos, de quién va a ser, de toda esa inmunda morralla de mierda que no nos deja vivir y nos tiene históricamente oprimidos” (37). Though a personal criticism is present, the focus of Juanjo’s ire is clearly directed at Felipe as representative of a larger group and it is here that Juanjo begins in earnest to conflate his biological father with the “Strict father” embodied by the Spanish State. Sappi writes that in González Sainz’s second novel, *Un mundo exasperado*, the protagonist “sustituye la figura del padre genitor...por la del Gobernador” and that this demonstrates that “la función ‘Nombre de Padre’ puede ser encarnada por cualquiera y no sólo por el padre genitor (2). In the same way that the protagonist of *Un mundo exasperado*, “[a] partir de ahora...aludirá muy poco a su propio padre, relegándole al segundo plano mientras que el Gobernador deviene la persona que desempeña el papel de aquél”, Juanjo’s argument likewise relegates

Felipe's individual being to a secondary plane and brings in to focus the oppressive role of the surrogate "Strict father"<sup>5</sup> (Sappi 3). Though the father figures in each of the two works are certainly very different, the repeated replacement of the biological father for one linked to the government in some way is a trend that must also be noted.

Juanjo's discourse does not improve from there and, this discussion becomes the first act of (metaphorical) violence he commits against his father. As part of Juanjo's violent diatribe, he blames Felipe for "la culpa de sus mierdosos apellidos... y de su mierdoso lugar de origen, de su sumisión aborregada y de su cochina pobreza... y de tener un padre que era un fascistón de tomo y lomo (González Sainz 38-39). Juanjo's criticism of his father's unfortunate last names and place of origin, as well as his poverty (linked to his emigration to the Basque Country), plays in to the rejection of those same elements by radical Basque nationalists at the time. Jesús Rodríguez proposes that "la atracción de Juanjo por el nacionalismo radical se debe en parte a la vergüenza que le produce su origen maketo y su deseo de integrarse en el colectivo abertzale que en algunos pueblos de Euskadi representa la mayoría de la población" (235). By rejecting all elements of his father's heritage that would therefore also link him to a non-Basque identity, Juanjo attempts to assert his new social identity. Jesús Rodríguez also affirms the importance of this move in terms of his social standing; he quotes José Sanmartín, who states that "su entrada en ETA le ha dado una salvaguarda contra la discriminación y le ha hecho participe, a su vez, de su indiscutible prestigio social" (qtd. in J. Rodríguez 235). Fully integrating into this new world requires a total severance of ties to anyone who would not fully support ETA's actions—even if that person is Juanjo's own father—and he is only able to build up his own social power by stripping Felipe of his.

At the time of Juanjo's verbal attack on his father, Felipe notes that his son is twenty-seven years old. Consequently, Juanjo would have been around eighteen years old at the time of Franco's death in 1975—the official end of fascism in Spain. As Luis Carmona writes, with Franco's death "parecía abrirse un nuevo período en la lucha de la banda armada, pues muchos de los que la habían apoyado consideraban que uno de sus fines era el fin de la dictadura para, una vez sus commando hubiesen abandonado las armas, comenzar el diálogo sobre la creación de un estado vasco soberano" (69). This was not to be the case for ETA, however. Diego Muro notes that "[o]n the contrary, radical Basque nationalists became fiercely opposed to the consolidation of the constitutional monarchy arguing that the only political change that had taken place in Spain was the 'democratisation of fascism'" (113). This division in perspective led to a great loss in popular support for ETA but, as Florencio Domínguez Iribarren explains, the growing

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<sup>5</sup> Martín de Marcos briefly reinforces the oedipal nature of this, including the Gobernador's death at the hands of the protagonist in the novel and the connection between this violent action and the real-life of Ramón Baglietto, killed by ETA in 1980 in a similar fashion (*Terrorismo* 118-20). The literary reference to this particular case is additional evidence of González Sainz utilizing an interpersonal relationship to reference violence at the larger, societal level.

isolation from popular support only fed the organization's narrative that armed violence was even more necessary than before (301-2). This narrative was further supported by the ongoing issue of torture of suspected ETA members and, from 1983-87, the Spanish State-funded organization named Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (GAL), which carried out a number of violent acts—including shootings, bombings, and kidnappings—largely in the French Basque Country in order to apprehend or kill suspected ETA members and coerce the French government into cooperating with Spanish anti-terrorism operations (Muro 138-9). Ultimately, according to Muro, “The authoritarian tendencies of the police and security forces reinforced their image as ‘occupation forces’ and made it easier for ETA supporters to persuade new generations that littler or nothing had changed in the Basque Country since the death of Franco” (140). This would prove to be a convincing call-to-arms for young men such as Juanjo.

When Juanjo calls Felipe a “fascistón de tomo y lomo” and associates him with “toda esa inmundada morralla de mierda que no nos deja vivir y nos tiene históricamente oprimidos”, then, he sees Felipe as standing in for the larger source of Basque oppression at the time. Both Juanjo and Asun appear to use the term *fascista* to link Felipe to the Spanish State throughout the novel, employing the term on different occasions to criticize him in their outbursts. Begoña Atxaga might have argued that this term in particular is useful, in part, for Juanjo and Asun to break the intimacy between Felipe and themselves by locating Felipe “firmly on the Spanish side of the Basque/Spanish boundary” and aligning themselves with the Basque side of the conflict (“Out of Their Minds?” 251). Atxaga discusses this breaking of intimacy in the national context during her analysis of the word *cipayo* as a derogatory term for the Basque *Ertzaintza*, or the Basque police force. She argues that radical Basque nationalists began to use this term to demonstrate that, by policing and arresting members of their own community, the *Ertzaintza* were on the Spanish side of the Basque/Spanish debate. For Atxaga, this represents a trauma for the Basque nationalists, and she says that the term *cipayo* “contains the traumatic residue of an imaginary unity that has not been given up, while it signals the fact that it no longer exists” (251). In Juanjo's outburst, the term *fascista* holds this same trauma; it is a personal wound stemming from broken familial bonds, but also a reminder of the division at the national level.

Though Juanjo associates Felipe with a figure akin to Lakoff's Strict Father, it isn't Felipe himself against whom Juanjo is rebelling; instead, it is what Felipe represents to Juanjo. Until this very scene in the work, Felipe shows little inclination towards disciplining or guiding his family; apart from his occasional comments during Juanjo and Asun's discussions, he never attempts to even chastise his son before this moment, let alone discipline him in any significant way. Ironically, it is this very conversation that provokes Felipe's only attempt at truly parenting Juanjo. In a multi-page response, one of Felipe's longest stretches of conversation in the entire work, he attempts to draw the line between right and wrong for Juanjo, pausing to implore his son “¿me oyes? ¿me estás oyendo? ¿haces el puñetero favor de oírme por lo menos una vez?” (González Sainz 40).



He concludes with one final attempt to dissuade his son from what is obviously becoming a dangerous venture: “que uno, en resumidas cuentas, puede hacer lo que quiera, es cierto, pero no exactamente lo que le venga en gana; es decir, puede hacer lo que quiera siempre que no moleste ni intimide o atemorice a nadie ni por supuesto que le toque un solo pelo de la ropa. ¿Me has entendido, hijo mío?” (41). These are the last words Felipe speaks directly to his son in the rest of the novel. Juanjo does not respond to Felipe’s commentary, and apart from Felipe later breaking up a long-coming physical altercation between Juanjo and his younger brother, this is also one of the last interactions between Juanjo and Felipe in the work.

After Juanjo leaves the family home, Felipe finds himself entangled in a continued web of violence both at the personal and at the regional/national level. Around a year after he stops going to his neighborhood bar, one of the senior employees of the company where Felipe works is kidnapped by ETA. As soon as Felipe hears the news, he remembers “como un relámpago por donde se cierne la tormenta” that, months prior to leaving home, Juanjo had asked to accompany his father to work during one of his night shifts (González Sainz 52). Felipe, overjoyed to finally receive some sign of interest from his elder son, had agreed and had gladly shown him around the plant. Juanjo accompanied him on other nights, as well, “siempre a la misma hora y ya sin preguntarle si podía acompañarle”, and Felipe even noticed him outside the plant a few times, “no tanto como si lo esperara a él, aunque lo simulara, como si su salida le hubiera parecido en realidad prematura o le estorbara de alguna otra ocupación” (54-55). Though he had been flattered at the time to think Juanjo was finally taking an interest in his work and his life, Felipe quickly realizes that Juanjo had ulterior motives for this time spent with his father<sup>6</sup>. As a result of this betrayal, Felipe joins a small, but consistent, group of protestors who meet outside of the plaza mayor at the time their coworker was kidnapped to ask for his immediate release. Even as other members of the group begin to fall away—either because of the apparent ineffectuality of their protest or the constant, subtle threats they received due to their participation in the protests—Felipe remains dedicated to the protest and shows up “[d]ía tras día, hiciera el tiempo que hiciera” (56).

Felipe suffers physical violence for the first and only time in the work because of his steadfast participation in the protests. First discovering “una bolsa negra de plástico, de las que se usan para tirar la basura, amarrada con un nudo al picaporte de su puerta”, the threats escalate within a month and he finds “un gato negro muerto sobre el felpudo” with a note that says “tú mismo” (González Sainz 58). A month after the cat, Felipe barely opens the entrance to his apartment building when he is brutally attacked by at least two people. There are no clear indications of their identities, and the only words spoken by the attackers to Felipe are “da gracias a quien tienes que dárselas, cipayo de mierda” (59). With the attack ostensibly linked to Felipe’s participation in the protests, which were

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<sup>6</sup> Carlos Javier García explores in great detail Felipe’s guilt as a result of Juanjo’s actions in this and other moments throughout the work in “Aunque no veas, algo ves: la culpa en *Ojos que no ven*, de J.Á. González Sainz”.

originally spurred by a kidnapping most likely perpetrated at least in part by Juanjo or his surveillance, the reader cannot help but to suspect Juanjo's involvement in the violence committed against Felipe. Asun appears to later discredit this theory when she exclaims to Felipe that "tú no sabes nada, claro, tú no sabes lo que nos debes a mí a Juanjo, que nos debes hasta el estar ahora mismo respirando" (64). Even if it is true that Asun and Juanjo somehow conspired to save Felipe's life in that situation, Juanjo's participation in ETA is still undeniably linked to the physical and verbal violence that Felipe suffers.

Even after the attack, Felipe does not stop attending the protests and, a year later, his colleague is rescued in a police mission. The details of his confinement throw Felipe into a tailspin as he imagines living a year in the terrible conditions described by the news. After the kidnapping victim returns to work, though, the company—which had already gone downhill in his absence—continues to suffer. About a year after the rescue, the company for which Felipe works is bought out by a multinational corporation and Felipe takes an early retirement, deciding to leave the Basque Country. By this point, Juanjo has been gone from the family home for years and Asun has left Felipe and their younger son, as well. The description of Asun and Juanjo's activities serves to reinforce their tight bond and the exclusion of Felipe from their world; readers learn that Asun "había sido elegida concejal en las últimas elecciones por un partido del que todo el mundo sabía lo que había que saber sin que se tuviera que saber nada en realidad" and Juanjo, who Felipe has not seen in two years, now goes by "Potote" (González Sainz 73). Martín de Marcos, in "La dialéctica de lo freak," defines the freak as "un otro no reconocido, en razón de anormalidad política y con la consecuencia de su exclusión" and highlights this shift in Juanjo's identity as the moment that solidifies his identification as such (299). He argues that Juanjo's "rebautismo" marks a definitive shift in the relationship with his father, writing that "no es un mero cambio de nombre sino una mutación sustancial: ya no es Juanjo, y Felipe acaba por admitir que no lo *reconoce*" (313, emphasis original). Martín de Marcos is spot on in his general classification of Juanjo as a freak, according to his definition, but this name change does not make Juanjo as unrecognizable to his father as Martín de Marcos implies and it isn't until later that Juanjo is fully established as a freak. Indeed, Juanjo reappears later in Felipe's life in a devastating way and it is obvious that Felipe not only still recognizes Juanjo, but still considers Juanjo as his son<sup>7</sup>.

Juanjo's last appearance in the novel comes on the heels of his arrest for his role in at least one, and possibly three, murders. If, according to Martín de Marcos, Juanjo's use of an alias fundamentally altered the father-son relationship by making Juanjo unrecognizable to his father, the reporting of the crimes in the newspaper with Juanjo's full legal name serves as an undeniable confirmation that the relationship, however strained, still exists for Felipe. This still-present link is further reinforced by the repetition of the phrase "su hijo" as Felipe tries to absorb the information he has discovered: "Su

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<sup>7</sup> Martín de Marcos's analysis of *Ojos que no ven* in "La dialéctica de lo freak: víctimas y terroristas en dos novelas españolas de principios del siglo XXI" covers only the first half of the novel and, as such, does not examine Juanjo's reemergence in the second half of the work.

hijo, un asesino. Su hijo, un asesino que ha matado a otra persona que ya no vive ni podrá volver a vivir jamás porque su hijo, su propio hijo, el fruto nacido de sus entrañas, le ha quitado la vida” (González Sainz 108). The impact of Felipe’s discovery is nearly unbearable for him; the very idea makes him feel “como si algo, alguna alimaña por ejemplo, se hubiera lanzado en picado sobre él y le hubiera despojado de sus partes más blandas, del corazón y los pulmones y también de la lengua y los ojos” (108). Compared to the brutal attack Felipe endured as a result of his participations in the protests, his actual suffering here is far greater and mirrors feelings of true death. After letting himself imagine exactly how Juanjo might have committed the crimes, Felipe describes Juanjo as “esa alimaña petulante y asqueada que es mi hijo” (116). This is a significant turning point in the image that Felipe holds of Juanjo; while readers are aware that the news of Juanjo’s arrest is personally devastating to Felipe, they also see for the first time that Felipe is clearly able to view his son as a monster instead of avoiding the thought.

As punishment for his (suspected) crimes, Juanjo is imprisoned. Felipe makes the trip to visit his son and, though he imagines many things that he would like to say, he is rendered speechless when Juanjo is brought in. Recognizing his father’s silence as weakness, Juanjo lays into him yet again, shouting “Eres tan cobarde y tan poca cosa...que no te atreves ni a hablar” (González Sainz 129). The situation only worsens as Felipe gets up to leave without having said a single word to his son. In this moment, Juanjo, enraged, continues to yell at his father and begins to beat on the glass separating them. The last mention of Juanjo in the novel comes as the guards quickly move in to subdue and remove him. Felipe says that “Se lo llevaron a rastras hacia la puerta metálica del centro de la sala sin que él dejara de gritar a voz en cuello cipayos de mierda y puto padre de mierda, vete de una vez a la mierda de la que no tenías que haber salido nunca y donde ojalá te pudras más de los que siempre has estado en tu puta vida de mierda” (133). Between his pounding on the glass and yelling obscenities, Juanjo appears much closer to a rabid animal than a person with any shred of humanity left. It is this complete dehumanization of Juanjo that finally solidifies his classification as freak, according to Martín de Marcos’s definition of “un otro no reconocido”; Felipe is unable to reconcile the image he holds of his son, later reinforced through his examination of photos of Juanjo from his childhood, with the monster before him.

Though these murders “kill” the affective father-son relationship between Felipe and Juanjo, the specificity of Juanjo’s targets also permits an extrapolation of that devastation to the national level. Juanjo is accused of murdering a university Law professor, a journalist (who happened to be an anti-Franco activist), and a young guardia civil officer. These professions were all among the frequent targets of ETA<sup>8</sup> and the way that Felipe imagines, in full detail, the circumstances surround their murder serves as a

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<sup>8</sup> *El Correo*, a Basque newspaper headquartered in Bilbao created a special feature to highlight information about each of ETA’s victims through the year 2010, listing their professions and a few personal details, as well as including photos (where possible) of each victim and the news story that originally reported their death (“El legado de ETA”).

reminder of the collective pain experienced each time such a case was reported. Referring back to Lakoff's nation-as-family metaphor, wherein the adult citizens of a country are "children" of the national leader "father", these deaths go beyond the simple act of murder. Instead, as Juanjo kills "siblings" of his national family, he elevates the heinous charge of murder to fratricide. In this way, too, González Sainz brings an air of familiarity to the otherwise anonymous victims; their particular names do not matter as much as the fact that they were fellow members of the national family.

The murders Juanjo purportedly commits are the culmination of a consistently developing familial and societal tension in *Ojos que no ven*. Within the work, ETA creates their own suffocating, inhospitable environment for anyone not in full support of their activities and mission as an ironic response to the same type of persecution of the Basque people by the Spanish State. This is conveyed largely via descriptions of the family life within Felipe's home, which becomes untenable as Juanjo's participation in ETA escalates, and is reflected at the societal level by the changes in Felipe's neighborhood bar. On an individual level, Juanjo decries the oppression of the Basque people at the hands of "fascist" Spain and yet commits the ultimate act of oppression as he murders multiple people—only one of whom, it must be noted, has any official relationship to the State. This, as David Mikics describes, is part of the "filial inheritance" present in Lacan's reading of the oedipal narrative (60). Mikics writes that "Lacan's description of how the son inevitably repeats the errors of the father in the course of taking his place is an appropriate restatement of Freud's favorite tragic myth, the Oedipus story", which reflects "the at times cruelly farcical way in which sons mirror their fathers as they try to circumvent, rival, or overthrow them" (60-1). One of the primary goals of ETA was to secure an independent future for the Basque Country and, in that way, take the place of the national "father" that controlled the region. Just as Lacan implies, however, the nationalist "son" becomes the very thing it despises—in this case by employing the same persecution they accuse the Spanish State of originally having committed against their community.

The conclusion of Juanjo's character arc plays with the elements of blindness and punishment in the classic oedipal story. Oedipus blinds himself as a reaction to the devastating news that he has, in fact, fulfilled the prophecy foretold by the oracle, and, though Juanjo does experience both blindness and punishment, they stem from very different sources. In this case, Juanjo's blindness is a metaphorical condition, in that he is blinded by a visceral rage that seems to spill out of him in the violent discourse towards his father. The target of his animosity is significant, too; it becomes obvious that Juanjo has not been able to overcome the hatred of his father and so any punishment he receives is linked, at least in part, to this failure. Additionally, his blindness stems not from any personal sense of regret—indeed, there is no any indication that Juanjo feels any sort of remorse or disgust at the crimes he has committed—but instead from a refusal to "see" or accept what he has done and who he has become. Instead of blindness as a self-inflicted

punishment, then, the punishment must come from an external source: the judicial system.

Beyond a simple condemnation of ETA's violence, the title of *Ojos que no ven* stands as a criticism of ETA's blindness to the hypocrisy of their methods. An organization denouncing the brutal repression of the Spanish State descends into animalistic barbarity, according to the description of Juanjo's unraveling, and is unable to see the ways in which they, in pursuit of their own goals, end up inflicting the same pain on many people within their own "family". Incapable of separating himself from the Mother(land) and overcoming Freud's original "hatred and violent wishes against [the] father", Juanjo succumbs to his fate: a severance from the national family via his prison sentence and a closure of the oedipal cycle through his removal from society. Written nearly a decade before the official dissolution of the organization, the novel appears to imply that this same result might play out at the national level and that ETA itself might suffer a similar fate if they are unable to escape this cycle.

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