

**The Turning Wheel of Hostility: The E.T.A. in Literature and Film  
in Spain since the 1970s**

By

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To Mom, Dad, Amy, and Eric.  
What a lovely bunch of weirdos!

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## Abstract

### **The Turning Wheel of Hostility: The E.T.A. in Literature and Film in Spain since the 1970s**

By

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Chair: Cristina Moreiras-Menor

Through an analysis of the terrorist subject, focused on the Basque separatist organization known as the E.T.A (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, 1959-2011), this dissertation demonstrates that a paradigm of war continues to structure Spanish politics. Scholars in Spanish cultural studies often avoid the contentious core of separatist violence, focusing instead on questions of identity, on the victims, or on the E.T.A's value as a historical reference. Faced with these positions, it is more important than ever to redirect critical attention to the intertwined realities of Spain's democratic present and its conflictive past.

This study begins by considering the goals of the E.T.A and the paradigm of war that shapes the group, based on Carl Schmitt's understanding of politics as enmity. In this light, the E.T.A.'s assassination in 1973 of Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco, as retold in Eva Forest's *Operación Ogro* (1974), is analyzed as an act of war rather than a symbol for political transformation. This is developed through Rancière's critique of

consensus in *Dis-agreement* and Derrida's work on hospitality. Then, the film *La fuga de Segovia* (Imanol Uribe, 1981) is read as emphasizing a practice of freedom, presented in Jean-Luc Nancy's terms, with unique implications for the functioning of democracy. Next, the split nature of subjectivity is examined in Ramón Saizarbitoria's novel *Hamaika pauso/Los pasos incontables* (1995). With the help of Derrida's discussion of a passive decision in *The Politics of Friendship*, it is argued that true decision is conditioned by the unconscious and, thus, cannot guarantee a specific political outcome. Finally, in a discussion of the consequences of symbolic and structural violence via Žižek and Derrida, it is shown that Spain's fixation on the victim's of terrorism results in the nullification of the political subject, risking the suppression of historical memory. This emptying of the political subject is problematized through a reading of Jaime Rosales's film, *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008), which proposes that reflections on memory and the victim must relate differently to death since it is human finitude (rather than the duration of memory) that makes a thinking of the past significant.

## Introduction

Such a perfect democracy constructs its own inconceivable foe, terrorism. Its wish is *to be judged by its enemies rather than by its results*. The story of terrorism is written by the state and it is therefore highly instructive. The spectators must certainly never know everything about terrorism, but they must always know enough to convince them that, compared with terrorism, everything else must be acceptable, or in any case more rational and democratic.

- Guy Debord in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* 24

Since the Basque separatist organization ETA made public its decision to definitively abandon armed activity in October 2011, fear of the group has faded while the public's desire to leave behind the pain surrounding ETA has grown.<sup>1</sup> Following trends that date back to the "Pacts of Silence" of the Spanish Transition (1975-1982), decades of violence from both ETA and the Spanish State have produced a climate that favors amnesia over the incommensurable task of mourning. At the time of the

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<sup>1</sup> ETA is pronounced "eh-tah" (/eta/ in IPA transcription), as it would be said in Spanish or in Basque. In Peninsular Spanish, ETA is frequently referred to using the definite article "la," as "la ETA," but can also be referred to without the article (this may be more common in the Basque country). The name is an acronym formed by the words *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* in Basque, wherein "Euskadi" = Basque Homeland, "Ta" = and, and "Askatasuna" = Freedom.

Transition, a practice of forgetting was viewed as the means of "moving on," of keeping old wounds from reopening, and of directing energy towards other tasks in the political sphere. However, as the debates on historical memory in Spain over the last 10-15 years have shown us, consensus arrived at through an agreed upon forgetting leaves wounds to fester rather than heal. Spanish cultural studies has often followed this trend, avoiding the contentious core of separatist violence and focusing instead on ETA's significance as a historical figure or on the consequences of the group's actions. Faced with these positions, it is more important than ever to redirect critical attention to the intertwined realities of Spain's democratic present and its conflictive past, lest they slip into the shadows. Because of the way in which ETA serves as a locus for examining the conflicting political ideals and modes of action that traverse the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Franco years (1939-1975), and the Spanish Transition (1975-1982), and up to the present, a study of the group remains fundamental to the political and cultural project of Spanish democracy.

The traumatic moment elicits a string of questions: What happened? Why? Who did it? (Was it me?) What now? What do we do? Where do we go? How do we fix it? My interest in a particular *what/why* took shape while living in the Basque region of Spain starting in 2003, where attacks by ETA were part of a baffling tapestry of narratives. These were explained to me in whispers in the halls of the University of the Basque Country, in hushed voices in a friend's kitchen, in grunts and shouts at a corner bar, and in total silence many other places. Each conversation--marked in varying fashion by fear, anger, excitement, sadness, boredom, indifference--seemed to begin with hesitation and cautious sideways glances and conclude with a surprising degree of

certainty, regarding the *who*, the *where to*, the *what now*. The *who* involved terrorists, police, *gudaris*, torturers, prisoners, hostages, *impuestos revolucionarios*, extortion, *España, Euskal Herria*.<sup>2</sup> The *what now* or the *where to*, in addition to the inevitable exchange of implied violence, included legal and political changes: freedom from occupation, freedom from extortion, cultural freedom, freedom to mourn, political autonomy, political unity, etc.

The slippery nature of these terms makes their treatment in scholarship challenging, especially considering the attitudes that push scholars to write from a position of identification, as a critic or as a supporter, as sympathetic to nationalism or as critical of it (Lecours xi). Each issue, each actor, is imagined to represent a transcendental singularity while they in fact perform like spokes on a bicycle wheel. Together, in concert with the opposing spokes under similar tension, the wheel stays true and continues to turn. This predictable functionality is perhaps what Hannah Arendt refers to, while reflecting on the limited number of studies dedicated entirely to the study of violence, when she writes: "No one questions or examines what is obvious to all" (8). It is as if ETA and the state are professional fighters, doing the job they were trained to do, using force to injure, to immobilize, to win, perhaps even to entertain. Understood in this

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<sup>2</sup> All the terms in this sentence can be loosely associated with a potential opposite: the word *gudari* means soldier in Basque, and could be paired with terrorist. The *impuesto revolucionario*, which is of course synonymous with extortion, provided ETA with a means of financing its operations. The police represent protectors for some while, for others, they are assassins and torturers.

fashion, the slogan "Either you are with us or you are against us," may be nothing more than an invitation to dance.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty of choosing one's position regarding "the Basque question" (one of the euphemisms used to refer to the spectrum of issues tied to ETA violence) is due in part to the confluence of contradicting histories and ideologies that inform ETA. The organization's claims to legitimacy are based on the assertion that the Basque region has a historical right to autonomy, evidenced by its unique language, its resistance to invasion

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<sup>3</sup> It takes little thought to see how quickly one group's freedom fighter becomes another group's terrorist. The phrase "Either you are with us or you are against us" obviously references the discourse of prominent U.S. politicians after the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. This attack--and its consequences globally, following the U.S. led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan--casts a shadow on this project and on the issue of political violence. This shadow was made dramatically apparent in Spain with the train bombings in Madrid in 2004, signaling a transition from a focus on Spain's "internal enemy" found in ETA, towards a somewhat familiar "external" enemy, represented by militarized Islamists. Despite forensic evidence (a characteristic bomb signature) indicating that the attack was the work of an Islamist group punishing Spain for its participation in the Iraq war, the action was immediately attributed to ETA by the then Prime Minister, José María Aznar, from Spain's conservative Partido Popular (PP). This accusation fit with Aznar's strong anti-ETA stance, and if true, would increase his party's chances for success in the upcoming elections, with Mariano Rajoy as its candidate for Prime Minister. Aznar and Rajoy maintained this position, despite the evidence that continued to indicate otherwise, and as a result, José Luis Zapatero of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) won the election. The attack preceding the 2004 elections foreshadows a possible change in the direction of enmity for Spain, especially considering ETA's decision in September of 2010 to declare a ceasefire, which became "permanent" and "verifiable" in a declaration made in January 2011. Of course, this shift in enmity, defined according to a Muslim Other, has deep roots in the history of the Iberian Peninsula. If the current framework for envisioning threats to the State (as it concerns Spain) focuses on a militarized, internationally feared Islamism, other previous versions of this enmity might take into consideration Spain's colonial occupation of North Africa in the early 20th century, centuries of Catholic control of Spain and the accompanying repression of the Inquisition (1478-1834), and additional centuries of conflict in Islamic Iberia (711-1492) before the consolidation of Catholic rule. It seems that the "future" of Spanish enmity towards/with the so-called Islamic State of the present, cannot ignore this history. And even as the political violence perpetrated by ETA becomes a thing of the past, it is almost certain that familiar relationships will be reproduced with Spain's new (old) enemies.

since Roman times, and the legal agreements with neighboring monarchies called *fueros* (in effect until the 19th century), which mark the special privileges of Basque political subjects. The continued use of the Basque language up until the present shows (at least anecdotally) that the Basque people have managed to avoid cultural assimilation and conquest for centuries. Stanley Payne questions the view professed by 19th century historians (using Ramón Ortiz de Zárate as an example) that the Basque region remained totally independent of the Roman Empire, but notes that the "region was never directly occupied by Roman arms" (10). Payne adds that, similarly, the Visigoths "never established full sovereignty over the Basque territory" and "[a]t no time did the Muslim invaders. . . make a serious effort to occupy the northern mountain districts of the peninsula" (11). For Payne and others, the Basque region defines the limits of the Muslim empire (12-13). Letamendia adds that the Basque region and other northern territories are the starting point of the so-called *Reconquista*: "La lucha contra los musulmanes surge en la Península en los pueblos que habitan las zonas montañosas a lo largo de las sierras cántabras y los Pirineos" (Vol. 1 43).<sup>4</sup> This dedication to struggle "through the seventh and eight centuries," writes Payne, "indicates that some kind of civic unity may have been established among a number of tribes" (11). This confirms at least partially the plausibility of the explanation Iulen de Madariaga (one of ETA's cofounders in the early 1950s) gives in an interview, reflecting on what he understands to be the historical unity of the Basque people and the source of their oppression:

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<sup>4</sup> In a paradoxical fashion, the Basque region's Roman/Christian history marks the starting point of the Catholic/Castilian empire that would later be considered its principal oppressor.



No hay que olvidar que desde el siglo VIII hasta el XIII vivimos todos los vascones juntos: siglo XIII, que es cuando Castilla nos empieza a desmembrar. Nos arrebató Gipuzkoa por un lado y Araba por el otro, y más tarde Bizkaia, a finales del siglo XV. Pero los vascos estuvimos cinco siglos todos juntos bajo una única batuta nacional en Iruñea (Pamplona), como capital federal de nuestro pueblo. (Medem 553)

The degree of this unity is not entirely verifiable, especially considering the lack of documentary sources from this era, as Letamendia notes (Vol. 1 44). Instead it reflects a presentist desire to justify ETA's goals within a modern, European nation-state framework. Lecours writes that "there is no ancestor to the Basque Country formed as an autonomous community. . . that can be found buried in the ancient history of the Iberian Peninsula" (29-30). Instead, the Basque provinces enjoyed greater or lesser autonomy in relation to the surrounding kingdoms, particularly Castile and Navarre (30-31). When the Basque region was considered part of Castile, it preserved its local customs, written into charters called *fueros*, which were "grounded in provincial assemblies (*juntas generales*) and involved a right not to implement and enforce royal decisions (*pase foral*)" (33). As Lecours reports, "Each new monarch throughout the 16th century swore to abide by these agreements," making them an important symbol for the historical sovereignty of the Basque regions, even if that sovereignty never existed in the form of a modern nation-state (33).

While the *fueros* do not prove a right to historical autonomy, they do indicate a kind of historical exceptionalism. The reasons for this exceptionalism are not totally clear, and may not favor the anti-imperial narrative told by 20th century radical Basque nationalists. Castile's foral involvement in the Basque region is partly explained by the kingdom's efforts to administer "bloody, extended aristocratic clan feuds" or *guerras de banderías* from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries in the Basque Regions (Payne 19).

Lecours writes that the *fueros* were a reward from the Catholic Spain to the Basque region for fighting against the Muslims, effectively making these agreements part of the structure of Catholic empire (31). Similarly, "through the *fueros* the Basque provinces committed to [Spain's] defense [against France], in exchange for an exemption from military conscription" (33). In addition to the strategic military character of the *fueros*, Payne suggests that the Basque region's privileged status depended on its economic importance, since it controlled key seaports for the transport and sale of Castilian wool (20).

Through readings of the sources closest to ETA, the tenuousness regarding the group's claims becomes more pronounced. ETA refers to its struggle as a *national* struggle, oriented towards a Basque nation, but it rejects the centralization that any concept of nation presupposes. ETA opposes the modern European "federalismo de entes monstruosos," referring to Spain, France, Germany, etc., favoring instead a "federación de etnias" (Garmendia Vol. I 51-52).<sup>5</sup> This federation is idealized as a composition of minority groups that would resist consolidation (and thus control over one another) through a practice of absolute equality (Garmendia Vol. I 53).

This idealization takes on an exaggerated character in ETA's own publications:

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<sup>5</sup> Krutwig emphasizes language as the defining characteristic of ethnicity, moving away from 19th century conceptions of Basqueness centered on race (in the nationalism promoted by Sabino Arana, for example). (Garmendia Vol. I 23). ETA's propagandistic publications follow a similar line, claiming to be "en las antípodas del racismo. Todo hombre, sea de la raza que sea, tiene derecho a vivir dignamente en cualquier parte del mundo" (Garmendia Vol. I 74). However, these claims (which are published by ETA in response to criticisms of the group's use of terms like "coreano" and "maqueto" to refer to people immigrating to the Basque region) do little to exonerate ETA (and Basque nationalism) of discriminatory, racist tendencies.

La organización política administrativa vasca se ha caracterizado siempre por una gran descentralización. No ha habido jamás un estado unitario y la descentralización alcanza no solamente a la organización estatal, sino que desciende hacia organismos inferiores, hacia los municipios y el caserío y al mismo tiempo no tiene dificultad en ascender para formar Uniones Federales y Personales con otros Estados vecinos. (24)

ETA adds that "Entre los vascos, la democracia no ha sido ni un hallazgo ni una conquista sangrienta; ha sido una práctica de siglos. Jamás ha existido un monarca absoluto, y los representantes del pueblo, han conservado, en todo momento, la plenitud de la soberanía" (24). The description of this decentralization gets more detailed, specifying its representational character and the "consuetudinary" nature of Basque law, or the *fueros* referred to previously, which were only "necessary" after foreigners presented themselves in Basque lands (25).<sup>6</sup> In these passages ETA has begun to mythologize its past as a means of justifying the decisions it must make in the present.

More details about Basque government are developed in *Vasconia* (Federico Krutwig, 1962) through the description of a system organized according to *biltzarres*. Krutwig explains that *biltzar* in Euskera means something similar to the Russian word "soviet," wherein "[l]os biltzarres locales ejercían la soberanía y enviaban delegados al Biltzar superior de la república, aunque no cedían a éste la soberanía" (226). Krutwig claims to be describing a historical system that is pre-feudal but also post-revolutionary: "La organización de los Estados vascos en este sentido era un modelo de organización comunista, mucho más avanzada que la dictadura del proletariado, que es meramente una

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<sup>6</sup> For a more thorough treatment of the development of Basque nationalism as it relates to ETA, specifically linking the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), the Carlist Wars, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and the Spanish Transition to Democracy (1973-1982), see volume one of Francisco Letamendia's *Historia del nacionalismo vasco y de E.T.A.* (1994), particularly Chapters III, V, VI, and VII.

situación 'obligada' pero no 'deseada,' para llegar al comunismo, que consistiría en la abolición del Estado" (226). For Krutwig, and for ETA, the Basque past exists as a magical, anti-federal collectivity that preserves national sovereignty. However, the opening of *Vasconia* provides a version of Basque history that relies less on this utopian myth: "rara vez vemos a los vascones unirse para alcanzar algo, sino, tan sólo, para defenderse contra algo" (15). Krutwig seems to be admitting from the beginning that his vision of political organization in the Basque region is more imaginary than real and more seated in desire than in historical reality. Nonetheless, rather than present an objective capable of matching the singular character of *la organización de los Estados vascos*, Krutwig offers a dull prescription for the direction nationalism must take: "El nacionalismo que quiera ser algo efectivo tiene que representar una tarea, ser un ideal con futuro, en torno al que se agrupen mental y materialmente hombres que se crean unidos, por uno u otro factor, a tal tarea nacional" (16).

This combination of ideologies and historical moments, cemented together as the foundation lending legitimacy to ETA's actions, perhaps explains Begoña Aretxaga's assertion that "a kind of madness can be seen in the violence of Basque radical nationalists" (174). This insanity is found in the relationship between the history invoked by ETA, the group's purported goals, and the means it uses to achieve those goals. Aretxaga continues to develop this notion of madness:

But this madness is not defined by their belief that they embody the national people, or that the moment is ripe to achieve national independence now. That is the fantasy that hides a reality unspeakable and rather shameful, organized around the knowledge that an actual nation-state would necessarily entail the loss of an idealized unified nation as a utopic object of desire. The possibility of such loss engenders a deep ambivalence toward the actual possibility of a nation-state.

It is as if ETA's commitment to armed struggle was an admission that the utopian core of its project has always been non-existent. This is not however a limitation of "Basque" nationalism, but rather a flaw in the "the hegemonic form of the modern polity," the nation-state itself. In Aretxaga's words:

Thus while radical nationalists strive madly indeed to obtain their object of desire--a Basque nation-state--they do everything possible to ensure that it will not happen. Yet I would like to suggest that this political madness unfolding in the Basque Country might be an expression of something intrinsically mad, or maddening, in the nation-state form itself. I'd like to suggest that something is profoundly at odds in this hegemonic form of the modern polity that engenders a constant tension between the logic of nationhood as a utopian fraternal community sustained by imaginary acts of identification and the practice of statehood as a force of law sustained by multiple relations of power. (175)

ETA's ideals of radical democracy are pushed toward a form that is not remotely radical, and they effectively "lose their minds" over it. Their goals are adapted to a method--drawn largely from the most conservative parts of Krutwig's *Vasconia*--and their political project, in effect, arrives at its current state of non-existence.

Jon Juaristi reports that according to Krutwig, *Vasconia* (which would shape ETA's anti-colonial position and its commitment to *la guerra revolucionaria*) reaches ETA not through the hands of other militants but from the mouth of Fraga, who read *Vasconia* and published on it in *El Español*: "En dicha revista. . . se publicó un artículo en el que se hablaba de la organización ETA como de un movimiento terrorista-separatista, citándose con profusión a *Vasconia*, como soporte ideológico de la organización" (286). According to Krutwig, ETA's founders (*Txillardegi* in particular) had no interest in *Vasconia*, but Fraga's article painted a picture of ETA that was appealing to a broad number of *abertzales* and "ETA fue asumiendo esa influencia poco a

poco" (286). Effectively, Fraga performed a textbook case of interpellation on ETA members, identifying them as terrorists, to which they responded and exceeded all expectations.<sup>7</sup> In this way, ETA is the product of its own (idealized) vision of history, but it cannot avoid the subject defining function of the Spanish State.

The focus up to this point on historical texts has been aimed at characterizing the "Iberian" nature of the history that defines ETA while pushing away from the insistence on establishing legitimacy or illegitimacy regarding the organization. In addition to looking at historical sources, this dissertation will look at a variety of texts side by side, including works of literature, film, anthropology, political theory, and philosophy, rather than prioritize one discipline over another. One of the premises herein is that every text, insofar as it contributes to the spheres of discourse that define lived reality, has validity regardless of the risks they present in showing loyalty to one discipline or one particular group. Some of the texts included in this project come from ETA itself, published in its massive *Documentos* (1980). Others, such as the historical studies by Francisco Letamendia (1994) and Jose M. Garmendia (1979), show themselves to be sympathetic to the causes of Basque nationalism, but not in ways that minimize the importance of their contributions for understanding the reality of the conflict surrounding ETA. Eva Forest's retelling of the assassination of Carrero Blanco in *Operación Ogro* (1974) is a fascinating historical document, but it is clear that it also reads like propaganda at times. Throughout the dissertation, I try to characterize texts (and their treatment by critics) not in terms of

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<sup>7</sup> Krutwig's *Vasconia* and Schmitt's *Theory of the Partisan*, both produced in the early 60s, represent an interesting coincidence that deserves more exploration. In this example of subject formation and transmission of ideology (from Fraga to ETA) it is worth noting that Fraga, as a student of Carl Schmitt's, represents the identical but opposing side of the ETA's coin.

their political affiliations but in terms of the concepts and ideologies they reproduce. While the project does deal with a fair number of texts that "cater to" Basque nationalism, especially in Chapter 1, it does so to establish the parameters of the debate and, in the long run, criticize their participation in narratives of legitimacy. The texts that I dedicate greater attention to, such as *La fuga de Segovia* (1981) by Imanol Uribe, *Los pasos incontables* (1995) by Ramón Saizarbitoria, or *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008) by Jaime Rosales, all share an ideological complexity that permits them to cut across the lines of hegemonic narratives. I therefore aim to consider the goals of the terrorists, and those that oppose them, from both sides and from the middle, in order to consider more fully the contributions of each to thinking about political life.

The *who* that this project is interested in is the *who* of a political subject whose certainty has been put into question. Or, more appropriately, a political subject who necessarily was always split, fractured, uncertain, and only now is the split visible given the circumstances the subject has been forced into. I would like to think that the political subject is both the militant activist that we observe through history and narrative *as well as* the subject engaged here in reading, writing, speaking, and contributing to the same spheres of discourse that link thought to action and action to change.

Perhaps more than any other political group in the 20th century, ETA provided a figure for thinking violent conflict in Spain from the end of the Civil War in 1939 up to the present. Although ETA did not exist as an entity until the late 1950s, it came into existence principally as a means of fighting the military dictatorship of Francisco Franco, compelled by what it saw as the failures of the conservative Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco or PNV) to organize and provide its own response to

Francoism. The group that would become ETA began meeting in 1952, the same year the last *guerrilleros* coordinated by the Partido Comunista de España (PCE) abandoned their posts in the fight against Franco. They thus became a political group in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, and World War II (where many of the Spanish and Basque *maquis* participated in the French Resistance), and represented one of the major forces against the Franco regime prior to the Spanish Transition to Democracy. The group's violent activity during the Transition and afterwards, even decades after Franco's death, made it one of the longest-lived symbols of violent resistance against the state in Spain. It is the duration of this struggle that makes ETA the focus of this investigation, since it points to a relationship that is cyclical, circular, and ongoing in a fashion that binds the past to the present.

It is from this starting point that my project uses film and literature produced in Spain since the 1970s to examine the origins and impulses of the terrorist in relation to the goals of a democratic present. It shows the way in which a closed circuit of hostility and its iterations through language limit the efforts of democracy and the work of mourning and remembrance tied to political violence. In three parts, I examine the context that gives rise to ETA, then I consider the issue of decision linking the political subject to the moment of violence, followed by an analysis of historical memory and the figure of the victim in the aftermath of the traumatic instant.

Chapter One argues that ETA's prescription of armed struggle, outlined in pamphlets from the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the hostility of Francoism, is insufficient to the goals of greater freedom and hospitality. Along these lines, I read the organization's otherwise celebrated assassination in 1973 of Spanish Prime Minister Luis



Carrero Blanco, retold in *Operación Ogro* (1974) by Eva Forest and in the related film *Operación Ogro* (1979) by Gillo Pontecorvo, as an act of war consistent with the logic of enmity. In contrast to this model, I show how Imanol Uribe's retelling of a jailbreak in 1976 from the Cárcel de Segovia, in the film *La fuga de Segovia* (1981), provides an alternative in which prisoners make their equality visible through a practice of freedom that defies containment. However, this understanding of freedom does little to "solve" the issue of real or figurative imprisonment, requiring instead continued persistence, investigation, and questioning as a means of evading, subverting, and/or transforming a political order centered around domination.

Chapter Two establishes the way in which the fractured nature of subjectivity, linked to political militancy and literary form in Ramón Saizarbitoria's novel *Hamaika pauso* (1995)/*Los pasos incontables* (1998), complicates the relationship between decision and outcome. Through a critique of certainty, by way of Lacan's understanding of the split subject and Derrida's discussion of a "passive" decision, I argue that the choices made by the ETA militant (and to a different degree, the cultural critic) are conditioned by life and death impulses at the level of the unconscious. In this fashion, the chapter proposes that an attempt to define politics before the fact, through a decision conditioned by the limits of consciousness, will fall short of its revolutionary aims. Chapter Two thus points back to the issues of freedom and political transformation from Chapter One while pivoting forward, like a door hinge, to set the stage for a different analysis of the consequences of political violence in the Chapter Three.

Chapter Three puts the issue of historical memory in dialogue with the debates surrounding the victims of terrorism, given the way in which they are born out of a

shared history of conflict. The chapter argues that Spain's one-dimensional cult of the victims of terrorism, exemplified in works like Iñaki Arteta's 2005 documentary *Trece entre mil*, produces a mode of discourse that mirrors prescriptions for censorship by the Spanish State. This trend is related to other efforts to suppress the remembrance of a violent dictatorship and the multiple layers of related pain and conflict--layers that are seen, for example, in Julio Medem's documentary *La pelota vasca* (2003). I argue that by avoiding these layers and prioritizing the victims of terrorism, the victim alone takes the place of the political subject, resulting in a neutral entity incapable of influencing politics. This fusing of the political subject with the empty subjectivity of the victim, is addressed and problematized through a reading of Jaime Rosales's third film, *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008). The film sets a trap for the viewers, putting us in an uncomfortable middle space, suggesting that we participate in the logic of terrorism even while trying to save the victim. Rather than guard against death, which is impossible, I propose that reflections on memory and the victim must keep death, and finitude, close, since it is the limitations on life (and not its permanence) that make a thinking of the past significant.

## Chapter 1

### Hostility, Hospitality, Freedom: ETA in the 1970s, the Nature of Politics, and *La fuga de Segovia* (1981) de Imanol Uribe

De haber sido recta la línea fronteriza, este problema no hubiera existido, porque hubiese sido una simple cuestión de cruzar la línea.

-Ángel Amigo, *Operación Poncho* 197

#### Chapter Introduction

In the 1970s ETA is a principal actor in events that point us to an examination of the relationships between hostility, hospitality, and freedom. These events include the assassination in 1973 of Franco's political successor, Luis Carrero Blanco, and the jailbreak from Spain's Cárcel de Segovia in 1976. The historical and fictional retelling of these moments in film and writing allow for an examination of the nature of politics, especially with regard to ETA's commitment to a Schmittian paradigm of hostility. With Carrero Blanco, initially the aim was to kidnap him in exchange for political prisoners. However, after he was named Prime Minister and the likely successor of Franco in June of 1973, the objective became assassination in order to cripple the regime, given the understanding that Carrero Blanco was key to maintaining Francoism after Franco's death. Not unpredictably, the purpose of the jailbreak from the Cárcel de Segovia in 1976

was to put more trained, dedicated ETA members on the street in the service of their struggle. The two events, linked textually through the issue of prisons and their significance to ETA's overall goal of Basque autonomy, make the concepts of hospitality, in a Derridean sense, and freedom, by way of Jean-Luc Nancy, highly pertinent. Despite the strategy-related differences of a failed jailbreak compared to the assassination of a high ranking government official, this pairing allows for an analysis of ETA's political goals alongside its use of violence, and does so without resorting to valorizations of historical legitimacy or illegitimacy according to who is in power.

While ETA's early use of violence is easily enough forgiven in a historical sense, as is the case with the assassinations of known torturer Melitón Manzanás in 1968, or Carrero Blanco in 1973, ETA's more recent activity, such as the kidnapping and killing in 1997 of Miguel Ángel Blanco (a politician from the Partido Popular on the Ermua City Council) has been unanimously condemned. But rather than keep the peace about this division between "historic" (semi-legitimate) ETA and illegal, terroristic ETA, the ease of maintaining this distinction amounts to an uncritical silence that hides the space left open by true disagreement.<sup>8</sup> In the gaps between hospitality, hostility, and the ongoing (the

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<sup>8</sup> Here I am referring to the sense Jacques Rancière gives this term in the book whose title, *La mésentente: Politique et philosophie* (1995), is translated into English as *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1999). Rancière uses the idea of dis-agreement to provide a notion of politics that contrasts with the jockeying of those in power, maintaining and reproducing a set of economic and social conditions regardless of their political affiliation in a kind of consensus or collusion. He describes this mode of politics as a "set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution" (28). Rancière proposes the term "police" rather than politics, for referring to this system "of distribution and legitimization" (28). In contrast to the policing that maintains the status quo, he describes the "misunderstanding" of disagreement as a break "with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack

exhausting but endless) search for freedom, this chapter focuses on the 1976 escape from the Cárcel de Segovia, reading it as a form of protest that continues to make demands on Spain's democratic present, where silence, amnesia, and exclusion, continue to be the preferred flavors at the table of Spanish politics.

Even though the right to a voice in Spanish politics has been regulated and legislated in order to exclude attacks on Spanish democracy post-Franco, a strategy described in appropriately critical terms by Teresa Vilarós as "la táctica del consenso, de la reforma y del olvido" (11), the texts chosen for this chapter challenge the idea that an inassimilable or disruptive past must be avoided. Instead, I make use of the disruptive nature of these works to investigate their implications for both the recent past as well as the present. These texts include Eva Forest's interview with the ETA commando that killed Carrero Blanco, *Operación Ogro: Cómo y por qué ejecutamos a Carrero Blanco*

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of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration--that of the part of those who have no part" (29-30). (I explore this quote at greater length in Section 3 of this chapter). Earlier in *Dis-agreement*, Rancière describes this break as "the introduction of an incommensurable at the heart of the distribution of speaking bodies" (19). Politics as dis-agreement, then, takes place when the realities of structural violence (exploitation, inequality, harm) are not only made visible but positioned in such a way that they cannot be avoided. These moments are of course fleeting and uncommon, as Rancière notes: "Politics, in its specificity, is rare. It is always local and occasional. Its actual eclipse is perfectly real and no political science exists that could map its future any more than a political ethics that would make its existence the object solely of will" (139). Politics is, therefore, also not something that can be prescribed (an issue that is discussed in Chapter 2, in terms of decision). This chapter in particular does not attempt to "represent" political disagreement, but it hazards a contribution by insisting on certain aspects of ETA's past. This grows out of the fact that, in Spain, consensus regarding ETA requires continuous condemnation of the group as well as the group's past, since an examination of ETA's past necessarily urges an examination of the brutality of the Franco regime. This contradiction between ETA's origins and the remembrance of the Spanish past is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

(1973, 1993), which I read as a manifesto for and justification of ETA's dedication to armed struggle. ETA's propagandistic publications from the 60s and 70s, reproduced in historical works and in the multi-volume collection dedicated to the organization's history titled *Documentos*, are key to understanding ETA's justification of *la lucha armada*. This analysis of violence as a political tool leads to my reading of the characterization of freedom in Ángel Amigo's retelling of the 1976 jailbreak in Segovia, *Operación Poncho* (1978) and Imanol Uribe's filmic adaptation of the same events in *La fuga de Segovia* (1981). Through the lenses provided by Derrida and Nancy, I read Uribe's *La fuga de Segovia* as staging an alternate figuration of the political, still highly pertinent to the present, if not frequently overlooked since the time of the film's production. While *La fuga de Segovia* is referred in chronologies of the cultural production of the Transition, rarely is it examined in greater depth.<sup>9</sup> The chapter therefore examines the apparently

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<sup>9</sup> Igor Barrenetxea Marañón has written one of the only articles dedicated entirely to the film. He concludes that in *La fuga de Segovia* Uribe "parecía estar todavía preso de los convencionalismos que le marcaron en *El proceso de Burgos* e influido por el espíritu del libro [*Operación Poncho*] en que se basaba *La fuga de Segovia*, apela a un *espíritu de resistencia* porque la lucha contra el régimen así lo justificaba. Pero ese tiempo ya había pasado" (31). He characterizes the film as confined to its historical moment and warped by its idealism, but this characterization is overly conditioned by the need to identify with (or reject) the group that ETA became. In this chapter I argue that precisely because of the failure of the Transition to deal adequately with the problem of political violence, especially in light of the way Schmittian hostility continues to form the backbone of politics in Spain, there is value to Uribe's presentation of this *espíritu de resistencia*, which travels beyond the confines of the Transition. Similarly this *espíritu* and its *reivindicación*, despite being portrayed in relation to ETA in *La fuga*, does not amount to an attempt to vindicate ETA at the present, but rather to reconsider whatever this spirit was that ETA and other radical movements lost. From a historical and journalistic perspective, Mariano González Clavero grants greater agency to the prison escape itself, and mentions Uribe's film although without making use of any aspect of its *mise en scène*. He describes his contribution as putting "nuestro grano de arena a la hora de rellenar el vacío de investigaciones históricas sobre este periodo de la historia de España, y concretamente de la provincia segoviana" (284). In this sense he is "filling in the gaps," and ignoring the way in which these stories continue to have life beyond the Transition.

revolutionary assassination of Carrero Blanco, understood in relation to a Schmittian understanding of politics and guided by the hostility that also characterizes the Franco regime. I argue that the assassination should not be celebrated or deemphasized, a "historicizing" maneuver that occurs in an effort to establish the action's contribution to the future of Spanish democracy, but instead should continue to be viewed as "an unbounded event or a defective object rather than as a bounded sign or act" (Lezra 59). Rather than attempt to link the event to a timeline or justify it historically through an explanation of causality, these pages view it as an interruptive mark that continues to provoke questions about the nature of politics. The jailbreak from Segovia allows for an analysis of the relationship between violent means and the potential justness of the ends, but does so through a different relationship to the future and to freedom. In light of these analyses, I conclude with a discussion of the influence of hostility in the field of Spanish politics at present and the role of discourse in addressing these issues.

### **Section 1. In Search of Hospitality, in Search of a Method: The Path to Militarized Resistance**

The resoluteness of ETA's commitment to armed struggle is historically conditioned not only by the reality of a militarist dictatorship but also by the failures of other attempts to resist the regime. The Basque government in exile organized an anti-

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Carlos Roldán Larreta ("Una apuesta..." gives a more nuanced version of the relationship between history, politics, and art in *La fuga* but does so only briefly as part of a discussion of a series of Basque films about ETA (190-191). Another article by Roldán Larreta similarly discusses *La fuga* in terms of its distribution and reception and also with regard to the use of Euskera in the film, describing it as one of the first major commercial pictures after Franco's death that is "un intento serio de integrar la lengua vasca dentro del discurso cinematográfico" ("Euskera y cine..." 168). A more recent article from 2004 ("Paisaje...") by the same author follows similar lines to the other two but still only reaches skin-deep with regard to the actual narrative of Uribe's *La fuga de Segovia*.

Francoist guerrilla campaign destined for the border between Spain and France as early as 1943, the "Gernikako Batalloa," but it ended up fighting in World War II in France rather than against Franco and was disbanded in 1945 (Letamendia 209, 211).

Letamendia suggests that the Basque government--largely controlled by the conservative PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco) was responsible for distributing propaganda and for acts of sabotage in Spain in 1945 and 1946 (Letamendia 210) as well as for working together with the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) and ANV (Acción Nacionalista Vasco) up until at least 1951 to coordinate the workers strikes that took place throughout the Basque country (Clark 23). However, Clark suggests that the diminished role of the Basque government in the resistance was due to the repression and mass arrests it suffered in 1951 (repression that was motivated by the surprising success of workers' movements) and not to a disinterest in continuing the fight against Franco. This partly explains why the "Ekin" group that became ETA was made up of "fresh faces," individuals with no record of subversive political activity (Garmendia Vol. 1 233), and not only because of ideological differences between the PNV and Ekin. It was also known that the Basque government had placed a great deal of hope in receiving the support of the United States and England in opposing Franco. However, this changed in 1950 when the U.S. agreed to loan Spain 62.5 million dollars after it pledged its support in the fight against communism (Letamendia 213), making it clear at that point that the U.S. would do nothing to interfere with Franco.

It is along these lines that ETA's early writings position themselves: "Al situarnos contra el franquismo, porque atenta contra las libertades individuales, lo rechazamos también porque atenta a nuestra Patria Euskadi" (Garmendia Vol. I 94). ETA specifies



the wrong that characterizes Franco's political order as principally an attack on liberty, which also happens to be an attack on their historic homeland, "nuestra Patria Euskadi." Here we see the group's opposition to Franco as a primary characteristic of its struggle, defined by a concern for individual freedoms, that are still not subordinate to the issue of a free Basque nation. At the time the *Zutik* publications that Garmendia is quoting from are written (in the early 60s), it is less clear how ETA plans to enact this struggle, "presienten que hay que hacer algo, pero no saben qué, tampoco saben cómo" (*Zutik* 49-50 qtd in Garmendia Vol. 1 231). They receive no support from the PNV and begin meeting as a response to what they describe as the "casi nula actividad" of groups like the PNV, which according to ETA "después de 1950 no podía ser calificada ni sería ni honradamente de RESISTENCIA" (231). ETA is therefore a product of the social, cultural and historical circumstances that surround it, forces that it studies and tries to listen to as a way of creating an enunciation capable of identifying and revealing the "harm," to use Rancière's term, or the series of inequalities at the heart of the political order.<sup>10</sup> It is an organization attempting to read its historical moment and respond to it, while at the same time imagining a future. Guided by the study and subsequent

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<sup>10</sup> Rancière describes this harm as "the dividing of society into parts that are not 'true' parts; the setting-up of one part as equal to the whole in the name of a 'property' that is not its own, and of a 'common' that is the community of a dispute" (18). He also calls this a "wrong count of the parts of the whole" (10). This miscount that excludes the poor specifically (but not only the poor) is the "constitutive wrong or torsion of politics as such" (14), referenced in an earlier note. Rancière describes a miscount because if the harm or inequality were properly counted and accounted for, the accumulated negatives would contradict and unbalance the illusion of equality maintained in the guise of a national or economic project. In ways that will continue to be developed in this chapter, ETA, at least in the beginning, is working at making a series of cultural and economic "miscounts" or divisions visible.

idealization of the Basque past, ETA dreams of a future shaped by the democratic imaginary of early Basque society:

...veremos que el pueblo vasco siempre ha admitido el derecho de la crítica, reunión y libre opinion, el derecho de habitar sin temor la tierra, la tierra de sus mayores, el trasladarse libremente de un lugar a otro de la tierra, el derecho de la elección de los magistrados propios...el derecho a castigar el abuso de poder o su mantenimiento violento, el derecho al trabajo y al disfrute de lo adquirido mediante él...el derecho a una mayor justicia distributiva de los bienes de la tierra. ("Fueros-Leyes" 11 in Garmendia 29)

The document goes on to summarize that, "el mérito de las leyes vascas no estriba en el valor grande o pequeño, que tengan en la actualidad. Su valor inmenso consiste en que representan el espíritu de un pueblo que supo vivir democráticamente, en el verdadero sentido de esta palabra" (29). This is the organization's attempt to envision a Basque self, a Basque political subject capable of embracing a democratic project thanks to a reimagining of the Basque past. It envisions a revolutionary scenario that, despite its improbability, might be delivered, or arrived at, after having employed the proper tactics and followed the proper course, the proper method. This understanding of radical democracy presented as something inherent, part of a "modo de ser vasco," puts into question the need for a State or system of law that is anything but radically democratic. And although this Basque "way of being" is not a given, and in part is at odds with that other reading of the self shaped by the negatives of Spanish (and French) occupation, the Francoist state, etc., it *might* come about through the process of a culturally oriented praxis: through a dedication to the study of politics, of language (Euskera), of Basque histories and counter-histories. This is an early version of the potential modus operandi for ETA, partly based on Sabino Arana's problematic dictum that "la lengua es la patria de los vascos," which we can read not as that which makes identification possible but that

which allows for a "way of being Basque." It is also perhaps an open door to the Basque cultural and political unconscious, a hospitality to the hoped-for (but nonetheless unknown) reality of the past.

In this scenario, the path is not marked by certainty but by potentiality. The past seems capable of teaching the Basque political subject about radical democracy, capable of delivering democracy, of blasting away at the present with Benjamin's "chips of messianic time" (263). But the ability to arrive at a "modo de ser vasco," speaking Basque, thinking in Basque, dreaming in Basque (if that is the place one hopes to arrive at) depends, for a group like ETA, on the question of power, since it determines where and when language may be spoken, published, or taught, especially under Franco. A reading of the Basque self along these lines, a subject that identifies itself both as the object that has been reshaped (or misshapen, diminished, lessened) by Spanish power, and as the inheritor of a radical egalitarianism, lays the ground for political being: for rebellion against what "I should not be" (whatever is not Basque, not egalitarian, not democratic) and for a return to the practice of those characteristics being denied.

In addition to being defined by historical and cultural knowledge of what is Basque, this struggle is also strongly linked to space, to the drawing of borders, the occupation of territories, to the idea of a home and a homeland. In this sense it is not simply an issue of freedom or of rights--of the right to speak one's language for example. It is an issue of belonging, of hospitality, and in effect of being admitted to and provided shelter in the place that, despite being your home, is not fully yours. Therefore, what is veiled in ETA's demand for freedom is more precisely a demand for hospitality, but a hospitality that paradoxically, through the nature of the demand and the desire for a guarantee through

law, can never be absolute. The incompleteness of this demand is reflected in the bitter tone with which ETA describes the Castilian influence on the Basque region in the 13th century, referring to "señores extraños, desconocedores en absoluto de las costumbres y modo de ser vascos" who "quieren extender su nefasta influencia a nuestro país" (qtd in Garmendia Vol. I 29). ETA would prefer to avoid the risk of those outsiders, *señores extraños*, that might require it to alter the rules of its house, its home. There is a strong sense here of the correlation Derrida makes between hostility and hospitality, noting that "The Latin *hostis* means guest but also enemy" (*Of Hospitality* 157). In order to develop this notion further, Derrida's compares *absolute hospitality* to hospitality by right:

The law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights. Just hospitality breaks with hospitality by right; not that it condemns or is opposed to it, and it can on the contrary set and maintain it in a perpetual progressive movement; but it is as strangely heterogeneous to it as justice is heterogeneous to the law to which it is yet so close, from which in truth it is indissociable (*Of Hospitality* 25-27).

Hospitality by right is the hospitality guaranteed (or limited) by the law, guided by a rule, an institution, reciprocity, mutual understanding, and identification with the self on some level. The guest is an "other" but a recognizable other, someone who deserves the same treatment I would expect as a recognizable other in their position. Of course, according to this rule, the other can be denied food, shelter, or space if he or she is not "recognizable," does not give a name, does not respect a cultural practice, etc. This is also the place where conditional hospitality or hospitality by right slips over into hostility, where not only can the unidentifiable other be denied a place, but it can be abandoned, killed, or eliminated, since either it does not meet the established rules or it resides outside of them.

We do not have to look far for examples of this kind of hostile hospitality in

Franco's Spain, beginning with exterminatory practices in the Civil War that then become legislation, such as the "Ley de fugas" and the "La ley de la represión de la masonería y el comunismo."<sup>11</sup> In terms of hostility towards a culture, when Franco's troops invaded cities during the war, they insisted on the elimination of "la 'anti-España" and any language that was not Spanish was banned from public use as early as 1936 (Letamendía 194). During Francoism, Basque was still spoken in homes but was met with the threat of fines or beatings when spoken in public, proving the conditional, limited hospitality that characterized the Franco regime. To complicate the issue, economic conditions across Spain in the late 50s and early 60s lead to the greatest influx of immigrants in the history of the Basque region, which some Basque nationalists view as a political move to stifle

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Preston explains in the last chapter of *The Spanish Holocaust* (2011) how "The long-term institutionalization of Franco's victory required the perfection of the machinery of state terror to protect and oversee the original investment" (471). Amongst the numerous examples he provides of executions and imprisonment suffered by Franco's enemies, perceived or real, Preston specifies, "Membership of a left-wing committee in a town or a village where right-wingers were killed would usually guarantee a death sentence even if the accused knew nothing of the killing or had opposed it. Men and women were condemned to death for participation in crimes not on the basis of direct evidence but because the prosecutor extrapolated from their known Republican, Socialist, Communist, or anarchist convictions that 'they must have taken part'" (475). Although a legal structure hardly seems necessary to legitimate these actions, given the degree of abuse, laws nonetheless grew out of the "administrative machinery and pseudo-legal framework developed throughout the war" (472). The "Ley de fugas," which was perhaps defined in legislation as early as 1921 under the rule of Alfonso XIII, is one example of a preexisting structure used to maintain a successful climate of repression. The "Ley de 1 de marzo de 1940 sobre represión de la masonería y el comunismo," which appears directly after the Civil War, justifies itself by complaining that "Son muy escasas y de reducido alcance las órdenes y disposiciones legales adecuadas para castigar y vencer estas maquinaciones," referring to the "evils" of masons, Jews, and communists. The goal of the legislation would be to put "un valladar más firme a los últimos estertores de las fuerzas secretas extranjeras en nuestra Patria y se inicia la condenación social de las organizaciones para la unidad, grandeza y libertad de España." The text does not mention the Basque country or culture specifically but the exclusionary, homogenizing spirit of the law (and consequently of the Franco regime) is clear enough, aimed at preserving hospitality only for those alligned with the Patria, "los principios cristianos," and "la generosidad del Movimiento Nacional."

and dilute Basque culture (Letamendia 262). These individuals take a hostile position towards the immigrants, describing them as "invasores" and potential "enemigos" while others see immigrants as potential allies, especially considering that they form part of the working class that any movement of national liberation depends on, capable of helping to destroy "las cadenas de la opresión nacional y de la opresión social" (262-263). In this sense, ETA's struggle is shaped by a desire for hospitality *without limits*, capable of providing the conditions for radical democracy that is nonetheless in conflict with a hospitality guaranteed by the laws of the land, capable of delivery upon demand, and potentially limited to only those who properly identify as Basque. This is, effectively, a desire for hospitality that can only ever be conditional--which perhaps explains the difficulty of bringing it about.

Absolute hospitality on the other hand leaves no conditions, does not seek out identification, does not expect reciprocity, or as Derrida says, even a name:

Absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner...but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names (*Of Hospitality* 25).

Therefore, no rules or limits placed on generosity, to what the guest may or may not do, to the language he/she/it may speak, to the future that the guest may bring. The Basque case is thus not unique except in the way it can be read as both a figure of radical otherness as well as an image of what "giving place" to this radical otherness might look like. ETA's political project relies therefore on an "other" that cannot be known or encountered, given that this other belongs to the past, to the unconscious, and also to the future. And so the desire for the unconditional gift of a place, of a space in which to

arrive (whether the *arrivant*--to borrow the term from Derrida's *Specters of Marx*--is Basque or not), provides the 'Basque question' with an argument, wherein a kernel of political potentiality might reside, if only it were not for the otherwise unending set of conditions and demands ETA has put forth over the years.

As the events of the past several decades have shown us, waiting for this arrival was simply not enough. This is where we see that listening, waiting, practicing, and imagining have taken the back seat (or simply have never materialized) to action. The combative paradigm is instead maintained: "Pulverizar la administración enemiga es, a nuestro juicio, el principal objetivo de la guerra revolucionaria" ("La insurrección en Euskadi" 97, qtd in Garmendia 112). Although ETA's proposal to engage in revolutionary war is accompanied by commitments to a workers front, a cultural front, and a political front, these final commitments, fall away in the changes ETA undergoes through out the years.

## **Section 2. "La dureza de las contradicciones." Political Change and Revolutionary Violence**

El problema de la lucha armada, por ejemplo, no lo tienen nada claro. Y cuando se llega al problema nacional lo ven completamente diferente a nosotros. Lo ven desde el punto de vista de la burguesía española; no comprenden que el pueblo vasco tiene su opresión especial; seguramente será resultado de la propaganda franquista, porque ese es un tema que no lo quieren ni oír, pero es así...

- "Jon" in *Operación Ogro* by Eva Forest 30

An early document from the second part of ETA's 5th Assembly in 1967, titled "Ideología oficial de ETA," describes the organization's 'method,' "[e]l método será un proceso en espiral ascendente de acción represión--en los cuatro frentes que componen la lucha revolucionaria de un país oprimido (cultural, político, económico y militar) para la toma de poder vasco por la clase trabajadora vasca." (qtd in Garmendia Vol. II 191). The military front is seen as functioning within the paradigm of war that defines Francoist politics, acting as a response to it and a necessity. Further along in the document titled "Ideología....," justifications for the four fronts are sketched out:

La dirección de la lucha y su complejidad nos exige un Frente POLITICO. El carácter capitalista de la explotación y la importancia de apoyarnos fundamentalmente en los trabajadores, nos impone un Frente SOCIAL. La dureza de las contradicciones, un Frente MILITAR. Y nuestra situación de pueblo colonizado, a quien se trata de asesinar nacionalmente, sustituyéndole su Cultura por la del colonizador, nos lleva a la práctica en un Frente CULTURAL. (193 Garmendia Vol. II)

Despite the apparent completeness of a strategy defined by four *frentes*, aimed at addressing the spectrum of elements that shape society and the possibility of changing it, over time, the salient feature of ETA's strategy becomes its dedication to the use of coercive violence. And despite what seems like an admission that the *frente militar* (sandwiched between the other fronts in this description, like a core) contradicts ETA's other strategies and objectives, it ends up becoming the defining characteristic of the organization. It is not a tool subordinate to the other aims of the group but the spearhead that will purportedly pave the way for any possibility of changing what is otherwise conceived of as social, cultural, and political.

Around the time of ETA's second 6th assembly in 1973, the insistence on the centrality of *el frente militar* is explained in the concluding paragraphs of a document



titled "Acerca de la lucha armada," produced by ETA in 1973 and reprinted in Volume 15 of its *Documentos*:

¿Cómo resolver entonces el problema del impase combativo en el que se encuentran? .... En suma, un *aparato militar* que, enfrentándose al otro *aparato militar opresor* que es el Estado fascista, *complemente su acción* y les ofrezca la única posibilidad de combatirle con sus propias armas: no basta con pedir la disolución de la Guardia Civil o de la B.P.S., hay que disolverlos. En definitiva, la única posibilidad *real* de superar los obstáculos que hoy mantienen a las masas sumergidas en el reformismo, el abstencionismo y el desánimo, es un *aparato militar* que, codo a codo con las masas (pero por delante suyo), dinamice nuevamente el proceso revolucionario (relanzado una y otra vez su potencia compulsora en su provecho) hasta sacarlo del callejón sin salida en que se encuentra. (*Documentos* Vol. 15 158)

With language describing *la lucha armada* as "la única posibilidad *real*," there is little point in debating whether "al preconizar una dinámica militar obraba correctamente" (*Documentos* Vol. 15 158). Perhaps there is only the dull conclusion of "Maybe yes, maybe no." If there is a fundamental error in the group's conception of radical politics, it is its insistence on the supremacy of a single form of action--putting it fully in line with Carl Schmitt's description of "the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political," which makes itself "evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses" (*Concept* 27). Part of what is at stake in a criticism of ETA's allegiance to hostility, an allegiance conditioned by Schmitt's understanding of politics, is the idea that transformation *must* be achieved through the implementation of a program, through a kind of equation or a calculation of the kind assumed by Schmitt, which in the case of ETA is its longstanding commitment to armed struggle as "la única posibilidad *real*" for change.

This insistence on the importance of a military apparatus to produce change is linked to several other key assumptions regarding ETA's strategy. Francisco Letamendia

quotes Frantz Fanon to describe ETA's unwavering commitment to the use of violence: "la violencia es la mediación universal. El hombre colonizado se libera en y por la violencia" (Letamendia 360). This emphasis on violence has less to do with the innate revolutionary potential of violence and more to do with the reality of what is for Fanon the colonial power structure, maintained through the use of force, which is not unlike the power structure of Francoism, which relied at least partially on effective coercion through the use of violence. This we could say is the starting point for ETA's theorization of violence: if the state has recourse to maximum force, the only way to defeat the state is to engage it through the use of maximum force.<sup>12</sup> But within this use of force, ETA claims the necessity of distinguishing "entre la violencia del poder y la que se opone a la arbitrariedad del poder, al terror militar o policíaco, que de distinguir entre violencia o diálogo" (Garmendia Vol. 1 102), in an effort to evaluate the use of violence based on its relationship to justice and not on the fact that it is sanctioned or unsanctioned by a legal order. Thus, the first part of ETA's justification for a military front says that if we are to topple the state, we must use the state's tools, especially when this recourse to force is understood in terms of its efforts to transform. As explained in Zutik, nº 2 (written between 1959-1964), "...ETA es, por tanto, revolucionaria porque quiere destruir unas

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<sup>12</sup> This adherence to Fanon is also the first example of ETA's use of violence as a form of calculability. We could say that, in general, the organization relies on the prior success of a theory or the repeated or widespread invocation of a theory in order to justify its use. It therefore relies on old strategies, "proven" strategies, but nonetheless strategies that reflect that historical and material realities of other places (rural China, industrial Russia, North Africa, Brazil, etc.). It might be worth acknowledging that although one does well to read and make use of the theories of the past as a way to think about the revolution they are in the process of igniting, only an activity that innovates, that takes into account the specific nature of both history and place (and material, oppression, resources, etc.) has any hope of changing the present. This points back to the problems outlined with Rancière and Derrida, which I explain further along.

estructuras que, desde el punto de vista vasco, son injustas" (qtd in Garmendia 33). The second part of its justification, which builds on the first (which by way of Krutwig, drawing on Claude Delmas, we can call *la guerra revolucionaria*), involves what has been described already as the action-repression-action spiral theory, in which the repressive response produced by an initial action leads to a heightened awareness amongst citizens (given the severity of the repression). Precisely because of the insufferable nature of the repressive measures, more citizens are moved to stand in opposition to the regime. The idea, then, is to use the oppressor's tools to topple the oppressor, while using them in a way that urges greater participation in the movement. A further development in this justification involves the theory of the "foco revolucionario" made famous by Che Guevara in Latin America and theorized by Regis Debray (Letamendia Vol. 1 380), whereby guerrillas act independently of other social movements in a focused manner, engaging in violent actions in a particular region or affecting specific targets as a way of bringing about change, like the point of light properly focused through a magnifying glass that eventually ignites paper, leaves, twigs, branches, and finally, the whole forest.

But this theory amounts to more of an image for change than it does a strategy: "Instead of the military strategy being subordinate to politics, it now *is* politics" (Glberman). According to Martin Glberman, intense sites of struggle that act independently from other fronts (a workers front, a cultural front, a political front), effectively cut themselves off from the broad majority they claim to be working for: "a view which cuts off the oppressed class from the revolution, except as recipients, must, of necessity, cut the....revolutionist off from his only source of theory." Thus, despite the

*foco* being proposed as a central part of ETA's theorization of the military front and its ability to provoke change, it also justifies actions that affect a broader population in an almost dictatorial fashion. Even though it is presented as the revolutionary avant-garde, the *foco* amounts to a justification for autocracy, "the vanguard has been refined from party to foco and from foco to chief. Which, of course, settles the matter. Under these circumstances, what need is there for theory or strategy. The military struggle settles all problems -- one way or another" (Glberman). In Spain, time has supported Glberman's analysis and shown that the combination of a force that works independently of the people it claims to be fighting for, along with the severity of any related repression, has had the opposite effect--leading even strong supporters of ETA, and ETA members themselves, to condemn the organization and its actions. Having insisted on a strategy of war, ETA has left no doubt that it is an enemy and as the enemy, in a way, asked for its own elimination.

The advocacy of armed struggle as the only *real* possibility for change amounts to a peculiar but accurate take on Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, a formula that ETA utilizes in response to and as a mirroring of the Schmittian nature of Francoism. Schmitt's influence on Spanish politics is undeniable (Tahmassian 59). And despite the departure from Francoism following the Transition, and serious debate within ETA about its continued use of robbery, kidnapping, and assassination after Franco's death (*Documentos* Vol. 15 153), what is left of the organization after the 1977 amnesty agreement continues to act in accordance with the idea that political action *par excellence*

is defined by identifying and eliminating the enemy.<sup>13</sup> Every proposal or cease fire since then places the illegal use of weapons as somehow equivalent to the fulfillment of ETA's demands for freedom: you give us freedom, we will hand over the weapons. Aside from the impossibility in practical terms of the Spanish state providing liberty--as if it could guarantee that for any of its citizens--ETA's demands were not met and the organization, predictably, retained its use of weapons.<sup>14</sup>

Since the Transition, Spain's democratically oriented government, maintains the same war-oriented approach in its fight against ETA, including the use of torture and attacks on ETA members by illegal State-affiliated paramilitary groups like the Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (GAL) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The state's response to ETA remains strong throughout the 80s and 90s and ETA loses public support as well as effectiveness, given the successful war of attrition being waged against it. ETA attempts to reassert the legitimacy of armed struggle in 1994 with Rufi Etxeberria's 'Oldartzen Report,' which advocated a "socialization of violence," also described as a "socialization of suffering," wherein all levels of society see and feel the consequences of armed struggle (Maskaliünaité 171). This attempt to make visible the agents of "the violence of the system" takes shape first in the 1995 assassination of

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<sup>13</sup> This was the case despite proposals made by ETA (and the political parties representing it) such as the "Alternativa KAS" in 1976 and the "Alternativa Democrática" in 1995, which would have put an end to ETA's use of weapons (had their conditions of full autonomy, amnesty, etc. been fulfilled). For the full text of the "Alternativa KAS" see pages 192-194 in Vol. 16 of *Documentos*.

<sup>14</sup> In spite of ETA's tenacity as a group (having remained active for over five decades) as of October 20, 2011 the organization announced "el cese definitivo de la actividad armada," in what appears to be up to now its most sincere expression of interest in disarming ("Declaración" 1). Despite its track record of ending every ceasefire since 1989, so far the group's refusal to use weapons seems sincere, with no attacks or altercations since a fatal shootout with French police in April 2011.

Gregorio Ordóñez, a legislator in the Basque Parliament from the conservative Partido Popular, and makes itself unavoidable and utterly unacceptable to the public eye with the kidnapping and execution of Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997. With this move, once again in accordance with Glaberman's analysis, the Spanish and Basque public turned finally and definitively against ETA, against any interest in negotiating with the organization and proving beyond a shadow of a doubt the "need" for ETA to be eliminated.

It is in this way that ETA's insistence on armed struggle, on knowing its enemies, strategically engaging them in battle, and eliminating them, comes full circle. Since the politics of enmity require a basis in identification, in seeing the enemy as "the other, the stranger....existentially something different and alien" (Schmitt 27), ETA's disregard for human life, its disregard for legal means of bringing about change, make it the most identifiable enemy of liberal democracy, in need of elimination. But, as noted previously, this version of politics, limited to choosing between friends and enemies, only ever turns in circles in the most undemocratic way, emphasizing control rather than freedom, sameness rather than equality, the "peace" of consensus over the clamour of disagreement. The following section analyzes the attack on Carrero Blanco, perhaps understood as an exceptional revolutionary moment, within the framework of war and considers its effects.

### **Section 3. Not Disagreement but War: The Assassination of Carrero Blanco.**

Carrero's assassination was not only foreseeable; it was not destined to be the mere object of intense written and visual

polemic. The attack was always already “written” and took place, as it were, within the space of a certain aesthetic construction (of the state, of the city, of the relation between concrete bodies and what they represent). Or rather: the radical re-materialization of the state that ETA’s bomb provoked and revealed opened contiguous figures, names, spaces, and geographies to this process of rematerialization. The bomb that killed Carrero scattered the cityscape and animated it with a flurry of broken names, bodies, and senses, partial ghosts whose hauntings no *cala* or *corte* could hope to describe or contain.

-Jacques Lezra 54

"Lo que sigue es un documento verdaderamente excepcional," writes Eva Forest under the pseudonym Julen Aguirre in her 1974 preface to *Operación Ogro*, published in France and read in Spain the year before Franco's death. And while the document may be exceptional in the way it gives the reader voyeuristic access to the thoughts, activities, and circumstances of the actors involved in a major terrorist attack and a definitive moment in Spanish history, the action itself ought to be reframed to better situate it with regard to ETA's politics as described up to this point. A scene early in Gillo Pontecorvo's film *Operación Ogro* (based on Forest's text), released in Italy in 1979 and Spain in 1980, dramatizes the vote taken by ETA members to decide whether to assassinate Carrero Blanco or kidnap him in order to demand an exchange for political prisoners; it highlights the tension within ETA between the factions that would later be known as "los polis," who ended up leaving ETA after the Transition to form political parties, and "los milis" who would remain part of the organization and its ongoing dedication to armed activity.

Inside a dark farmhouse early in Pontecorvo's film, the camera pans around a table full of men following the count of hands, "uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco..." ending at the head of the table with an older man facilitating the vote, Joseba, who announces: "Nueve favorables al secuestro." He presents the alternative to kidnapping, "ahora por la ejecución," which receives two votes. Joseba confirms the approval of "la propuesta de secuestro del almirante Carrero Blanco y la petición de canjearle por 150 presos políticos," and ends the meeting. Eva Forest reports in her *Operación Ogro*, that "[la] preocupación por liberar a los presos es una constante de la Organización" (Forest 29). Carrero was important enough to increase the success of the operation and contribute to ETA's goal of freeing political prisoners.<sup>15</sup>

However, despite the importance of freeing trained, knowledgeable ETA members to the overall goals of the organization--as is the objective in the escape from the Cárcel de Segovia explained below--the action follows a different route when Carrero is named prime minister in June of 1973. Without the benefit of hindsight, the militant referred to as "Txabi" in Forest's original publication explains the justification for Carrero's death, "la ejecución en sí también tenía un alcance y unos objetivos políticos clarísimos" (45).<sup>16</sup> He goes on to explain Carrero's importance within the regime since

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<sup>15</sup> The book is published a year before Franco's death in 1974 in Paris and Hendaye, France and no doubt read in Spain secretly. As explained in the introduction to Ruedo Ibérico's website, <http://www.ruedoiberico.org/intro/>, the editorial was founded in 1961 in Paris, France by Spanish political refugees with the goal of establishing a publishing house that could fight Franco's propaganda machine.

<sup>16</sup> Victoria Prego sums up the slickness of the operation: "...el almirante Carrero muere esa mañana. . . porque un grupo de la banda terrorista ETA ha decidido dar un golpe espectacular y ha elegido uno de los blancos más fáciles imaginables: un hombre casi sin protección y que, además, resulta ser presidente del Gobierno. El sucesor político de Franco, el hombre destinado por el general para cuidar de que, tras su muerte, el futuro



1951 and his reach in all areas of Franco's government: "creó una red de confidentes dentro de los ministerios, de la Falange y aún dentro del Opus Dei. Su policía (el Servicio de información de la Presidencia del Gobierno) logró meterse en todo el aparato franquista" (46) In this way he became "el elemento clave del sistema" and "la pieza fundamental del juego político de la oligarquía....llegó a ser insustituible por su experiencia y capacidad de maniobra y porque nadie lograba como él mantener el equilibrio interno del franquismo." (46) It is thus that ETA's decision to assassinate Carrero Blanco "significa dejar coja la maniobra de desdoblamiento, sobre todo, privar a la oligarquía del quizá único elemento capaz de asegurar la continuidad del Régimen, una vez desaparecida la figura del viejo dictador" (46). The *desdoblamiento* referred to here is the use of Juan Carlos as the symbolic face of a new Francoism post-Franco, where Carrero "desde la sombra tendría el poder auténtico." This analysis of the situation identifying the importance of Carrero, already published in 1974, is confirmed by history. And in an organization struggling to define itself, divided between "obreristas" and "militaristas" in the early 70s, the assassination reaffirms the validity of *la lucha armada*, "se demostraba que existen posibilidades por medio de la lucha armada para destruir el Estado español" (Forest 47). With regard to the desire for change, even from within Franco's government, the attack was welcome and even longed for, "aunque nos cueste ahora admitirlo, ETA fue simplemente el brazo ejecutor de un generalizado sentimiento social que quería un cambio político casi de forma desesperada" (Vilarós 120). Proposing a similar theory about Carrero Blanco's death, Victoria Prego writes: "su muerte no fue tanto un magnicidio que alteró el curso de la historia cuanto un golpe psicológico letal

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no termine arrasando los principios que inspiraron el régimen del 18 de julio, queda así apartado de la historia" (21-22).

para quienes aún creían posible la supervivencia del franquismo sin Franco" (24). This might mean that political change was inevitable with or without Carrero's death, but there is no doubt about its symbolic significance regarding the end of Franco's regime and the Transition to Democracy.

At this point it is important to address the language Forest uses to describe the attack on Carrero as "*el acontecimiento*" in her reprinted prologue to a 1983 edition of *Operación Ogro*, 10 years after the fact (15).<sup>17</sup> Given the way in which Carrero's death took place despite a host of logistical challenges, at a moment of near desperate desire for political change, it is as if a collective prayer had been answered. Forest thus refers to Carrero's death as "*aquella noticia extraordinaria, que una mañana se propagó como un reguero de pólvora y conmovió al país*" (14). She emphasizes with italics as she references the moment, "lo qu[e] sintieron cuando les llegó la *noticia*," presenting it as a kind of mystical experience, "los que pasaron por *esa experiencia inolvidable*," and insisting that "el punto de referencia respecto a *aquella acción* ya no es el *hecho mismo*, recogido en el momento de ocurrir, con toda la riqueza de matices y de emociones, sino el *relato del hecho* y lo que cada cual reconstruye en su imaginación" (14-15).<sup>18</sup> She indicates the threat of the State propaganda machine which will create "una abundante

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<sup>17</sup> The edition of Forest's book used for my analysis is published in 1993 and contains the prologues of each edition reprinted prior to 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Despite Prego's admission that in a sense it is not at all strange that ETA would pursue a target like Carrero, and in fact they did pursue him with relative ease, her description of the attack as eventlike resounds with Forest's, "La voladura del coche de Carrero parece algo inverosímil, increíble. Inasumible" (15). Both Forest and Prego are emphasizing the uniqueness of the moment not because of its unpredictable singularity but because it overfullfills the expectations of ideology for Forest and it upsets the expectations of ideology for Prego (and for the established order). This is a case where the power of spectacle, the striking nature of the image, and the pleasure we receive in viewing it (and reproducing it) contribute to an inaccurate sense of the "eventness" of the moment.

literatura de consumo impregnada de ideología del Poder y que no hace sino confundir, tergiversar, manipular datos para ocultar los hechos reales de la Historia según convenga a sus intereses" (15-16). She follows this by saying that with time the truth will make itself visible: "Tendrán que pasar varias décadas hasta que los datos verdaderos, nada ocultos al principio y poco a poco encubiertos, sean recuperados de nuevo y ordenados de una manera inteligible" (16). Jacques Lezra responds indirectly to Forest:

The assassination of Carrero works culturally as an unbounded event or a defective object rather than as a bounded sign or act. It produces languages that designate it and histories that explain it—the anatomies, ideologies, temporality, and economies of its sense; it exposes an underdetermination of social intent and an excess of social affect radically irreducible to any definition of political interest; it changes the past no less than the present and the future; it unbounds the instant. (59)

Given the emotion tied to the event for Forest, what she describes in her prologue to the 1974 edition as "una alegría especial, liberadora, tal vez la alegría que sólo pueden sentir los que luchan por la liberación de su pueblo" (12), she imagines "los datos verdaderos" as producing a feeling in readers (and viewers, if we include Pontecorvo's film) that are true insofar as they coincide with her own feeling. She imagines the truth of the event not as a truth of "social intent" but rather as ideological identification, social affect, "la alegría que sólo pueden sentir los que luchan por la liberación de su pueblo." In this sense Forest's account is imbued with the same war-producing ideology that motivates the attack on Carrero in the first place (a circle that is discussed in greater depth below). This is proven by the very different sentiments Victoria Prego associates with the the day of the attack, "en que la mayor parte de los españoles se encogía de miedo e incertidumbre" (13). Thus the "truth" that Forest refers to, despite referencing what is without a doubt an extraordinary and unforgettable occurrence, is not a moment deserving of the language

she employs, not an event in the philosophical sense that she identifies with the word *acontecimiento* or emphasizes with repeated adjectives indicating exceptionality.

In an interview with Giovanna Borradori regarding the attacks on the Twin Towers in September of 2001, Derrida questions the insistence on describing what took place as a major event. Derrida does not deny the significance of the attacks, or their atrocity, or their extraordinary nature, or their permanence in memory (89). But he disagrees that the attacks deserve to be described as an *event*. He explains that "A major event should be so unforeseeable and irruptive that it disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such*." (*Philosophy...* 90). Even though the pain and destruction caused by the attacks was undeniable, it certainly was not unforeseeable. There had been an attack on the Twin Towers in 1993, not to mention numerous other attacks and attempted attacks on high profile targets in the years prior to 2001 (91).

The attack on Carrero is not much different. The fact that the attack was not intercepted (just as the attacks on Sept. 11 were not intercepted), does not mean that there was anything unforeseeable, incomprehensible, or event-like about it. Significantly, the accounts published by Forest and recreated by Pontecorvo are proof of the predictable, premeditated nature of the attacks. To quickly summarize the steps: ETA, a group that had declared itself openly hostile to the Spanish state, received news that suggested Carrero Blanco was an appropriate and achievable target for kidnapping or assassination. ETA members surveilled Carrero and his escort over the course of several months and set up a plan to kidnap him. When conditions changed and Carrero was named Prime Minister, ETA adapted and chose assassination. A tunnel was dug beneath the street of

Carrero's regularly scheduled route, charges were placed, and at the proper time, the Prime Minister's Dodge 3700 was blown into the air. As is frequently the case with a successful (albeit surprising) military or terrorist attack, a combination of foresight, planning, creativity, and luck make the attack possible. It was therefore a well-planned act of war, fully in line with the military tactics described in writing and put into practice by ETA previous to this moment.

Even though Carrero's assassination in 1973 is referred to as a conceptual starting point for the Transition, his death does not amount to a change in the perception or the nature of politics, but rather follows the path already laid out by both Franco and ETA. Alongside Derrida's discussion of the nature of the event, Jacques Rancière's treatment of the nature of politics in *Dis-agreement* is useful at this point, especially considering the limitations regarding Schmitt's concept of the political referenced above. Paying particular attention to the notion of equality, and the way inequality or harm is maintained through the regulation of discourse and visibility--regulated as it were by the *police*, the people, the policies, and the institutions that reproduce and reinforce the modes of thought, speech, and visibility that directly or indirectly keep harm out of sight--he describes the moment of politics as a place or time of interruption. Rancière:

I now propose to reserve the term *politics* for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration--that of the part of those who have no part. This break is manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined. Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise (Rancière 29-30)

In a sense, Rancière's description of political activity is highly pertinent to Carrero's assassination, which not only physically catapulted the figurative head of the Spanish state into the air but screamed to the Spanish public that ETA, and potentially any other militarized group, was a force to be reckoned with. But this is a literal interpretation of the attack, which in no way breaks "with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration" (Rancière 29-30) or "disturbs even the horizon of the concept" (Derrida *Philosophy...* 90). Despite the changes in power that Carrero's death allowed for, there is very little about the success of the attack that alters the tangible configuration or changes the way one thinks about politics. Truly, the attack reproduces the kind of thinking about politics that Francoism is built upon, wherein enemies are an inevitability and are in fact necessary for justifying, for example, the existence of a brutal police army such as the Guardia Civil. It is thus that a work like Forest's, which is a fascinating historical document in addition to shedding light in important ways on ETA's dedication to an ideology of hostility, does little to challenge our thinking about the nature of politics. Pontecorvo's film works a little harder to problematize the tenuous relationship between Carrero's death and the possibility of social revolution, but similarly remains an insufficiently critical homage to the surprising success of the attack on the Prime Minister. In this way, Carrero's assassination amounts to ETA's most successful instance of counter-hegemonic war-making, and an appropriate segue to the following discussion of the influence of Schmitt in both the Regime and ETA, and the circular nature of this relationship.

Lena Tahmassian highlights Schmitt's presence in the work of Falangist

ideologues like Francisco Javier Conde and Luis Legaz y Lecambra. She writes that "Schmitt is the most cited author" (62) in Legaz's *Introducción a la teoría del estado nacionalsindicalista* (1940), a work whose function was to argue against the "totalitarian" nature of liberal democracy while painting the "transparency" of dictatorship as "slightly more democratic" (62). Tahmassian references the explicitly Schmittian nature of Conde's *Representación Política y Régimen Español* (1945), used similarly to legitimize "the activities of the regime since the start of the war" (Tahmassian 64). Tahmassian quotes Conde: "lo que da a la acción contenido preciso es la idea de un adversario concreto. El objetivo de la acción no es otro que aniquilarlo" (qtd in Tahmassian 64). Schmitt's prescription of the nature of politics is serious because it insists that there is no outside to politics: no other way to understand and engage in politics, without identifying an enemy and relying on a principle of domination as the means of determining what is sanctionable and what is not (Schmitt 26).

ETA explains its relation to this paradigm, acting out of necessity in response to the invading enemy: "nosotros nos hallamos en estado de guerra con el ocupante extranjero por obra y gracia de éste, no nuestra; estado de guerra que no cesará hasta que la última pulgada de nuestro territorio nacional no se haya liberado" (*Zutik* 17 "Diálogo o violencia" qtd in Garmendia Vol. I 133). While it frames war in terms of defense and occupation, its dedication to war is described as an unwavering truth, one that guarantees an enemy can be identified and thus, in a fully Schmittian sense, ensure a claim on politics: "...nuestra verdad es la verdad absoluta, es decir, verdad exclusiva que no permite ni la duda ni la oposición y que justifica la eliminación de los enemigos virtuales o reales ("La insurrección en Euskadi 91 qtd in Garmendia). Within a classical

interpretation of war, "war is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (Clausewitz 44) and the paradigm of war is seen as doubly favorable: any successes in war are the progress of a political project at the same time as they are limitations upon the future coercion of the enemy. It is in this way that ETA imagines its commitment to action, strengthened by the group's claim to truth, will over time produce a set of conditions in which the the public's experience of oppression will convince it to join ETA and effectively immobilize the Spanish State.

By revealing its decision to approach politics as war, with the attack on Carrero Blanco as an example, ETA proves how far it has come from its desire for a hospitality modeled on an idealized Basque past. Benjamin reminds us that "[a]ll violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving" ("Critique" 288), meaning that a physical attack on the established power carries with it the potential for a new rule, and the recourse to the force inherent in that rule. Even though ETA has no proposed plan or charter, by aiming at destroying or immobilizing the Spanish State, its "violence confronts the law with the threat of declaring a new law" (283-284). And by threatening to interrupt the cycle of domination of the Spanish State, incapable of using violence to depose the violence of the state, ETA participates in a predictable cycle of force being trumped by greater force.

ETA's adherence to a Schmittian paradigm is peculiar because Schmitt has no interest in theorizing a transformation of society.<sup>19</sup> Instead his understanding of politics aims to reinforce the position of established power, making it especially useful for the

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<sup>19</sup> Note for example Schmitt's work on dictatorship, published recently in English for the first time as *Dictatorship* (2014), where he justifies the necessity of dictatorship as a legal resource.



Franco Regime as noted above. Schmitt's influence in Francoist Spain is no secret just as Schmitt himself is known to be the product of the "counterrevolutionary and authoritarian conservatism" of thinkers like Donoso Cortés (Tahmassian 61). Implicitly attacking the Kantian idea of a perpetual peace and the liberal democratic form it takes in the 20th century, as well as the possibility of a successful international communist organization, Schmitt insists that politics cannot be transformed. In the circular manner of argumentation that characterizes the Catholic jurist's thinking, he writes: "No one thinks it possible that the world could, for example, be transformed into a condition of pure morality by the renunciation of every aesthetic or economic productivity" (*Concept* 53). And not only is transformation impossible but annihilation, the "disappearance" of the oppressed, as the enemy that was too weak to make a place for itself, stands as proof of the legitimacy of whoever retains power. Schmitt continues: "If a people no longer possesses the energy or the will to maintain itself in the sphere of politics, the latter [(politics)] will not thereby vanish from the world. Only a weak people will disappear" (*Concept* 53). For Schmitt the nature of politics is constant and only those who are unable to defeat their enemies "transform" by way of their own disappearance or submission to their enemy.

This argument lacks logical completeness since the impossibility of transformation is based on the assumption that "no one thinks that the world could....be transformed," and its effectiveness relies on a faith in the permanence of a certain type of structure, as if this structure were akin to God.<sup>20</sup> His argument also fails to explain

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<sup>20</sup> This is not surprising considering another of Schmitt's frequently referenced statements, "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" (*Political Theology I* 38), an idea which views the modern State of

causality when he says that politics "will not thereby vanish from the world" (53) saying instead that whatever or whoever the weaker opposing force is will disappear. He emphasizes the idea of weakness (and therefore also the necessity of authoritarian domination) by connecting the impossibility of transformation to the avoidance of political decision: "Even less can a people hope to bring about a purely economic condition of humanity by evading every political decision" (53). This suggests that only those who take the identification of the enemy ("political decision") as the rule of politics have a hope of playing.<sup>21</sup> Once within the logic of hostility, all arguments will justify it given the way its identical but opposing parts turn in a circle, exchanging the same terms and insisting on the same courses of action. Derrida summarizes the nature of this logic that through a desire to determine the future, to achieve certain ends, will always exceed itself so that "action follows knowledge as a calculable consequence: one *knows* what path to take, one no longer hesitates (*Rogues* 84-85). Now we are far from the early ETA that explores, debates, questions and whose members "no saben qué, tampoco saben cómo." (Zutik 49-50 qtd in Garmendia Vol. 1 231). Instead this is the ETA that has the answers, the plan, the path. But since it *does* know, and it acts only according to certainty, it falls back into the circle of Schmittian hostility. So the "dream" of radical

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Exception, in which the ruler can act extra-legally to torture, to end life, to make war, etc., as analogous to the miracle in theology. Schmitt's argument depends on the idea that transformation is impossible because if society were to transform then it would unravel--it would negate the "miracle" of sovereign legitimacy, just as it would negate the God who is sovereign. This argument could be countered with a similar but opposing assertion, "Everyone understands that the world could be transformed..." which would be just as ineffective since one of the markers of possibility is the phrase's relationship to the future and hence the inability to prove or disprove it.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 2 discusses in greater length the notion of Schmitt's "political decision" as well as other ways of understanding the nature of any decision, through what Derrida refers to as a "passive" decision.

democracy, of absolute hospitality, becomes doubtful. As concrete changes are achieved, radical potentiality is eroded.

Alberto Moreiras explains the circularity of Schmitt's concept, saying that

the order of the political, as a principle of division, as division itself, always already regulates, and thus subsumes its externality: externality is produced by the order as such, and it is a function of the order. Or rather: a principle of division can have no externality. Beyond the order, there can be enemies, if attacked, but they are not necessarily enemies of the order: they are simply ignorant of it. (79)

So a discourse and a promise that imagines an undoing of decisionism is reduced to two combative narratives: one on the side of the Spanish state (involved in its own battles with historical memory, of which Basque nationalism is only a subsidiary) and another involving the future Basque State, or at least those claiming to represent it. Alternative intelligences and political aims within ETA have effectively been expelled when they come in conflict with this order, as evidenced by the poli-mili splits throughout the years. And since power is achieved along these lines, against any truly radical aim, ETA's brand of nationalism has employed and reinforced the logic of calculability common to the formation and security of states. It attempts to construct its own political truth forged in a violence that is legitimate, sanctioned, so long as it succeeds in establishing its own power and its own laws (power, right, truth). But this effort at achieving power, on the one hand through force (assassinations, bombings, the action-repression-action spiral theory), and on the other hand through a weak democratic presence: a minority showing in institutions, a minority constituency, the aims of which all depend on an approval and a letting-go by the Spanish state. So while these desires are presented as visions of incommensurability (freedom, autonomy, eternal peace), they are racked internally by the

language of the identifiable, the calculable: what is properly Basque, what is properly Spanish, friends, enemies, violence so long as it preserves the state, etc. Tahmassian provides us with a fitting example of this dance, familiar to observers of ETA over the years:

As ETA's armed struggle has continued into the decades after the transition to democracy, both representatives of Spanish bipartisan politics have made political gains through designating ETA as the political enemy. Schmittian thinking in Spanish politics created a situation in which a terrorist organization has continuously gained leverage through its armed struggle and has entered into an implicit pact of codependence with the Spanish government. (79)

With no outside to the system, with no event that "disturbs even the horizon of the concept," ETA brings its politics to a standstill.

#### **Section 4. Fight or Flee? Freedom and *La fuga de Segovia* (1981) by Imanol Uribe**

¡Ya! ¡Sacadme de aquí, hostias, que me ahogo!  
¡Sacadme de aquí! ¡Abrid la puerta!  
¡Sacadme de aquí! ¡Hostias! ¡Abrid la puerta!

-José in *La fuga de Segovia*

Where the fantasy of a single, corporate response to the terrorist act becomes the blank numerical ontology of the mutely nonpolitical, we erect a second fantasy, the fantasy that the philosophically minded critic can act immediately outside the corporatization of popular and university culture, beyond the material determinations that bind and bound his or her speech; the fantasy, in short, that transitional, moving, an-aesthetic thought acts as explosively as a

bomb, suddenly or spontaneously, with the effect of fully saturating and effectively changing the sense of the semantic and political fields it enters. A heroism of critical thought: the an-aesthetic thinker as terrorist.

-Jacques Lezra 61-62

This final section moves away from the obvious but equivocal example of Carrero Blanco's assassination in 1973 as emblematic of ETA's involvement in Spanish politics. Instead it looks at a quieter case: a prison escape from the Cárcel de Segovia in 1976. In the same way that the attack on Carrero represents a turning point in Spanish history, it also marks a transition within ETA as the organization tries to imagine possibilities for relating to a different political apparatus.<sup>22</sup> During the shuffle of power within Spain

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<sup>22</sup> While the organization that would retain the name *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* continued to prioritize *la lucha armada* for decades, as if the sets of words were synonymous, divisions within ETA produced a variety of modifications to the group's name in the 1970s. Following the logic of the four *frentes* or areas of struggle defined in the V Asamblea (político, militar, económico, cultural), referenced in Section 1, ETA found itself divided into roughly two groups starting in 1974, ETA político-militar (ETA-pm) and ETA-militar (ETA-m). ETA-m wished to continue to act as the "vanguardia revolucionaria de las masas vascas" while ETA p-m wanted military actions to be subordinate to other forms of protest and political activity (*Documentos* Vol. 15 159). The attack on Carrero in 1973, which had been decided upon and carried out by the "milis," heightened the tension between the two groups. This tension reached a head after the bloody attack by ETA-m on la cafetería Rolando in Madrid, in September of 1974. ETA-m thought it necessary to affirm its involvement in the attack and show its support for the action even if it meant eroding popular support for the organization. ETA-pm argued that there was no way they could endorse the attack, and ETA-m declared it would then act independently of ETA-pm. ETA-pm wanted to find ways to engage in politics publicly and legally while ETA-m wanted to continue to have recourse to the tactics and strategies made possible through clandestinity. Following this division, ETA-pm formed the political party Euskal Iraultzarako Alderdia (EIA) and participated in Spain's 1977 general elections. ETA-m boycotted the elections. By 1982, ETA-pm accepted an amnesty agreement with the Spanish government, agreed to abandon the use of violence, and joined the political party Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE). ETA-m went back to

during the Transition, after Franco's death, entities from across the political spectrum tried to imagine new configurations of power and their role therein. Meanwhile, a group of political prisoners in la Cárcel de Segovia addressed the most obvious limitation on their freedom through a carefully planned jailbreak. A first attempt in 1975 was thwarted when Mikel Lejarza ("Lobo") passed information about the escape to police.<sup>23</sup> The second attempt the following year, however, was successful. After months of preparation, 29 inmates left through a tunnel that began in the prison bathroom, accessed via a removable section of wall that had been seamlessly retiled and could be extracted with suction cups. Ángel Amigo, one of the ETA members who participated in the escape, retells the events in writing in *Operación Poncho* (1978). Amigo also participates in the filmic rendition of the escape based on *Operación Poncho*, titled *La fuga de Segovia*, directed by Imanol Uribe and released to Spanish audiences in 1981. Following the theoretical proposals already outlined in this chapter, this section focuses on Uribe's film given the way in which it works as a crossroads between ETA's interests, the interests of Spain on the verge of Democracy, and the viewer in the present who is necessarily caught up in the ongoing task of being free.

The film allows for an examination of politics along the lines Rancière presents, discussed previously, wherein the principles of division are not merely inverted but redistributed, "shift[ing] a body from the place assigned to it, or chang[ing] a places

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being ETA *a secas*, as it is known still, and remained active militarily up until 2011. The players discussed in this section belong to ETA-pm, which held a majority within ETA at the time, and as such point to the possibility of a politics within the group that is not strictly guided by hostility, especially at the most significant moment of "regime change" in recent Spanish history. For more information, see Letamendia Vol. 1, pages 394-398.<sup>23</sup> Mikel Lejarza, known as "Lobo," is portrayed in the film by Miguel Courtois of the same name, *Lobo*, from 2004.

destination" (30). It also provides examples of the Schmittian need to identify and eliminate the enemy as the prison escape turns into open battle with the *guardia civil* along the French-Spanish border. However, at the core of the film is the issue of freedom and what might be considered a *practice* of freedom. Up to this point, references to freedom have in part assumed the language ETA has used when discussing freedom or liberty. In a practical sense, ETA's demand for freedom is a demand for political or legal freedom: freedom to self-govern, freedom to decide upon one's laws, one's governing bodies, one's territory. In this sense, freedom is something that can be *had* and also provided. In a way this is one of the great contradictions of ETA, considering that the group partially advocates (or hopes for) a space that is radically democratic, unconditionally hospitable, and absolutely free, but it wants this delivered by way of a State, perhaps even a constitution, and control over its own police and military forces. It also assumes that armed struggle is the most powerful tool for reaching these ends.

In response to the notion of freedom as something to be had, Jean-Luc Nancy insists that "freedom, to the extent that it is the thing itself of thinking, cannot be appropriated, but only 'pirated': its 'seizure' will always be illegitimate" (*Experience of Freedom* 20). Similarly, "freedom can in no way take the form of a property, since it is only from freedom that there can be appropriation of anything" (70). Nancy speaks of freedom not in terms of what can be granted or given but in terms of existence, "Freedom perhaps designates nothing more and nothing less than existence itself" (14). In this way "freedom is on the order of fact not right" (77). For Nancy, freedom is similar to the experience of birth: it is something we are thrown into and must be lived and experienced, rather than possessed. When considering freedom alongside a discussion of

ETA, it is worth noting that the group's most recognized actions take place under the notion of a freedom to be obtained or provided. In contrast to this tendency, my analysis shows how Uribe's film presents the escape, both within the prison and outside it, as an experience of freedom, rather than a flight from captivity to liberty.

Despite being referenced in some of the most important volumes of Spanish film criticism, the academic treatment of *La fuga de Segovia* is minimal. In *Behind the Spanish Lens* (1985), Peter Besas dedicates a paragraph to the work, summarizing it as "lacking the dramatic elements of a good escape film, and devoid of the political clarity sufficient to explain what the ETA is still fighting for" (205). Santos Zunzunegui in *El cine en el País Vasco* (1985) identifies *La fuga*, along with *Siete calles*, (1981), as "el punto de arranque del cine vasco actual" but says little more. John Hopewell writes about Uribe's film along similar lines in *Out of the Past* (1986), describing it as part of a move away from the folklorist tendencies in Basque art, towards a reflection on modern Basque culture (233). Spanish film historian José María Caparrós Lera dedicates a little over a page to *La fuga*, writing that it is fundamentally propagandistic and nationalistic, and that "la organización terrorista ETA" was behind the making of the film, "más o menos veladamente" (210).<sup>24</sup> He ends up clarifying that the film is more oriented towards

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<sup>24</sup> He refers to the support the film received from the political parties on the Basque left, Herri Batasuna and Euskadiko Ezquerria and the involvement in the film of ETA político-militar members who participated in the escape, such as Ángel Amigo. He does note, however, that the film also received financial support from the Basque government (controlled at the time by the conservative Partido Nacionalista Vasco) and that *guardias civiles* collaborated in the making of the film. This points more to Caparrós Lera's second conclusion that the film is "más próxima al cine comercial," attempting to follow in the footsteps of John Sturtges's *The Great Escape* (1963) and Don Siegel's *Escape From Alcatraz* (1980) (Caparrós Lera 210). Ballesteros includes the French escape thriller *Le trou* (1960) by Jacques Becker in this list of intertextual references (131), to which we can add Jules Dassin's *Brute Force* (1947) as well as *Rififi* (1955).



commercial success than it is towards ideological loyalty, even if it maintains a "surreptitious" and indirect ideological charge (210). In *Blood Cinema* (1993), Marsha Kinder mentions *La fuga* as one of the "interesting art films" that were made possible with financing from the Basque government in the 1980s. None of these authors investigate the work at length, using it instead to explain the history of film production in Spain. Carlos Roldán Larreta gives a more nuanced version of the relationship between history, politics, and art in *La fuga* but does so only briefly as part of a discussion of a series of films about ETA ("Una apuesta..."190-191). He historicizes the film by developing its relation to the ideological divide present in the organization following the assassination of Carrero Blanco in 1973 and the formalization of that split at the time of the Spanish Transition.<sup>25</sup> Isolina Ballesteros places *La fuga* in the context of other works by Uribe that reflect on politics in the Basque country, such as *El proceso de Burgos* (1979), *La muerte de Mikel* (1984), and *Días contados* (1994), with a focus on the masculine terrorist subject as martyr.<sup>26</sup> Despite insinuations that the film is insufficiently

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<sup>25</sup> See note 1.

<sup>26</sup> This reading may be most apt for Uribe's *La muerte de Mikel* and *Días contados*, whose stories are more focused on an individual than on a collectivity, even as the collective political subject has an important presence in *La muerte de Mikel*. Overall, I think Ballesteros's reading of Uribe's films in terms of identity minimizes the potential contributions of these works to a thinking of politics (this is explained in a note below). *El proceso de burgos* is Uribe's documentary meditation on the Burgos trial in 1970, a *consejo de guerra* known as "el proceso de Burgos" in which six ETA members were sentenced to death and twelve others to hundreds of years of combined prison sentences. The trial was notable because media coverage and national and international outcry led Franco to reverse the decision to execute, effectively saving the lives of the convicted (all of those involved in the trial were released from prison after the 1977 Amnesty Law went into effect). *La muerte de Mikel* is a reflection on the struggle of a gay man in the Basque country in the context of the local party politics in the 1970s and contains a portrayal of the challenges of one man's identity at odds with a community in formation. It, however, barely addresses the issue of ETA. *Días contados* focuses on the terminal, almost suicidal nature of ETA's struggle after the Transition, in the context of the excesses of the *movida*

ideological, or too ideological, none of these approximations look at *La fuga de Segovia* in terms of the goals that ETA and Spanish democracy, in theory, share. These last pages look at the problem of freedom with the help of Jean-Luc Nancy in conjunction with the film's portrayal of repeated efforts to escape; a practice of freedom as an element necessary for a practice of democracy.

A voice-over situates the viewer as *La fuga de Segovia* begins: "La historia que van a ver ustedes es real y en ella participan algunos de sus auténticos protagonistas." This affirmation of the film's truth is accompanied by the image of a prison at dusk, seen from the outside, before cutting to an interior where men gather and converse in a courtyard, then enter a hall that leads to a bar/dining area. They listen attentively with somber looks on their faces to a television news report describing a recent police action that left one ETA member dead, two wounded, and numerous others in custody. The death of the ETA member is recounted by the news presenter as a suicide, according to "numerous witnesses," although other sources indicate that the man "fue muerto tras ser detenido por la policía." As the newscast ends, the men (all of the characters in the frame are men) turn to each other to discuss, their faces marked by a prevailing seriousness. The camera cuts once again to a shot of the exterior of the prison, this time in full daylight. Now a bell sounds as the camera zooms in on the prison until it again shows the same interior, linking the external space of the prison with the previously ambiguous internal space (bar? restaurant? prison?) while indicating that the men responding to this bell,

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*madrileña* in the 1980s. The film shows the violence that Uribe's previous films were sympathetic to as a kind of fatal addiction without a future. This last piece effectively concludes Uribe's filmic investigation into the organization.

recognizable from the previous scene, must indeed be prisoners as they exit a building in single file. These first minutes summarize the issues central to the film and my analysis: a miscount in politics that is maintained by incarceration (an exclusion of the already excluded), the prison as a figure for the limits of this miscount that stands to be interrupted or transgressed (by a political subject, and by the camera), the war-like reality of the "freedom" beyond the prison, and the great difficulty of confronting that reality and perhaps transforming it.<sup>27</sup>

With the prisoners gathered in what is now clearly a disciplinary space, standing at attention facing uniformed guards, surrounded by high, flat concrete walls, the warden presents them with a warning that is also a challenge: "Les he reunido a todos ustedes porque me han informado desde la dirección general de la existencia de un plan de fuga en este centro."<sup>28</sup> The camera pans over the prisoners' rigid faces in a silence that

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<sup>27</sup> Other clues point to Uribe's interest in problematizing the inside/outside of Spanish politics in linguistic terms. The first frames of the film present the production company "frontera films irun s.a.," written first with Basque orthography (with no accent on Irún) and second in Spanish, presenting "ren produkzioa"/"una producción." Uribe was one of the few directors in the late 70s and early 80s to use Basque along with Spanish in his films, providing them with a space of shared legitimacy (Roldán Larreta "Euskera..."165). It is a minor but perhaps unsettling detail to viewers that have internalized the homogenizing impulses of Francoism, given that censorship practices had only recently been abandoned in legal terms (1977). At the very least, the fact that two "unequal" languages share the same space and are presented as equal means of transmitting reality indicates the level of dis-agreement/interruption at work in the film.

<sup>28</sup> The 1963 jailbreak classic *The Great Escape* reminds us that, for a political prisoner, escape is a duty. In the film, Allied group commander Captain Ramsey responds to Colonel Von Luger's demand that there be no escape attempts: "Colonel Von Luger, it is the sworn duty of all officers to try to escape. If they can't, it is their duty to cause the enemy to use an inordinate number of troops to guard them and their sworn duty to harass the enemy to the best of their ability." The German Colonel can only reply, "Yes, I know." This sentiment is summed up in the *La fuga de Segovia* when Ion narrates (referenced below): "Fugarnos era una obligación."

amounts to a confirmation of their intent to escape. The warden continues, explaining that there will be changes to security, "he ordenado que suspendan las visitas hasta nueva orden," in an attempt at reinforcing the real limits of the prison. This results in immediate clamor amongst the prisoners who converse in indignant tones while the warden speaks over them, finally regaining their attention to indicate that the private and communal spaces of the prison interior will also be affected, "permanecerán cerradas las duchas y el comedor, que solamente se abrirá para las comidas y cuando lo consideremos imprescindible" and prisoners will be more closely monitored, "incrementaremos el número de recuentos y los patios quedarán incomunicados." The speech ends with a threat of the "consequences" they will face in the event of an escape in a scene that portrays the wrong or the miscount of politics apparent in the threat to punish those who desire their freedom, already jailed for having desired freedom.<sup>29</sup>

Months of planning, hard work, and luck characterize the escape in a presentation that is both politically relevant and visually engaging. The film plays with the rhythmic qualities of the prison and its reliance on schedules and repetition. The clank of keys as they open and close doors, one after the other, turns into a drum beat on prison bars that

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<sup>29</sup> The prison turns out to be an easy metaphor for a society that treats its members as criminals and their need to break free of that prison; for Isolina Ballesteros the escape "quiere representar la lucha global de Euskadi por lograr su futura autonomía política, lingüística y cultural dentro del Estado español," while also constituting a "reivindicación de la identidad nacional vasca," given the film's significant use of the Basque language as well as traditional Basque (and Catalán) songs (131). It is true that the film employs characteristic traits of Basque (and Catalán) identity, I would say for the purposes of realism, but not in ways that prioritize Basque or Catalán ("ethno-nationalist") desires for freedom over a *general* desire for freedom. It is important to note the emphasis throughout the film on the solidarity shown to other groups on the left such as the PCE, GRAPO, and the MIL, none of which are principally ethno-nationalist groups. If someone besides Uribe had to place his film ideologically, it would be on the side of ETA-pm who ended up prioritizing the struggle of the working class alongside other national-cultural struggles.

accompanies the retelling from cell to cell (in Basque and Spanish) of the death of recently executed ETA and GRAPO members. The bounce of the handball during the recreation hour, meant to train and maintain the bodies of the inmates, turns into the timing mechanism and the sound cover used by the men chipping through bathroom tiles as they begin the excavation. Absurdly loud music on a record player in a prisoner's cell, and the overzealous work of a man loading firewood, have similar functions. The guards observe much of this behavior with a sense of humor, in a characterization of them that is perhaps too naive, or not, considering that intelligence and imagination can always find ways to defeat security. Rubbish from the excavation is washed down a drain in the recreation yard after being hidden with food waste that the prisoners must dispose of after each meal. In a telling scene, a new prisoner complains about his toilet not flushing properly (given that the excavation is taking place in the prison sewer). When the inmate in charge of the tunnel (José) hears that a plumber is coming to investigate the blockage, he goes physically mad, screaming and pounding on his cell door (the quote at the beginning of this section comes from this José)--as if his body alone could muster an excuse worthy of releasing him from his cell. It works and he is released, giving him a chance to get to the tunnel and clear the blockage.

Prisoners are aware of the crumbling state of Franco's rule, since they regularly tune in to the unintentionally satirical descriptions of Franco's failing health. But rather than wait for the "freedom" that will be granted to them, since an effective amnesty is not far off, they decide to go on with the escape. In intercalated scenes that clarify practical and historical questions and give the narration a retrospective quality, a reporter interviews one of the escapees, Ion (Xabier Elorriaga). His answers, which take the form

of a voiceover, justify that the prisoners *had* to go through with the escape, that there was "no reason for them not to." Elorriaga's character is reinterpreting Ángel Amigo's declaration that "Fugarnos era una obligación, un compromiso con Euskadi" (*Operación Poncho* 17), but Ion does so in the film by placing all of the weight on the obligation, disassociating it from the concrete political aim of Euskadi. There is a scene where a prisoner presents a letter requesting a pardon for Juan Paredes ("Txiki") and Ángel Otaegi as well as "la independencia y el socialismo para Euskadi y para todas las nacionalidades que lo soliciten."<sup>30</sup> While this scene shows a commitment to the politics centered on Euskadi and reiterated by Amigo, it also maintains a discursive relationship with the desire for unconditional hospitality expressed in early ETA documents (and discussed previously in this chapter). This hospitality is also practiced in the invitation ETA members planning the escape extend to Oriol Solé Sugranyes (played by singer-songwriter Ovidi Montllor), active in the Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación (MIL).<sup>31</sup>

Solé movingly sings the Catalan folk song 'el rossinyol,' "The Nightingale" in the moments before the escape. In part, the scene establishes Basque-Catalan solidarity as Isolina Ballesteros points out but it feels more like an attempt by Solé's character to communicate to his companion (presumably a fellow MIL activist who has not been asked to participate in the escape) that he will be departing soon (131). The nature of the song, about a woman who is going to France because her father has arranged her marriage, suggests that the emphasis here is placed on Solé's desire for freedom more

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<sup>30</sup> These men along with several militants of the FRAP were the last individuals executed during Franco's rule.

<sup>31</sup> Members of the Front d'Alliberament Català (FAC), the PCE, and the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR), also escape along with those from ETA, although these relationships are not clearly developed in the film.

than an attempt to create a moment of Catalán-Basque solidarity. The figure of Solé here is an effective link between the problems of hospitality, freedom, and hostility, as he is the only person to die during the escape.

After Solé finishes singing, the prisoners leave the dining hall in small groups to the sound of a heavily percussive musical score. We could say that this is "the" moment of political interruption in the film, where the prisoners take their freedom, physically overcoming the limits outlined by the camera in the first scenes of the movie, walking out the dining hall, to the bathroom, and then the tunnel as if to say: "This is not a prison." The tunnel door is a carefully constructed panel, just the width of a human torso, hidden in the bathroom wall. Each person squeezes through feet first, one by one, into a passage that gradually widens until it meets a large sewage tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, they are met by other ETA members who hand out weapons in what is essentially the *end* of the political moment. Now they are "free," but their freedom is characterized by another set of imprisonments that repeat themselves. The fact that the space outside the prison was never free anyway and is only marginally defensible by a tiny group with a few weapons emphasizes this point. Upon picking up their weapons, they are once again restricted to the language and the limits of a police order that thrives on the possibility of battle, and will always win in a contest of force.

In order for the escapees to maintain their freedom they must re-imprison themselves, in the first of a series of renewed limitations. They are escorted to a truck designed with a chamber for contraband, destined to carry them across the border with France. The ETA members who have coordinated the escape from the outside explain to them that they have no food and that they will not be able to urinate, since that is how

most migrants are caught. The feeling here is that "freedom" has been achieved, but it is undercut by this first re-jailing in a fashion that recalls Nancy: "It must be understood that what is interminable is not the end, but the beginning. In other words: the political act of freedom *is* freedom (equality, fraternity, justice) in action" (77). The idea that freedom is a form of activity that is interminable, oriented towards beginning or becoming but never towards an end, a stopping point, or a closing, continues to be developed in the film.

Once the escapees are near the Spanish-French border, they wait for the *mugalari* (the person who will guide them across the border), who never appears since the code, recited to the *mugalari* over the phone to indicate the escapees were en route, was not exact. The group then decides, with weapons in hand, to leave this second cell to undergo what they expect will be a short walk through the forest into France. The night and the forest, along with a dense fog, turn out to be just as immuring as a prison and they become disoriented. After a firefight with the *guardia civil*, one man is left wounded and the party gets split up into three groups. The following day, one of the groups is surrounded and detained by the *guardia civil*. Another group decides to abandon its weapons and walk into the village unarmed, although it too is picked up shortly thereafter. The injured man (José, in fact), who had gone off on his own, also gets picked up by the *guardia civil* after a brief chase. The third group finds an empty house in the country where they stay, confined once again, until the owners show up unexpectedly. The group takes the owners' car and manages to reach the ocean, where a small fishing boat carries them to France. Once in France, this group, the only one to successfully elude Spanish authorities, is confined by the French government to the island of Yeu, from which they also escape. Ion's voiceover



explains that "en cuanto a los demás, pocos meses más tarde, una amnistía los ponía en libertad."

The film ends on a cynical note after a farcical series of imprisonments and escapes, highlighted by the final escape from the island of Yeu and crowned by the official release of all the prisoners in 1977. But the cynicism is countered by the images of the escapees' boat, bathed in golden, early evening light as it floats on the water, and the return to the same percussive music that accompanied the initial escape. There is a disjuncture here between the success of the escape, the speed with which the prisoners are back in jail and then released, and the feeling created by the image of soft sunlight accompanied by the sounds of war. The end of the film suggests that fighting and escaping the prisons that inevitably confine is connected to the nature of the dominant political order, but not necessarily one that, if changed, would make the need to insist on one's freedom any different. Regardless of the seemingly absurd and interminable set of escapes and re-imprisonments, this is part of the activity of freedom from Nancy's perspective:

Freedom cannot be awarded, granted, or conceded according to a degree of maturity or some prior aptitude that would receive it. Freedom can only be *taken*: this is what the *revolutionary* tradition represents. Yet taking freedom means that freedom *takes* itself, that it has already received itself, from itself. No one begins *to be* free, but freedom *is* the beginning and endlessly remains the beginning. (77)

There is thus no rest in searching for justice and moving from an "unfree" inside does not mean arriving at a free outside. A change in the appearance or the name of the structures that limit freedom, even when the change is as apparently significant as the shift from life within prison to life outside it, or from dictatorship to constitutional monarchy, does not change the fact that freedom cannot be given or possessed. The "taking" of freedom does

not involve "having" freedom or even "being" free. Freedom resides in the realm of experience which is why it can "take" itself, in the moment of its happening, but only as a beginning that must be renewed. This disjuncture of image, sound, and story at the end of *La fuga de Segovia* does not mark the escape as a failure, but it is also not a celebration of what appears to be freedom in the arrival of democracy in Spain in the early 1980s. This combination of elements, especially when viewed from the present and the still unrealized search for democracy, puts the viewer at the beginning of not what has been achieved but what must be tirelessly pursued.

## **Conclusion**

Up to now, the chapter has tried to link together an understanding of ETA's purported goals of radical democracy and freedom--the challenge of the incommensurable--along with the group's insistence on a war-seeking paradigm to arrive at those goals. Uribe's film represents ETA in a moment of departure from this paradigm, even though time has seen the group return to this familiar mode. Despite ETA's description of armed struggle as being justified by "la dureza de las contradicciones," what we see over time is not that ETA holds on to *la lucha armada* out of contradiction, but, in a way, purifies itself of any of the elements that seem to contradict the supremacy of *la lucha armada*. In this way, ETA has made itself practically irrelevant to the realm of politics while promoting and allowing itself to be the object of an exterminatory Schmittianism. Not insignificantly, at present other forms of textual and discursive exclusion continue to define politics in Spain, in addition to the "real possibility of physical killing" (*Concept 33*) that Schmitt says imparts the true meaning to the division

between friends and enemies. The Rajoy administration currently refuses to acknowledge or converse with ETA, despite the group's decision in October of 2011 to abandon the use of armed tactics. Even after this declaration, victim advocacy groups have pushed for ETA to "condenar toda su historia de terror y desaparecer" ("Pagazaurtundúa" 1), as if history could be annulled and its actors made to disappear.

This position takes advantage of Rajoy's insistence on non-negotiation, a stance that implies the existence of perpetual and severe legal repercussions for ETA members, despite the first real attempts by the organization to disarm and definitively abandon *la lucha armada*. The ongoing threat of retaliation, understood as ETA's permanent exclusion from the political realm, feeds the spirit and, in the extreme case, maintains the legacy that helped Franco consolidate and legitimate a military dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War. Thus, a Francoist Schmittianism endures in the actions and words of politicians, journalists, thinkers, artists, and cultural critics as long as their position is one of non-negotiation and silence. Rather than discuss the possibility of change and what revolutionary violence might mean, rather than confront true contradiction, we are left with the same rigidity, the same back and forth favored by ETA, by some of the victim advocacy groups, by the Spanish government. The battle for freedom--the *askatasuna* that gives meaning to ETA's name--now must take an entirely different course, which is not without irony considering that the vast majority of ETA members are currently in prison. Whether this might occur through a different understanding of freedom as *experience*, as shown in Uribe's film, is hard to say. Such an understanding would require, from the perspective of Nancy, not just a different understanding of politics but also a different understanding of *being*. This leaves a great number of questions

unanswered, especially as the wheel of hostility continues to turn, disregarding the supposed progress of democracy. Lezra is right to caution us against "the fantasy that the philosophically minded critic can act immediately outside the corporatization of popular and university culture, beyond the material determinations that bind and bound his or her speech" (61-62). That does not, however, make acting, thinking, and writing, any less necessary. And despite the author's own "fantasy," this piece is perhaps not unlike the repeated efforts of the prisoners from the Cárcel de Segovia, engaged in a repetition, a pursuit, a search still ongoing that is also a beginning.

## Chapter 2

### For Vitality or Not: Ramón Saizarbitoria's *Hamaika pauso* (1995)/*Los pasos incontables* (1998) and Derrida's Passive Decision

"...who pretends to be just by economizing on anxiety?"

-Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law" 955

#### Chapter Introduction

If the nature of politics is the question that drove the first chapter, this second chapter examines another level of the same problem through what Derrida describes as a passive decision, particularly as it is dealt with in Ramón Saizarbitoria's novel *Hamaika pauso* (1995)/*Los pasos incontables* (1998).<sup>32</sup> While Chapter One focuses on the motivations and outcomes, the before and after, of two of ETA's attempts to change politics, Chapter Two focuses on the space between motivation and outcome--decision--as it relates specifically to the interruption characterizing the political moment. The present chapter thus builds on the conceptual work dedicated to Schmitt and Rancière in Chapter 1 and examines, by way of Derrida, a concept (decision) that I demonstrate is

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<sup>32</sup> The concept of the passive decision, which is present implicitly in much of Derrida's work and specifically in "Force of Law" (1995), *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), and *Rogues* (2003), will be developed throughout the course of the chapter, alongside my reading of Saizarbitoria's novel.

crucial for thinking a politics not defined by the parameters of hostility (friends/enemies, terrorists/victims) or consensus (homogenized discourse, silence, forgetting). In conjunction with this reading of Derrida's work, I propose that *Hamaika pauso/Los pasos incontables* is in fact resistant to the trend that prioritizes national and cultural identity as the common horizons for considering Saizarbitoria's work, viewing it instead as dedicated to developing the relationships between literary and historical discourse, temporality, and decision. Chapter Two therefore continues to advance conceptual thinking about the nature of politics while addressing what is a Schmittian division at work in the field of cultural criticism.

### **Section 1: Decision, Disagreement, and the Staging of Politics**

Up to this point a blank space has existed in this project regarding the relationship between subjectivity and action, as if there were a predictable correlation between the two, as if a subject's rationality and responsibility could be viewed as sufficient or complete, and therefore as determiners of a given action and its outcomes. This assumption, which I am now responding to, implies that changing the pieces, substituting for example the type of subject (a Spanish subject for one that is Basque or vice versa, an imperialist subject for a democratic one, and so on) or the type of action (prioritizing social organization and mobilization over assassination or vice versa, or any other strategic change), is capable of producing a real change in politics.<sup>33</sup> Using Rancière we would say that this is not the moment of politics but rather of policing (28-

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<sup>33</sup> Here I am referring to characteristics of ETA's and the Spanish State's political and military strategies as explained in Chapter 1, Sections 1 and 2.

29), where changing the pieces does more to maintain a politics of dominance than to interrupt the foundations that power rests upon.<sup>34</sup>

In conceptual terms, drawing on the previous chapter's engagement with Rancière's *Dis-agreement*, we can say that a change in politics would require the making visible of an otherwise invisible but still incommensurable part (19). The introduction of this incommensurable amounts to a break or an interruption in the perception of power, which becomes "manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined" (29). From there we have the definition of political activity not as consensus, and not as the production of parts suited to achieving certain goals (i.e. the passing of legislation, the stabilization of the economy, and so on), but as that which "makes visible what had no business being seen" (30). This is the staging of true disagreement, presented in opposition to the policing that Schmitt's concept of the political and neo-liberal consensus both depend on in order to perpetuate and maintain a particular power structure and its corresponding goals and exclusions. It is therefore a risky position since it leaves politics open to a future without guarantees.

In spite of this definition, we still lack a conceptualization of the role of decision in the staging or manifestation of this misunderstanding or disagreement. Rancière describes a subjectification, "decompos[ing] and recompos[ing] the relationship between the ways of *doing*, of *being*, and of *saying* that define the perceptible organization of the community" (40), but this seems to take place as the result of decision--leaving intact the

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<sup>34</sup> As argued in my discussion of Schmitt in Chapter 1, Section 3, the circularity of his "Concept of the Political" does not in fact provide a definition for politics but rather proposes a theory that justifies the dominance of a preexisting political model, which relies on sovereign decisionism and the superior use of force in order to maintain and perpetuate itself.

idea that the political moment might be achieved without any consideration of the way in which one goes about deciding.<sup>35</sup> Although Derrida's and Rancière's conceptions of politics are not so different, I am proposing that Rancière's understanding of the political moment ought to be considered in tandem with Derrida's discussion of decision, given that it confronts the assumption that even Rancierian dis-agreement could be decided in a Schmittian fashion.

## **Section 2: Recent Approaches to *Hamaika pauso/Los pasos incontables***

Much of the writing done to up to this point on *Los pasos incontables* follows the trend that continues to prioritize a defense of Basque language, culture, and nation over other forms of textual engagement, possibly because of the historically marginal status of the Basque language and the challenges of maintaining it, given the effects of Francoist repression and changes in the social composition of the Basque country due to immigration. This style of criticism has a place insofar as Basque culture continues to experience the effects of this marginalization, which have a complicated afterlife, while having to struggle similarly against the demands of the market. It certainly has the greatest effect on cultural censorship in the present. At the same time, these critics do a disservice to the texts and their authors by continuing to valorize them according to the degree to which they promote, defend, innovate, or otherwise aid Basqueness, before considering their engagements with other critical/theoretical problems. An example worth noting is Joseba Gabilondo's article, "Terrorism as Memory: The Historical Novel and

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<sup>35</sup> All italics within the citations appear in the original text unless otherwise noted.



Masculine Masochism in Contemporary Basque Literature," which analyzes the role of historical fictions, focusing notably on Bernardo Atxaga's *Gizona bere bakardadean/The Lone Man* (1993) and Saizarbitoria's *Los pasos incontables*.<sup>36</sup>

Despite being one of the earliest critical treatments of *Los pasos incontables*, Gabilondo's article (published in 1998, three years after *Hamaika pauso* was published) is nonetheless one of the best, as it considers the implications of memory work that take place alongside each novels' sacrifice and disavowal of the terrorist subject (terrorist is the word Gabilondo uses). He explains that "the goal," of both Atxaga's and Saizarbitoria's novels, "is to create a new national space in which the Basque community can imagine itself beyond its political conflict" (138), basing his argument on the fact that both novels deal with historical issues, and that, as Benedict Anderson argues, literary and historical discourses participate in "national processes of community imagining" (Gabilondo's paraphrase of Anderson 113). However, Anderson's argument as it is presented by Gabilondo does not serve to establish a link between what a text does--what the specific use of language and structure in *Los pasos incontables* does, for example--and what markets, literary critics, the internet, etc., do with these texts. In this sense, to say that the *goal* of Atxaga's and Saizarbitoria's writing is to create a new national space is a strong imposition on the works mentioned. It is also already an example of the problem of decision in academic scholarship--in this case, Gabilondo's decision to

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<sup>36</sup> While this chapter focuses on Saizarbitoria's text, due to its reflection on the relationship between literature and political action, through Iñaki Abaitua's character, Atxaga's novel stands out from the other works that deal with ETA, along with Imanol Uribe's film *Días contados* (1994), as portraying ETA members from a position that acknowledges the organization's historical relevance while strongly criticizing ETA's fatal (suicidal) devotion to violence.

prioritize the national, considering that the novels in question address historical issues. His argument assumes a definition of "historical fiction" as always relating to a national Project (Spanish or Basque) and a national History, when both novels could be seen as criticizing thinking that prioritizes the national, even if the negation of a (Basque) national project seems to contradict the aims of self-defined Basque nationalists like Saizarbitoria. I therefore prioritize the nature and function of the text as the principal means of determining its objectives in order to move away from the tendency to view the novel as a work written for or about the nation and national identity.

Mari Jose Olaziregi provides another case of the dangers of interpretation conditioned by ideology in her reading of *Los pasos incontables*, even as she tries to be extremely respectful in her efforts. In a reference to Saizarbitoria's use of the past in the novel, Olaziregi explains that "what the author is trying to tell us is that the past, constructed from texts and official chronicles, can be reconstructed with the ethical objective of telling what the official story surely does not tell: the very real suffering brought about by Basque terrorism" ("Mapping..." 394). As noble as this interpretation reads, almost certainly influenced by the crystallization of "Basque terrorism" as the most pernicious threat to Spanish democracy in recent years, there is little support within *Los pasos incontables* that this is Saizarbitoria's central goal. The testimonial nature of *Los pasos incontables* is in fact most sympathetic to the experience of the victims of Francoist violence, through Daniel Zabalegi's character. This proves the arbitrariness of Olaziregi's claim, and if carried to an extreme, ignoring other aspects of *Los pasos incontables*, we

could read it (wrongly) as "enaltecimiento del terrorismo."<sup>37</sup> In an interview from 2003, Saizarbitoria muses about the danger of one "side" or another appropriating the author's attempt to present a truth: "...es cierto que a la hora de hablar de algo relacionado con el país, muchas veces temo más los aplausos de unos que las amenazas de otros" (Etxeberria 168), which he in fact addresses in the last pages of the novel. Despite what seem to be "good intentions" on Olaziregi's part, she is proposing a use of Saizarbitoria's novel that does not correspond to what the text is doing, fulfilling instead the demands of political consensus--the demand for a broad and defiant rejection of ETA at all levels of society--at the time of the article's publishing (2008).

### **Section 3: Counting in *Los pasos incontables***

We could now turn to *Hamaika pauso/Los pasos incontables* by trying to count: accounts, vote counts, recounts, retellings, body counts.<sup>38</sup> Too many to count on a set of

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<sup>37</sup> The potential for abuse of the laws regarding "enaltecimiento del terrorismo," namely Article 578 of the Spanish Penal Code, is explored in depth in Chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup> In any discussion of terrorism, counting runs up against the dead. The analysis in this chapter does not follow the course of all the counting that intersect when studying a group like ETA which include, for example, the number of deaths ETA is responsible for (at the forefront in any description of the group), the individual prison sentences of up to a thousand years that attempt to compensate for any given number of deaths (as in the recent case of Jon Olarra Guridi) the votes received by candidates that supposedly represent the interests of ETA or other Basque nationalist groups, etc. These related obsessions with ciphering, which are impossible to avoid in the most public discourses regarding not just ETA but any discussion of the uncountable nature of injustice are also implicitly the objects of my discussion. Anthropologists Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, in their critique of the discourse that surrounds and takes part in the production of terrorism, *Terror and Taboo*, draw particular attention to the fascination with counting and compiling the "brute facts" of terrorism: 103 dead, 270 dead, 3,100 dead, 23,000 dead (5), referring to the number of lives different organizations are responsible for having ended. The insistence on tallying the victims of terrorism, which transforms itself into a strangely perverse adaptation of Schmitt's friend-enemy division, is the topic of my third chapter.

hands, as one might try to do, with fingers as a guide. *One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten.* After ten of course comes *eleven*, a number that could as well be a zillion depending on the value, the measure, or the time attributed to each number. *Hamaika pauso*, literally "eleven steps" in Euskera is the title of Ramón Saizarbitoria's novel published in 1995 in Basque and translated into Spanish by Jon Juaristi as *Los pasos incontables*, following the idea of an innumerable quantity that comes after the number ten.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the number eleven in Saizarbitoria's title points to the possibility of a counting which is also a sequential contradiction, a *contretemps* in a Derridean sense, given that the duration represented by each finger, one through ten, comes up against the possibility of an immeasurable time, at the point that whoever is counting no longer has eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen fingers to continue tallying predictably.

The title of *Los pasos incontables* puts counting in spatial terms, steps, *pasos*, and links it to the *contretemps* that intersects the course of one's life, where the number eleven may correspond to the last step you take, or simply the distance required to reach the street corner. At one point in the novel Saizarbitoria's protagonist, the Basque intellectual and novelist Iñaki Abaitua, counts "once pasos exactos hasta el cruce" (132), where nothing happens. Similarly, in the passage that appears to precede Abaitua's death, he counts to ten and waits while the narrator tells us, "El resto ya se sabe" (361). With this emphasis on counting in mind, this chapter examines decision as a process with a singular relationship to time, to the future, to the enigma of the political moment, and to

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<sup>39</sup> The translator explains that the number *hamaika* (eleven) in Basque "se utiliza también para expresar un número indefinido muy alto, probablemente porque rebasa los dedos de ambas manos" (*Los pasos incontables* Title Page). Juaristi's translation into Spanish is also the text my analysis is based on and from here on will be referenced as *Los pasos incontables*.

death; a process that, regardless of the subject position, cannot be taken for granted as being one thing or another, given that it necessarily takes place in a fragmented space, somewhere at the confluence of history, the subject (as far as it can be identified), and the unconscious.<sup>40</sup> Before delving into the specifics of this argument, I will take a moment to situate Saizarbitoria's novel.<sup>41</sup>

*Los pasos incontables* paints a portrait of life in Spain from the years just prior to Franco's death (1975) to sometime after the Spanish Transition to Democracy (1975-1982), although the end of this period is never defined in the novel. The opening presents the reader with some of the central concerns of the work as they relate to the novel's protagonist: "Cuando ya se sabe que morirá dentro de unas horas en algún punto del panorama que abarcan sus ojos: ahí podría comenzar el relato. O antes..." (7). Already, the reader is faced with the counting that will lead us to the protagonist's death "in a few hours," and with the novel's characteristic ambiguity, since it is not clear whose death is being referred to, or who the subject of the sentence is. Although the passage that follows indicates the first sentence is *about* Abaitua, it could also be a thought produced by

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<sup>40</sup> From the outset we have to accept that academic work is necessarily fragmented and impure, demonstrated here by my decision to read a translation of Saizarbitoria's *Hamaika pauso* alongside Derrida (also translated) in *Politics of Friendship, Specters of Marx*, and other texts.

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed and well-explained contextualization of Saizarbitoria's literary production, see Olaziregi's article "Realismo renovado y *Amor y guerra* (1999) de Ramón Saizarbitoria," particularly pages 186-188. Her summary of *Los pasos incontables* may be of use to the reader: "En definitiva, es el horror y la terrible soledad ante la muerte la que resume el entramado temático de la novela, presentando, para ello, toda una serie de referencias intertextuales y metanarrativas y trayendo a colación citas de escritores, sociólogos, filósofos, o músicos. *Los pasos incontables* es un gran palimpsesto que, gracias a una factura compleja y atractiva, nos transmite una intensidad narrativa excepcional" (187). Gorka Aulestia provides an even more thorough summary but, like Olaziregi, does not go into depth in his reading of the novel.

Abaitua, as he contemplates the destiny of Daniel Zabalegi, the protagonist of Abaitua's own novel, also titled *Los pasos incontables*. Saizarbitoria's novel is focused on Abaitua and recounts the Basque intellectual's thoughts, travels, interactions, and writings.

Saizarbitoria chooses to showcase Abaitua's work as the author of a homonymous novel by explicitly featuring fragments of Abaitua's *Los pasos incontables* within the text. The story lines of Saizarbitoria's and Abaitua's novels (if we imagine they are indeed separate texts) permeate each other, with images and events repeating and intermingling in each narrative body, respectively assuming the fundamental interconnectivity of lived and narrativized life. Significantly, Abaitua's novel also makes history the object of literary discourse, through Zabalegi's character, who is based on the ETA militant Angel Otaegui, symbolically relevant as one of the last people executed by the Franco regime months before the dictator's death.<sup>42</sup> It is precisely Zabalegi's execution by firing squad that

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<sup>42</sup> Otaegui along with Juan Paredes (Txiki) and several militants from the FRAP were the last people executed by the Franco regime on September 26, 1975. The dates of Zabalegi's execution (101) and other biographical details indicate that Otaegui is his historical correlate. Txiki and Otaegui form part of the cluster of names that by now are part of the problematic mythology ETA has constructed and accumulated over 50 years of activity.

A less obvious historical correlate is the Basque poet Esteban Urkiaga, "Lauaxeta," whom the narrator points out for the reader after describing the moment before Zabalegi's execution, "Ciertamente, no es difícil adivinar la figura de Lauaxeta en la cárcel de Santoña, escribiendo un poema en castellano, la víspera de su fusilamiento" (338); he was jailed in 1937 by Francoist sympathizers, just a few days after the bombing of Guernica. He was killed by firing squad in June of the same year.

A literary correlate would be Loretta Sheridan, a character in Mercedes Saenz-Alonso's 1947 novel *Altas esferas*, whose death by firing squad in *Altas esferas* is referenced numerous times in *Los pasos incontables* and inevitably influences both Abaitua's attempts to narrate Zabalegi's execution.

It is worth keeping each of these figures in mind especially as they correspond to different historical and literary times. Their ghosts, we might say, have yet to be spoken to.

Abaitua tries to remember and do justice to in his novel, a work that ends up paralleling and informing Abaitua's own march towards death.

Saizarbitoria's text reads much like the image of a broken plate, which the narrator borrows from Claude Simon to describe memory, "la memoria es como un plato roto" (22). The narrator does his best to compose the shattered pieces, but does so guided by memory's own whimsical chronology, "como los recuerdos suelen llegarnos en aras del capricho, es lícito respetar su orden secreto y misterioso, sin preocuparse de seguir en la narración una disposición convencionalmente cronológica..." (21-22).<sup>43</sup> In this fashion, the novel unfolds in pieces, at odds with sequentially ordered time. In the spirit of this fragmentation, much of Abaitua's experiences take place at geographic and political peripheries, in Barcelona and San Sebastian, understood as contradictory and politically indeterminate spaces, also on the border between France and Spain, between land and sea. The Basque language (Euskara), which Abaitua and the friends he spends the most time with (Jon Igartua, Abel Osa, Alberto Pardo, Artantza Olabe, Ane Aristi) use more than Spanish, is occasionally interrupted by the Spanish (or French, or English) of non-Basque speakers, like Abaitua's lover from Barcelona, Susana, and of news headlines, quotations, and book and movie titles.<sup>44</sup> The conversations that take place between these friends often address political issues, such as the use of religion to

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<sup>43</sup> In this quote we get a feel for the narrator's distance in the expression "es lícito respetar," which allows him to narrate without the reader ever becoming overly attached, trustful, or distrustful for that matter. The lack of narrative charisma or personality forces the reader to assume entirely the role of relating to the text, by interpreting the fragments, repetitions, and juxtapositions that the narrator more or less coldly (sometimes brutally) recounts. It reminds the reader that the narrator is simply another part of the construction, not more or less important than the other parts.

<sup>44</sup> In Juaristi's translation into Spanish, the parts that stand out in the original text as Spanish (in contrast to Euskara) are identified in italics.

maintain a climate of fear (16), or the legitimacy of the use of violence for political purposes (39), and reflect an atmosphere of opposition to the Franco regime amongst the novel's characters. It is through Alberto Pardo, who is likely a contact for ETA, that Abaitua meets the character who ends up being one of the central narrative motors of *Los pasos incontables*, Eduardo Ortiz de Zárate, and agrees early on in the narration to transport Ortiz de Zárate across the border to France. Abaitua's intermittent contact with Ortiz de Zárate's character pushes the novel to its fatal, although not entirely resolute finish, which we will arrive at soon enough.

#### **Section 4: Contretemps: Time, Structure, Self**

Why seek to reconstruct the time of clocks in a narrative which is concerned only with human time? Is it not wiser to think of our own memory, which is never chronological?

-Alain Robbe-Grillet, in *For a New Novel*, 139

In a section of *Los pasos incontables* that acts as a kind of reader's guide, in the same paragraph that refers to Claude Simon's description of memory as a broken plate, Saizarbitoria's text references another figure linked to the French New Novel, Michel Butor, in a way that echoes the Robbe-Grillet quote above, "Butor afirma que sólo en algunos raros instantes experimentamos el tiempo como si fuese un continuo" (22). Following the metaphor of the broken plate, the narrator explains the difficulty of recomposing the scattered shards, "No tiene sentido recomponer el dibujo del plato



encolando los pedazos, porque siempre faltará alguna pieza de esmalte que hará imposible la reconstrucción" (22). This leads to an argument directed at those literary critics obsessed with discovering "las confusiones y las discontinuidades, las piezas descabaladas que faltan a causa de los lapsos de memoria" (22), and is a warning to the reader who plans on reading *Los pasos incontables* as a coherent system, hoping for the reassurance of imagistic and structural clarity. At this point, the narrator contrasts these critics and writers "esclavos de la cronología" with Iñaki Abaitua (and implicitly Saizarbitoria): "No buscaba la armonía convencional que nunca podrían poseer los trozos de porcelana rescatados de sus recuerdos. Sin negar su fragmentarismo, quería definir con ellos un nuevo espacio, no mágico, sino real" (22-23). Robbe-Grillet explains: "what is at issue here is an experience of life, not reassuring..." (139). Fracture, fragmentation, and restructuration are thus presented as characteristics of a writing that is deeply engaged with lived reality and experience. In this sense, the novel eludes from the start the kind of "conventional harmony" that would otherwise facilitate a reading of *Los pasos incontables* as favoring a particular subject position (Basque, Spanish, etc.).

True to the spirit of Saizarbitoria's literary models, nowhere does the reconstruction of this plate try to take the form of a plate, forming instead a mosaic without any particular shape.<sup>45</sup> The fact that the novel is narrated entirely in the past tense requires that its reader always be in the present, even as the present time in which the

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<sup>45</sup> In addition to the direct references to Butor and Simon, and the explanation of Abaitua's writing style that reads as if it were taken directly from Robbe-Grillet's *For a New Novel*, Saizarbitoria openly refers to the thinkers and writers of the "New Novel" as his models in an interview with Hasier Etxeberria, "...devoré las obras de Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, Claude Simon, Sarraute y demás... Los he tenido como modelo en mi novelística" (111).

novel is read depends entirely on an ongoing and often unstable relationship with the past, a past that presents itself unexpectedly, sometimes repeatedly, other times not appearing at all. The reflection on structure that the novel begins with is taken up again when Ortiz de Zárate's character is introduced, "La historia podría empezar en el momento en que conoció a Eduardo Ortiz de Zárate...en Barcelona, por tanto, en el otoño del '73. Durante un viaje que hizo Iñaki Abaitua cuando trabajaba en el diccionario" (21). That "podría" will repeat itself, despite the insistence here on a year, a location, a specific set of conditions, and the fact that the novel has already "begun," at least in the reader's time.

Descriptions or characteristic phrases are similarly presented as part of the narrative, such as the remarks that qualify the landscape Abaitua looks out upon before his death, just mentioned, "el paisaje que, cierta vez, decidió amar" (7), but reappear two pages later in an isolated fashion, in quotation marks, in a lone paragraph two sentences long, "'El paisaje que cierta vez decidió amar.' No es una frase hueca." (9), but this time following a slightly different rhythm, lacking the commas, and highlighted as being significant, "not empty." Language doubles itself, "[i]n two times but at the same time" (Derrida in *Politics 2*), appearing unexpectedly and without explanation, asserting its importance nonetheless. This disjointed union, by way of the "podría," allows passages that assert themselves throughout the novel (that do not prioritize a before and an after) to exist doubly, in the same present, in a *contretemps*. It is a technique that is both unsettling, since it creates a certain degree of anxiety about the purported meaning, and joyful, allowing the same description or idea to float and resurface, much like memories reappear and hang about unexpectedly.

"[T]he two times," Derrida explains, "already form two theses--two *moments*, perhaps--they concatenate, they appear *together*, they are summoned to appear, in the present: they present themselves as in a single stroke, in a single breath, in the same present, in the present itself" (*Politics 2*). Much like the measured counting that lacks a system once you run out of fingers to count on, cramming predictable time up against unknown time, the novel is constantly pushing time up against itself. This is done through the explicit commentary on narrative structure discussed so far, on the repetitions of specific phrases and also scenes, as well as on outright reflections on counting. Both on meaningless counting--the 89 times that the word for shoes supposedly appears in Abaitua's *Los pasos incontables*, according to "un filólogo cuyo nombre no se mencionará" (144), to the obsessive counting of time shortly before Abaitua's death, as he waits for his girlfriend Julia to come home, to see her once more before he dies. This is the counting of one's existence, of intensely lived and fleeting time, antithetical to the fixity of Historical time (often quantified in years and months), "Eran las ocho...tenía que irse..." (361), and a few sentences later "Eran las ocho y dos minutos" (362). Meanwhile Abaitua holds his breath and counts to ten, saying that afterwards he will leave. He does not, "A las ocho y tres minutos contó de nuevo hasta diez, sin poder abandonar aquel lugar" (362), trapped by the present and by a simultaneous demand on the present, coming from elsewhere.

Contretemps is something like the timeless intensity (or boredom, too, perhaps) of lived experience itself, and the reminder that time goes on: a present that the past or the future is calling upon, a contradiction in time, an ordeal of time. For Derrida this moment is charged with vitality, it "*conjugates* man and animal, spirit and life, soul and

body. It places them under the same yoke, that of the same liability [*passibilité*], that of the same aptitude to learn in suffering, to cross, to record and take account of the ordeal of time, to withhold its trace in the body" (*Politics* 17). Held up by a *contretemps*, one must struggle with the irreconcilable nature of time as it impinges on life, forcing a confrontation and a decision. We could say that any experience of reading is necessarily countertemporal, bringing the reader's time in contact with the time of the text, the time of its writing, the time that has passed since, and in a way "yokes" the reader in an "ordeal of time," up to a point.<sup>46</sup> Saizarbitoria's novel intensifies this experience by actively producing and drawing attention to multiple times within the text: to the multiple times of reading experienced through a particular narrative structure, to the multiple times of language (through self-quotation, through the coexistence of "distinct" narrative bodies), to the multiple times of history--the time of Daniel Zabalegi as also the time of Angel Otaegi, and Esteban Urkiaga. It is in the constant navigation of these times, and the multiple demands of each time on the reader--to consider the miserable deaths of Zabalegi, and Otaegi, and Urkiaga, and the fact that they represent not just imagined time, but real time, real denials of life, real denials of dignity; not just in the reader's present time, but in 1975, in 1937, and *also* in the reader's time--*contretemps*.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida describes "a dis-located time of the present, at the joining of a radically dis-jointed time," adding that "...time is *disarticulated*, dislocated,

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<sup>46</sup> My thinking here is indebted to Catherine Brown's article "In the Middle," which reflects on the encounter that takes place across time when one engages with a text. A particular quote comes to mind: "The text resists; you take it into you, but it is not 'you'; you break it open, suck it, chew it; you change it, and it will change you, so that, ultimately, you and it, subject and object, then and now, are not easily distinguishable" (561).

dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down [*traqué et détraqué*], *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted" (*Specters* 20), returning as he does throughout *Specters of Marx* to the quote from Hamlet that initiates the text, "The time is out of joint." Like so many pieces of a broken plate. This is perhaps why Saizarbitoria's narrator tells us that the story can start anywhere. After the first sentence has already reflected on where the story might begin, "...ahí podría comenzar el relato. O antes" (7), and after introducing Ortiz de Zárate, the narrator clarifies that, "no tiene mucha importancia el punto en el que comienza una historia, porque, sea cual sea, el final será el mismo" (21). The narrator reminds us that authors and readers are already caught up in this dialectic, "En cierto modo, por eso son muchos los lectores que comienzan a leer los libros por el final y, de la misma manera, adaptándose a esa tendencia, son cada vez más los autores que hacen lo propio cuando escriben" (21), establishing a link between writing and reading, and the choices writers and readers must make, but in a way hemmed in by the presence of haunting textual and historical times that demand attention and response. We could say then that, given the presentation of time as both multiple and mobile, in *Los pasos incontables* there is no single literary truth except the truth of uncertainty and unpredictability, and the anxiety it produces, but with the possibility of responding to that uncertainty, especially with regard to the past and to the "end," which is Saizarbitoria's preferred term (el final). The end being not the end of the novel, which is still a long ways off in the time left to the reader, but the end of a life (a character's, a text's, a writer's, a reader's).

Outcome or true denouement then are less important, even in the novel's last pages. Instead, Saizarbitoria achieves a constant re-nouement, not a renewing but a re-

knotting that alters the reading experience, the reading subject even, as it must go about making decisions. The explicit treatment of death as a metaphor for the defining trait of a text implies the multiple deaths of the text: the physical end of the work or the last phrase on the final page, the death of the protagonist Iñaki Abaitua, the death of the author in his absence, while making it simultaneously a site of life as the experience of reading through this "ordeal" of multiple times. Similarly, the ongoing nature of literary and intellectual work--the time, the details, the complexity--attempting to address a ghost of the past, the violence of the past, try to do the impossible in addressing "la línea finísima, de matices muy tenues, [que] separa la muerte digna de la muerte miserable" (23). While this is the narrator's attempt to explain Abaitua's obsessive reconstruction of the last minutes of Zabalegi's life, "a través de párrafos farragosos y enrevesados," it also points to Saizarbitoria's interest (perhaps now we can speak of a goal) in writing *Los pasos incontables*. The ordeal of time, which is also the ordeal of attempting to relate one's life with the end of that life, in a dignified way, establishes itself prominently as an aim of the work at this point.

This proposal that literary form--the broken pieces that Saizarbitoria's narrator trenchantly glues together--should attempt to reflect an experience of life, corresponds to the idea that the literary text is emphatically historical, "there are no masterpieces in eternity, but only works in history," writes Robbe-Grillet (10). And as an exploration of the conditions that shape living, a predetermined form would be no exploration at all: "A novel which is no more than the grammatical example illustrating a rule--even accompanied by its exception--would naturally be useless: the statement of the rule would suffice" (13). This language mirrors closely Derrida's description of determinism

that will be discussed later, and suggests that an engagement with literary form like Saizarbitoria's is also an engagement with notions of decision, which is the language Robbe-Grillet uses as well, "not everything is clear at the moment of decision" (13). Hence, the choices that Saizarbitoria is making with regard to structure, repetition, and temporality have implications for both the aims of the work, the attempt to "give" oneself a dignified death, and for the very idea of what it means to think and do--whether this takes an explicitly political form or not (as may be the case in the writing, reading, and interpreting of novels...).

Before examining particular cases of the relationship between the textual subject and the political subject in *Los pasos incontables*, it seems necessary to conclude this discussion of the role of decision in literary form by addressing the idea referred to earlier about the national aims of a literature and the appropriation of a literature by nationalist interests. Considering the ease with which a national project incorporates even contradictory elements, and given the powerful affective investment in promoting minority languages and regions, historical fictions associated with the language or the region, as is the case with *Los pasos incontables* or *El hombre solo* by Bernarndo Atxaga, are often read categorically as nation producing (or aiding in the production of national imaginaries). Elements of a narrative that may be at odds with notions of consolidated identity (Basque, Spanish, etc) are nonetheless incorporated as unique figures, new and unexpected brands to represent the nation/region. The nation is prioritized in a teleological, decisionist fashion. Similarly, nation, especially in the case of criticism on literature written in Basque, retains a place of privilege that censors other arguments, even when a stronger textual basis for those arguments may exist. And even when one

argues that a novel disavows national identity, the paradigm that favors thinking in terms of nation can still scoop up the work in question as, finally, a novel for the nation, singular example of the nation's literature because of the way the work disavows national identity.

Saizarbitoria's *Los pasos incontables* allows us to analyze this kind of decisionism. Even though the novel certainly addresses ideas about the relationship between nation and literature, referring for example to "Aquella teoría, que formulaba en todas las borracheras, de que la función de la literatura era hacer virtud de los defectos nacionales, literaturizándolos, es decir, idealizándolos" (29), this reference does more to develop Abaitua's character than to present a novelistic ethos, since the idea lacks development elsewhere in *Los pasos incontables*. Nationalists in general are under scrutiny in the novel. Even though Abaitua accommodates a radical nationalist, Ortiz de Zárate, and in fact sacrifices himself so that Ortiz de Zárate can cross the border into France, the de Zárate's character is for the most part repulsive to the reader: he is dirty, always has a cigarette hanging from his mouth, shows up unexpectedly at Abaitu's house, demands unreasonable favors of him, and carries a pistol, willing to kill when the need arises. Few would be tempted to defend his brand of nationalism at the present (in part due to the ideology that motivates the interpretation of the novel espoused by Olaziregi). Another nationalist, Abaitua's close friend Jon Igartua becomes a politician with the Partido Nacionalist Vasco PNV and loses respect within their social circle. On the other hand, the most important characters in the novel, Zabalegi and Abaitua, are given preference because of the way they are presented in relation to death, even as their degree of political (national) conviction wavers throughout the novel. Even so, my attempt to say



that a novel written in Basque by a Basque nationalist is not about securing a new understanding of the national experience can be co-opted (if you permit me the exaggeration) by the circular nature of identitarian thinking, since this novel can be read through a national lens as providing a conception of nation to the nation based on disavowing the nation. There is no outside to the argument.

Really, there is little doubt that arguments can be made about the role a text like Saizarbitoria's has in thinking about the Basque Country; I am not interested in abandoning lines of thought supported within the text of a given work. But, given the nature of a novel like *Los pasos incontables*, aware as it is that the subject "is always a question of the subject *qua* indeterminate" (Lacan 26), I am interested in exploring the workings of indeterminacy therein. Following Olaziregi's description of *Los pasos incontables* as a palimpsest, our reading up to now makes the case that choosing to examine the novel first and foremost on the grounds of a national project is illogical. As with the palimpsest, while one or even several "older" versions, ways of the thinking about the novel in this case, may be visible and even plausible--the idea that Saizarbitoria is continuing to write, "en labores de relleno," filling the Basque nation's literary void, is contradicted by the style and scope of *Los pasos incontables*. What we have instead is something different in many respects, and worth considering on those grounds.

## **Section 5: Political Subjectivity and Decision**

If we approach the question of the political subject conventionally in *Los pasos incontables* we identify, prominently figured, the fictional ETA activist Eduardo Ortiz de

Zarate, who is a constant point of reference for Iñaki Abaitu and Daniel Zabalegi. Zabalegi also appears explicitly in the diegesis of Saizarbitoria's text as one of Ortiz de Zarate's contacts, who Abaitua happens to meet in one of the many scenes linking lived experience and literaturized experience within the novel. Chapter I, following the "Proemio," begins by introducing Ortiz de Zarate (and his string of aliases: *Edorta*, *Zigor*, *Zapa*, *Zadorra*) and by referring to the moment when Ortiz de Zarate and Abaitua meet, putting the political subject in relation to the writing subject in the context of the 1973 trip that Abaitua took to Barcelona, motivated by his work on the Basque dictionary, which was financed by the Catalan bank Caja de Ahorros (21-22). And the details, tedious as they may seem, inform the reader of the political and economic landscape in which the novel unfolds: a reference to the year in which ETA gains unparalleled significance following the assassination of Carrero Blanco, a change in the political system which only marginally alters power, and the ironic fact that intellectual work takes place under the auspices of banks.<sup>47</sup> Although we end up having a great deal of knowledge about Abaitua, since so much of the text is devoted to him, we never get a complete sense of what Abaitua is about: what motivates him, what defines him as a subject. On the other hand, we have relatively little knowledge about Ortiz de Zarate by the end of *Los pasos incontables*, but we nonetheless seem to understand his motivations: political militancy, ETA, cross the border, drink, smoke; he is complete, understandable, maybe even predictable. Abaitua on the contrary is unpredictable, suicidal, mad, split.

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<sup>47</sup> By the end of the novel, Abaitua has completely abandoned the dictionary project and is even dismayed when he finds himself unconsciously working on the *fichas* that at one point he carried everywhere with him. Instead he dedicates his energy to the writing of *Los pasos incontables*.

The reader gets to know Eduardo Ortiz de Zarate as if by reading a police report: "Nacido en Vitoria en 1950. Estudios de Ciencias Económicas, sin terminar. Moreno, a veces se deja barba. Señales: una cicatriz que le cruza la frente desde el nacimiento del cabello, hasta el arranque de la nariz," (21), a description the narrator has in fact indicated was part of Daniel Zabalegi's police file. Ortiz de Zarate is presented as the quintessential tough guy warrior: solitary, a bit dirty, proletarian, taciturn (26). Fitting closely Joseba Zulaika's description of ETA activists' distrust and avoidance of "easy talk" (*Basque Violence* 202), Ortiz de Zárate never says more than a few words at a time, "Me voy contigo" (27), "Hora de irse" (35), "Algo habrá" (356). His scar inevitably leads Abaitua to imagine the combat that must have produced it, even as he finds the scar disgusting to look upon (27). When Ortiz de Zarate is using Abaitua's residence as a safe house, Abaitua observes him begin the day by doing pushups, completing a long set without even taking the cigarette from his mouth (358). The permanence of Ortiz de Zarate's persona is highlighted by the fact he always wears the same clothes, "un jersey marinero azul con botonadura en el hombro, sin camisa, encima de la camiseta," which further emphasize his masculinity, "y eso hacía que su cuello pareciera aún más robusto" (169). He seems determined, capable, reliable, whole. This feeling is emphasized by the fact that very little is known about Ortiz de Zarate, other than his political affiliation, which seems to be enough. He only produces language when necessary, he shares no feelings, there is no other development of his inner self. His story could be the one Abaitua's narrator is referring to when he says that the end is already known, "El resto ya se sabe." (362).

With this image of Ortiz de Zarate in mind, we are reminded of the boundaries that separate a critique of the Cartesian subject from the realm of influence that fixed notions of subjectivity continue to have on lived life.<sup>48</sup> In this way it seems appropriate to accept the criticisms of subjectivity that permeate contemporary critical discourse. Whether I am or not what I *believe* myself to be, it is frightening to begin to think that, not only might I not be what I am, but that my thinking, my willingness to think or not think, is proof that I am more than merely what I am capable of thinking. And that if I relinquish the lie that I am only he or that which thinks, who knows what I will become. It is uncomfortable to imagine a subject (in particular a subject for politics) whose impetus to act defies the predictability of a thinking characterized by determination, certainty, method, calculation, and in which case would cease to be identifiable as subject, since that produces a politics without agency or action. Derrida presents this problem at the beginning of *Politics of Friendship*: "We will then ask ourselves *what* a decision is and *who* decides," emphasizing the *us*, the *who*, before he continues, "And if a decision is--as we are told--active, free, conscious and willful, sovereign. What would happen if we kept this word and this concept, but changed the last determinations?" (*Politics* xi). We would have then a decision indefinable by any "one," never the product of a single determination or a single entity. In a sense, the "self" would no longer decide or it would decide only insofar as it would be hospitable to its own alter-ation, its own splitting or undoing. "Impediment, failure, split," Lacan reminds us, reading Freud's work on the unconscious (25).

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<sup>48</sup> By this I mean that there is no way to bring a theory of the subject to the level of practice without engaging the problem of decision, since decision conditions the passage of one supposed subject position to another (if any such passage or transformation in terms of "a subject" is possible).

Lacan emphasizes that the self is never complete to begin with. There is not the closed self, "a mirage to which is attached the reference to the enveloping psyche, a sort of double of the organism in which this false unity is thought to reside" (Lacan 26), but the "one" characterized by the aforementioned structural failure, "the *one* that is introduced by the experience of the unconscious is the *one* of the split, of the stroke, of rupture" (26). Here Lacan is reading Freud in relation to Descartes, underlining the importance of the self not as the "I" which disregards all previous knowledge as a way of coming into being through thought, "not in the initial method of certainty grounded on the subject" but "the fact that the subject is 'at home' in this field of the unconscious" (36). The self then is never only that which is consciously knowable; it is made up of previous knowledges, primordial knowledges, repressed knowledges, which can arise from a place where "something other demands to be realized--which appears as intentional, of course, but of a strange temporality" (Lacan 25), a temporality I will return to in a moment. Lacan explains how "the unconscious is always manifested as that which vacillates in a split in the subject" (28), meaning that while a Cartesian rejection of what is not known allows for certainty, it is engaging in a kind of untruth with regard to the relationship between thinking and being. In all this we begin to get an idea of what seems like a kind of insanity in Abaitua, and which makes a reading of decision possible through his character.

### **Section 6: Decision and Experience: *Who? Whose decision?***

In order to open oneself to this other possibility of the possible, the word experience itself would have to refer to another concept. And attempt to translate itself, if this other possibility were possible,

into a political language. The price to pay, if this were necessary, would be having to change the meaning of the word 'political' -- in other words, one would have to change politics.

-Jacques Derrida (*Politics* 67)

Faced with the urgency of action, it may be vexing to consider a passive decision as Derrida describes it.<sup>49</sup> Some readers of Derrida, anxious to know and to establish the French thinker's degree of politicized, frequently oppose passivity to activity, arriving at the conclusion that Derrida's discussion of what he calls the "decision of non-decision" is above all a theory of inactivity, a doing of not doing anything.<sup>50</sup> In effect these readers try to apply the calculability of the law to Derrida's thought, reproducing what the French philosopher describes, in a separate context, as the "vertiginous convertibility of opposites: the absent becomes present, the dead living, the poor rich, the weak strong..." (*Politics* 4). However, the argument leveled at Derrida only functions if one ignores his work and that of other thinkers over the years.<sup>51</sup> "Passive" is not the opposite of active

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<sup>49</sup> Most of the major considerations of Derrida's passive decision have come from thinkers whose cultural criticism focuses on Latin America. These include (in alphabetical order) Brett Levinson, in *The Ends of Literature* (2001), Alberto Moreiras in the article, "A God Without Sovereignty. Political *Jouissance*. The Passive Decision," published in the *New Centennial Review* (Winter 2004), and Gareth Williams in the article "Deconstruction and Subaltern Studies, or, a Wrench in the Latin Americanist Assembly Line" and in the book *The Mexican Exception: Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy* (2011). William Sokoloff, in the article "Between Justice and Legality" published in *Political Research Quarterly* (June 2005) also provides a particularly complete understanding of Derrida's concept.

<sup>50</sup> William Sokoloff gives as examples of this William E. Connolly's *The Ethos of Pluralization* (U. of Minnesota P, 1995), Mark Lilla's *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (NY Review of Books, 2001) and Dominic Moran's article "Decisions, Decisions: Derrida on Kierkegaard and Abraham" (*Telos* 123, 107-130, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> In "Signature Event Context" (1977), Derrida characterizes the nature of deconstruction in his discussion on writing: "an opposition of metaphysical concepts

but a locus for conceptual labor.<sup>52</sup> The passive decision is a decision that is other, a decision with no prior model, a decision that can follow no law or rule, precisely because the moment that necessitates decision is singular. No established rule will suffice to render justice at the moment when one must decide (any reflection on the hard decisions you have made might serve as examples). In this manner, decision is also a supremely vulnerable moment, "Those who snigger at discourses on the undecidable believe they are very strong," writes Derrida (*Politics* 4). But the certainty, the strength, of the subject as the basis for decision is insufficient to deal with the incommensurability of the impossible. The subject (as a subject of certainty) will always take a conservative position, a position that reproduces the false totality of the subject as divorced from the truth of doubt. Domination, then, or the effort to conserve the self (a human self, a sovereign self, a national self, a textual self) as a locus of power is tied to this general resistance to talking about a passive decision, already bringing us back to the desire for preservation inherent in Schmitt.<sup>53</sup>

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(e.g., speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the confrontation of two terms, but a hierarchy and the order of a subordination" (*Limited, Inc.* 21), defining the problem as a dissymmetry of power. He explains the double position taking that ensues: "Deconstruction cannot be restricted or immediately pass to a neutralization: it must, through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing--put into practice a *reversal* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system." (21). Derrida's use of the word passive must be understood in this sense, not as just a reversal but as a displacement and therefore as a means of "*intervening* in the field of oppositions [that deconstruction] criticizes and that is also a field of non-discursive forces" (21).

<sup>52</sup> See *Politics of Friendship* pages 6-11 and Derrida's discussion of love (*aimance*) and the act of loving versus being loved.

<sup>53</sup> Consider the constructions that present a decision as the condition of a particular subject position "As an American...I support..." "As a student... I shouldn't..." "As a man..." "As..." Decision also shows itself here to be the structure that links an identity to a rule.

A reflection on decision has been implicit in the argument up to now even as it continues to remain unclear how decision can be analyzed, especially in a text like *Los pasos incontables*, since retrospective examinations of a decision can always find a particular justification, and more so when there are so many disparate elements to work with, and so little to work with in terms of a concrete system made available in the novel. Saizarbitoria agrees explicitly and in practice with Robbe-Grillet's idea that writing is principally an exploration and hence open to a variety of outcomes. If we keep in mind the recent treatment of Lacan and the unconscious, there is a risk that a novel that resides in the fissure that divides subjectivity could find itself at odds with the interests and aims of the author--a kind of betrayal of the author's subjectivity. And this does not include the possibility of what others may choose to do with the text, as discussed previously. It follows, then, that part of Saizarbitoria's exploration takes into account the risk of writing by constructing the text in such a way that the reader faces a similar responsibility to the writer, as she or he chooses what to do with the work. Given the pieces examined up to now, namely the relationships between time, certainty, subjectivity and action, we can better approach other aspects of the problem.

Rather than act as a proposal advocating the passive decision as a "better" means of deciding, the work here is oriented towards reaching a more accurate description of what decision is. It is an attempt to think decision, following Freud's discussion of the unconscious from 1915, as shaped not by the mirage of a "one" that Lacan describes but as a decision grounded in an understanding of the subject as both conscious and unconscious, just as dependent on rationality as it is on the "strange temporality" of the



unconscious, driven by desire, by the pleasure principle.<sup>54</sup> In what follows, Derrida brings our understanding of activity and passivity into further conflict while indicating the unconscious nature of decision:

The passive decision, condition of the event, is always in me, structurally, another event, a rending decision as the decision of the other. Of the absolute other in me, the other as the absolute that decides on me in me. Absolutely singular in principle, according to its most traditional concept, the decision is not only always exceptional, *it makes an exception for/of me*. In me. I decide, I make up my mind in all sovereignty - this would mean: the other than myself, the me as other and other than myself, *he makes or I make* an exception of the same. This normal exception, the supposed norm of all decision, exonerates from no responsibility. Responsible for myself before the other, I am first of all and also *responsible for the other before the other*. (*Politics* 68-69)

This passage engages the logic of sovereignty and of nations, whose foundations depend on the mirage of certainty, in a fashion that puts the indeterminacy of the subject in direct relation to the issue of responsibility, which can only be understood by way of the strange temporality of the unconscious as a place in which desire (and also the repressed) engages history, much in the way the writer for Robbe-Grillet puts history in relation to the present in the literary work. We can return to Freud to emphasize the dual nature and significance of the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, precluding the active-passive opposition, or the idea that decision can be *only* passive since "the system *Ucs.* [unconscious] would not in normal conditions be able to bring about any

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<sup>54</sup> It is important to note the strange relationship of the unconscious to temporality, whose processes Freud describes as acting independently of time: "The processes of the system *Ucs.* are *timeless*; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system *Cs*" ("The Unconscious" 186). In a similar fashion, "The *Ucs.* processes pay just as little regard to *reality*. They are subject to the pleasure principle; their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfill the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation" (186).

expedient muscular acts, with the exception of those already organized as reflexes" ("The Unconscious" 187).<sup>55</sup> There is an activity to the passive, but the shape of this activity will never have a predictable and subjectively identifiable form if it is to relate uniquely to the future.

In addition to any author's broader engagement with the idea of decision at the level of style, in order to produce a narrative aimed at bringing "into the world certain interrogations...not yet known as such to themselves" and even "To try and find out why I wanted to write it" (Robbe-Grillet 14), *Los pasos incontables* also explores other moments of decision.<sup>56</sup> The first example takes place when Abaitua agrees to help Alberto Pardo transport someone across the border, which Abaitua agrees to do out of friendship, "él estaba dispuesto a hacer cualquier cosa por su amistad," even as he fumes about the bad luck that got him into that situation (63). Abaitua's decision is conditioned partially by a previous acceptance of the risks of being friends with political activists, even as there is not much choice in deciding who your lifelong friends are. Although Abaitua reacts to a kind of rule in his decision making--the rule of friendship--it is clearly a rule guided to a large degree by unconditionality, and assumes all of the risk of a

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<sup>55</sup> Derrida: "For yet again, one *must* certainly *know*, one *must know it*, knowledge is necessary if one is to assume responsibility, but the decisive or deciding moment of responsibility supposes a leap by which an act takes off, ceasing in that instant to follow the consequence of what is - that is, of that which can be determined by science or consciousness - and thereby *frees itself* (this is what is called freedom), by the act of its act, of what is therefore heterogeneous to it, that is, knowledge. *In sum, a decision is unconscious--insane as that may seem, it involves the unconscious and nevertheless remains responsible*" (*Politics* 69).

<sup>56</sup> Sazarbitoria puts it a bit more humbly (perhaps a false humility), "Uno escribe esa novela que no encuentra" (Etxeberria 105)

hospitality without limits.<sup>57</sup> Abaitua has no idea who he is agreeing to help, what they have done, nor does he consider the kind of trouble he might get into; in many senses this is a case of a passive decision, a decision beyond reason that responds to a particular moment, in line with one's desire. The activist in need of transport turns out to be Ortiz de Zárate, who conditions the rest of Abaitua's experience, which, in the end, is what is at stake.

In a sentence filled with risk, Derrida asks, "What would a future be if the decision were able to be programmed, and if the risk [*l'aléa*], the uncertainty, the unstable certainty, the inassurance of the 'perhaps', were not suspended on it at the opening of what comes, flush with the event, within it and with an open heart?" (*Politics* 29). The danger is that if you open yourself to risk "with an open heart" while "suspended on it at the opening of what comes," you *increase* destabilization, you put me at risk, you curtail my previously known ability to act. How will I act if in your threatening to undo my stable present I must respond to your openness, your open heart? Carl Schmitt, when reflecting on the figure of the partisan, answers these questions. The partisan, he tells us, "proceeds at his own risk, and in this sense, is treated as being *risky*" (27). The partisan cannot be allowed to traipse by, increasing risk, being risky. "Thus," Schmitt goes on, "the word *risky* also has a precise meaning, namely that risky actions are treated at their own risk, and the worst consequences of their success or failure are taken for granted, so that there can be no question of injustice when the severest consequences ensue" (*Theory* 28). The unpredictability that risk presents not just to the self (any self who engages in

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<sup>57</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion on the difference between hospitality without exceptions and limited hospitality.

risk) but to the "greater" self (the political order in the case of Schmitt) justifies maximum violence in order to preclude the risk of an unknown future: a decision that is other, a politics that is other. The decision to decide is terrifying because it establishes a relationship with history in the interruption of the self (what the self used to be) while leaving that self open to something that is unknown and unknowable insofar as that is the nature of the future. For Schmitt's writing, this unknown future is so *risky* that avoiding it justifies the greatest violence in order to preserve the "greater" self (the self in power). In many ways, this is the battle that ETA and the Spanish state cannot stop fighting, since both think about risk in the same terms, and both end up justifying the greatest use of force to achieve their goals.

This passage from *Political Theology* is illustrative: "The existence of the state is undoubted proof of its superiority over the validity of the legal norm. The decision frees itself from all normative ties and becomes in the true sense absolute. The state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right of self-preservation, as one would say" (12). The guarantee of safety, justified by the superiority of the self. In a historical sense, the execution of Angel Otaegui and other political militants by Franco's government in September of 1975, despite massive international opposition, exemplifies the final rumble of a sovereign whose certainty and self-security is in danger of perishing. But even the subject of certainty perishes. In a way, *Los pasos incontables* moves away from decisionism as a model at the point that it announces the end on the first page, acknowledging that the illusion of self-preservation is irrelevant, given that "el final será el mismo."

Instead, following its literary form, the novel speaks to an idea of decision that would be necessarily fractured and suspended--characterized by the transformation or even destruction of the subject in the simultaneous "invention of a new subject who is then re-invented by the next decision that splits apart the subject in the ensuing decision" (Solokoff 345). Decision is somehow the space where what I "am," the material and the space that "I" occupy encounters what is beyond me (if we can even speak of such a separation): life, living reality, the world, an other, in an occurrence that perforce changes the subject (the I, the you, the us...): "All decisions immediately alter the subject" (Solokoff 345). The subject immured in certainty, Schmitt's sovereign for example, on the other hand, "already, never decides anything; its identity in itself and its calculable permanence make every decision an accident which leaves the subject unchanged and indifferent. *A theory of the subject is incapable of accounting for the slightest decision.*" (Derrida, *Politics* 68). Jean-Luc Nancy speaks similarly of the subject when thought of as individual, as "the absolutely detached for-itself, taken as origin and certainty" (3). Both thinkers are referring to notions of the self that defend against the vicissitudes of contingency and unpredictability, leaving no room for "another concept of experience," for a real and wholly unimagined future. We have already seen the way in which Saizarbitoria's novel attempts to think writing as the exploration of experience; similarly it welcomes the constant possibility of alteration.

While many of the structural elements of *Los pasos incontables* work alongside Derrida's and Nancy's thinking about subjectivity, the novel still makes efforts to think about the possibility of "una muerte digna" even for its subject of certainty. Hours before Zabalegi's execution, at four in the morning as it is pointed out, one of the guards that

Zabalegi has gotten to know leaves him pen and paper. Although Zabalegi does not immediately react, the narrator informs us that, "De hecho, Daniel Zabalegi había pensado escribir. Incluso tenía pensado el texto. 'Muero por Euskadi. Detrás vendrán quienes continúen la lucha. Patria o muerte'" (304). But rather than write he hesitates, reluctant to accept the guard's offer since moments before they had been arguing, "...no cogió el bolígrafo. En cierta medida por orgullo, porque, tras la bronca con los funcionarios, no quería aceptar nada de su mano. Y sobre todo por las dudas ortográficas," referring likewise to the necessarily uncomfortable indeterminacy of writing, especially in a language like Zabalegi's native Basque, whose multiple dialects and oral traditions allow for competing orthographic interpretations (304). A set of words repeats over and over in his head, "patria o muerte," but finally he writes nothing, "Pero ha decidido no escribir" (305). It is suggested that the sterile opposition that makes up the phrase "patria o muerte" amounts to the true death of language in a novel like Saizarbitoria's in which no writing can be taken at face value. And when Zabalegi is confronted with the imposition of death, it is as if he gains awareness that the phrase "patria o muerte" is empty, or at least false, since death is already the only certainty guaranteed by existence and not merely an alternative to one's political struggle. The relationship to death therefore cannot assume the exclusion of death in favor of a superior object (life, patria) but instead must be thought of in relation to an experience of time. It is the attempt to experience as calculable the impossibility of death and time that unseat Zabalegi's certainty, which is reflected in his inability to write.

The narrative shifts slightly as this scene continues to play out. The reader revisits Zabalegi's struggle in the text of Saizarbitoria's novel as part of the commentary by

Lasagabaster, an actual literary critic, and also a character in the novel, whose work Saizarbitoria's narrator is referencing (338-340). The style seems to have changed, verbs are missing, and the details are slightly different: "En su mente, aquellas palabras que no sabe escribir. 'Doy la vida por Euskadi, otros vendrán detrás.' Ganas de pronunciarlas en voz alta" (339). This time Zabalegi in fact does write "'Doy la vida por Euskadi' escribe su mano," while evoking the violence that is imminent, "la mano que dentro de dos horas no podrá escribir, que ya no sentirá. Que no sentirá, porque él es la mano y los ojos y el pecho." Writing, the performance of writing as indeterminacy, and the pieces that make up the writer: the hand, the eyes, the self, are all put into relation in the face of the certainty of a death whose hour has been set. The "ha decidido no escribir" seems to be contradicted here with the statement "Y quedarán esas palabras: 'Doy la vida por Euskadi'" (339). He is told by the guard that there is time left yet to confess, it is only four in the morning (338). Zabalegi points to the paper as if to say that he plans to keep writing and the guard encourages him, "claro, claro, escribe" (339). But "No tiene, sin embargo, nada que escribir," we are told, "porque todas las palabras le resultan inciertas. La misma palabra *Euskadi*, no sabe si se escribe *Euzkadi*, por ejemplo" (339). Finally he folds the paper, tears it in half, then again and again before burning the pieces in an ashtray, wondering if those are the words he would have wanted to leave his friends, "Mirando las llamas, piensa que no sabe con seguridad si serían ésas las palabras que hubiera querido decirles" (340).

The mirage of oneness that Zabalegi assumes ought to guide his hand here, in order to produce a definitive final message for those that continue to partake in his struggle, gives way to the fracture, the split, an uncertain discourse, an unstable

discourse. Derrida remarks "If the *stabilized* stability of certainty is never given, if it is conquered in the course of a stabilization, then the stabilization of what *becomes* certain must cross--and therefore, in one way or another, recall or be reminded of--the suspended indecision, the undecidable *qua* the time of reflection. (*Politics* 15). In other words, the attempt to stabilize or determine action ahead of time will necessarily be marked by a paralyzing fissure, something inassimilable. It is in this fashion that Zabalegi's stabilized discourse fails, trapping him with indecision at a moment when time no longer remains. While a writing that stabilizes, that produces certainty, can overlook the relation to history, Zabalegi's effort to produce a stable text is rejected at a moment that defies subjectivity, certainty. Both Zabalegi, and Abaitua as the teller of his tale, confront instability and the possibility of alteration as precipitated by the attempt to respond to history (in the form of Zabalegi's death at the hands of the state). In this fashion, we can imagine the relationship between action, alteration, and responsibility in contrast to the application of a rule:

the responsibility of what remains to be decided or done (in actuality) cannot consist in following, applying, or carrying out a norm or rule. Wherever I have at my disposal a determinable rule, I know what must be done, and as soon as such knowledge dictates the law, action follows knowledge as a calculable consequence: one *knows* what path to take, one no longer hesitates. The decision then no longer decides anything but is made in advance and is thus in advance annulled. It is simply deployed, without delay, presently, with the automatism attributed to machines. There is no longer any place for justice or responsibility (whether juridical, political, or ethical). (*Rogues* 84-85)

Reacting to history without the aid of an infinite ability to calculate thus entails a listening, a sensitivity, an openness to the unconscious and to everything else that constitutes the decider, the actor, the doer, the subject, split as it is, in what is necessarily an "invincible listening to ourselves" (Tarizzo 21).



Saizarbitoria complicates the reader's ability to listen, and to respond, by returning once again to Iñaki Abaitua's death, mentioned on the novel's first page. Having abandoned his work on the dictionary, devoted to the writing of *Los pasos incontables* and struggling with the paranoia that Ortiz de Zárate has generated in him, Abaitua seems to commit himself to the suicide the novel has suggested is his destiny all along; his, however, is a death in two acts, or perhaps two deaths (or no death at all?). Early on the narrator suggested that even the most definitive and final occurrence in a novel is open to repetition and ambiguity, citing Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*, where Rameau appears walking around the streets of Paris several pages after the author has alluded to the character's death (22). Without this clue, a rather significant *contretemps* may not be obvious to readers, as it seems it has not been to critics.<sup>58</sup>

Iñaki Abaitua's first death takes place in the last pages of Chapter XIV. After weeks with an untreated gonorrhea infection, probably from his lover Susana, Abaitua spends the day drinking gin tonics and reciting poems from Miguel de Unamuno's *Cancionero* in Hendaya, France, just across the river from his girlfriend's (Julia's) house in Fuenterrabia/Hondarribia, Spain<sup>59</sup> (340). He gets kicked out of one bar after another and while passing a crowd of Basque nationalists adorned with *ikurriñas*, likely affiliated with the conservative Partido Nacionalista Vasco, who are drinking and singing folk

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<sup>58</sup> Gabilondo's article reads Abaitua's death as straightforward and definitive.

<sup>59</sup> Abaitua welcomes his infection with an astounding degree of hospitality: "Iñaki Abaitua no quiso beneficiarse de la acción de la penicilina. Observó interesado el desarrollo de la enfermedad que, por otra parte, no le limitaba en ninguna actividad. El mayor inconveniente se le presentó a los diez días y consistió en una inflamación de los testículos y en el pus que le obligó a llevar el pene envuelto en pañuelos para que no se le ensuciase el pantalón. La fiebre, por otra parte, que no era muy alta, le mantuvo de alguna manera ausente, con una sensación de lasitud que, hasta cierto punto, le resultaba agradable" (336).

songs surrounded by their hunting dogs, he accidentally trips on one of the dogs, which the men interpret as intentional (341).<sup>60</sup> After they insult Abaitua, he purposefully kicks one of their dogs, before falling down drunkenly and insulting them back, scorning their institutionalized nationalism; they proceed to kick him.<sup>61</sup> Finally they let up, seeing how drunk he is. Abaitua accuses them of killing all the birds in the area and of being cynical fascists, before falling down a hill into the river, up to his waist in water. He tries to crawl out but is unsuccessful:

agotó sus últimas fuerzas intentando salir del río, y quedó tumbado boca abajo, sintiendo en las mejillas el frescor del lodo, el olor penetrante de las materias elementales y el murmullo de los sumideros que le trajeron el recuerdo de las aguas cristalinas de un jardín lejano. Tras abrir nuevamente la boca en vano, se rindió y entregó su mente a la tranquilizadora idea de la muerte. (342)

But the next chapter begins and Abaitua seems okay, despite scratches on his face and eyebrow (345). As he arrives home, he finds Ortiz de Zarate, who has made keys to the house, sitting on the bed. As always, Ortiz de Zarate needs something: once again, passage across the border. First Abaitua hesitates, asking Ortiz de Zárate how long he plans on staying, but then proposes that he knows how to cross the border, deciding to take Ortiz de Zárate. Finally Abaitua is possessed by a moment of intense determination, "Tenía bien pensado lo que haría entonces" (364). Grabbing one of the dictionary cards and a pen, a gold plated Mont Blanc that he only uses for signatures, he reads the card, "La ficha correspondía a la palabra 'frontera'. 'Frontera. n. (1627). El momento o el lugar

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<sup>60</sup> The *ikurriña* is the red, white, and green flag of the Basque country and the song being sung is a Basque folk tune "Txoria txori," popularized by Mikel Laboa. This is also the song with which Julio Medem opens his *La pelota vasca: La piel contra la piedra* (2003), studied in Chapter 3.

<sup>61</sup> "'Sois una tribu ignorante de carnívoros, cuya máxima aspiración es llegar a ser peones de la Diputación'" (341).

en el que algo termina. Tú eres el principio, la fuente, la duración y la frontera de todo" (364). Considering that Abaitua may well be dead (or not, since he is fictitious), there is at least a possibility that this is a purely literary ending. The previous quote is preceded by the narrator's recount of the way in which Abel Osa, in an article that references Abaitua, and journalists, informed by Jon Igartua, choose to interpret Abaitua's now imminent death as an act of heroism, defining the passage as a problem for language interpretation, always open to the possibility that recounting a person's last minutes can serve to illustrate injustice, or suffering, or grace, but can also be appropriated, by the state, or in this case by the Partido Nacionalista Vasco that Abaitua despises throughout the novel.<sup>62</sup>

Now the narrator informs us that Abaitua does not in fact plan on writing anything--he imagines his own description of Zabalegi's last attempt to write, as if he were to recreate it. Finally, he writes his signature, and carefully folds the dictionary card for *frontera* into four pieces. Retrospectively, the narrator tells us "Eso fue todo lo que encontraron en su mesa" (364). Abaitua then drives Ortiz de Zarate to the French-Spanish border, but rather than attempt to cross, after drawing the attention of the Guardia Civil, he decides they will try to cross the border at the river. Abaitua and Ortiz de Zarate get

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<sup>62</sup> Jon Igartua's quote in the newspaper reads "'a pesar de no estar de acuerdo con sus métodos de lucha, rendir el homenaje que se debe a quienes dan la vida por una idea, y que mi amigo se merece como intelectual y patriota'" (364). The article by Abel Osa: "titulado 'El arma del escritor', en el que habló de la necesidad de llevar a cabo la elección correcta, como hizo Ernesto Guevara cuando tuvo que decidirse en el combate, entre optar por la metralleta o por el maletín de médico" (364). Famously in this case, Guevara opted for the machine gun, which puts Abaitua on the side of the battle in Abel Osa's mind (and in the mind of the readers). By now Saizarbitoria's scepticism with regard to these uses of memory should be obvious, adding to my previous arguments about the decisions regarding how readers and critics choose to use literature.

out of the car and run for the river, and Abaitua gets in up to his waist, in a repetition of the images used to describe the scene of the first death, before hearing the "HALT!" from the Guardia Civil. He turns around slowly and faces their lanterns and reaches into the pocket of his sports jacket for the gold plated Mont Blanc that he only uses for signatures. As he pulls it out and points it at them, like a pistol, he is shot twice.

It does not matter much whether this is Abaitua's real or his literaturized death since of course both are "only" literary. In this last case of a decision made by Abaitua, Saizarbitoria puts the reader in a place where, faced with the absolute ambiguity of a double death, the reader must take part in some kind of decision. This decision might take several forms: the reader might choose not to choose, leaving *Los pasos incontables* under the bed or on the nightstand. The reader might, following Jon Igartua and Abel Osa, read this moment as Iñaki Abaitua's real (and dignified) death, especially since saying that Abaitua died face down in the mud, as he appears to at the end of chapter XIV, does very little for thinking about Abaitua as a national hero. I choose to read both of these deaths as part of the textual body, following the Diderot reference early on. On the one hand, it presents a situation that reproduces the conditions of decision, where one cannot, but one must. At the same time, it treats Abaitua's performance of death as politically significant even as it puts that political significance into question, returning the problem to the realm of language and writing. Although the issue remains tenuous, Saizarbitoria has managed to charge his narrative with this idea of a relationship to vitality through decision; the decision that abandons vitality, "y entregó su mente a la tranquilizadora idea de la muerte" or the decision that proposes an ongoing relationship to life, through writing, through a figure, through the stylized performance of a dual, armed

with a gold Mont Blanc fountain pen. Even then, this death and this decision are shown at risk of being appropriated for the uses of calculability, by Jon Igartua and Abel Osa, interested in providing Basque nationalism with a hero. In this fashion, the success of the literary performance is both affirmed and denied, since appropriation of that death by a particular cause, approaches once again that "línea finísima, de matices muy tenues" separating dignified from miserable death.

### **Conclusion: Urgency, Decision, Vitality**

The decision to write in a particular way, to participate in a particular politics, to respond to a particular decision, all converge on the issue of responsibility, embedded in everything said up to now. The kind of impossible decision I am referring to comes only at a moment of urgency, at a time where the conditions of the present demand a response or "...*the obligation to answer*," says Derrida, "*the responsibility* which consists in calling as much as in responding to the call, and always in the name of a singular solitude, proper solitude, solitude strictly speaking." (*Politics* 39). When trying to imagine the conditions of such a decision, one would hope that rationality could be called upon to make the "best" decision. The most well informed decision, a decision that takes into account all of the factors, all of the potentially thinkable elements that define a situation. The passive decision is criticized because since if it does not represent inactivity (a doing nothing) then its activity is assumed to be conditioned by a psychological passivity, a lack of reason or a rejection of reason. Far from this being the case, for Derrida "It is necessary to know, to be sure, to know that knowledge is indispensable; we need to have knowledge, the best and most comprehensive available, in order to make a decision or take responsibility" (*Rogues* 145). The fact that Saizarbitoria uses the figure of death to

think about decision is telling since it assumes an experience beyond the limits of collective knowledge, "it remains for everyone to take his own death *upon himself*" (*Gift* 45), with no option but to face uncertainty.

In order to be responsible one must be incessant, sleepless, in one's attempt to know and therefore respond. But this tireless and invaluable rationality is at some point brought to a halt by history. By Ortiz de Zárate presenting himself at your door, by an infection, by history, crisis, struggle, injustice; they present themselves and demand a response, at which point "the moment and structure of the '*il faut*,' of the 'it is necessary,' just like the responsible decision, are and must remain heterogeneous to knowledge." (*Rogues* 145).<sup>63</sup> In any case, this is the only decision that could be recognized properly as decision, where the intransigence of history urges a response that doesn't have the luxury of waiting and of infinite ratiocination. Rather than *make* history by shaping the lives of others in an attempt to train life, predict life, secure life, make profit off of life, this decision must relate both vigilantly and enthusiastically to its critique of power in the present and the absolute unknowability of the future.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a decision that depends radically and insanely on history and on the complexity of imagining one's relationship to (other) life. A decision that is utterly embedded in the problematics of time even as it arises from the temporally unbounded space of the unconscious, as a response to history and as responsibility itself. There is little "understanding" of this decision, except as we have tried to do through bursts of language, pushing together

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<sup>63</sup> See also in *Politics of Friendship* page 69.

<sup>64</sup> Logics of calculability then are linked to biopolitics, the regulation of life, and would require further examination in relation to the problem of decision, especially if one is to imagine a positive biopolitics, as Roberto Espósito proposes in *Bios*.

pieces of a fabric that we can return to. The earlier reference to the heart, along with its implications for vitality, marks for Derrida a central metaphor for thinking the decision and responsibility:

It is this act of the act that we are attempting here to think: 'passive', delivered over to the other, suspended over the other's heartbeat. For a few sentences earlier on, 'its heartbeat' had to be necessarily accorded thus: as the heartbeat of the other. Where I am helpless, where I decide what I cannot fail to decide, freely, necessarily, receiving my very life from the heartbeat of the other. We say not only heart but heartbeat: that which, *from one instant to another*, having come again from an other of the other to whom it is delivered up (and this can be me), this heart receives, it will *perhaps* receive in a rhythmic pulsation what is called blood, which in turn will receive the force needed to arrive. (Politics 69)

Only with a great deal of uncertainty can we imagine the heart that beats in me as the heart of an other, an other that gives "in a rhythmic pulsation what is called blood" but that could be any rhythmic pulsation, both a giving and a receiving, a listening that lends itself to speech, a sensitivity to the unknowable in me that arrives urgently but without warning, somewhere between the suspended contraction of the heart and its consequent expansion, blood flowing forth. A passive decision, a decision "worthy of the name," not just in narrativized life, not just in theory, but in lived life, political life, "...a vital decision, a decision for vitality, or not, in which the future lasts forever with or without us" (Williams 54). Even here in this text that ends on a heartbeat.

## Chapter 3

### **Disarming the Question: The War Within Discourse, Historical Memory, and the Politics of Victimhood in *Tiro en la cabeza* by Jaime Rosales (2008)**

#### **Chapter Introduction**

After examining ETA's role in a politics of hostility, and the nature of the decision to take part in armed struggle, we now come to what could be described as the "war within discourse" in the figure of the victim, alluded to in Chapter 1 (Derrida "Violence and Metaphysics" 146). Here an analysis of the terrorist subject collides with the problem of historical memory, but not without certain challenges. Conversations on historical memory in Spain are typically focused on the effects of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship that followed while the issue of terrorist violence is seen as separate.<sup>65</sup> This separation stems in part from the fantasy that Spain, after the Transition, is politically changed and thus historically distinct, despite retaining a structural and ideological

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<sup>65</sup> Jo Labanyi makes similar observation about the way the use of the phrase "memoria histórica" excludes other national traumas, "Este uso de la frase no deja de ser curioso. Por un lado, al hacer referencia exclusiva a un período determinado de la historia, hace invisibles otros episodios problemáticos de la historia nacional, cuyos crímenes también merecen ser abordados" ("Historias..." 88). Labanyi specifies that these other episodes are, "por ejemplo, el genocidio en América, la intolerancia religiosa y étnica, etc." (88), but the problem of separatist violence can be added to the list.



continuity with Francoism.<sup>66</sup> However, it is precisely because of the failure of the Transition that ETA justifies sustaining armed activity up until recently. Thus, the debt of responsibility towards the victims of ETA is necessarily intertwined with other debts to the dead, linking the problem of terrorism to historical memory. Despite attempts in the present to prioritize the victims of terrorism over other victims, pain and the realities of conflict, disagreement, and difference, are shared across multiple narratives.

ETA plays several roles here. It can be viewed as a victim of Francoist attacks on subversive political activity in addition to generally representing the cultural repression experienced in Spain's Basque region. The 1977 Amnesty Law therefore continues to provide relevant legal protection to ETA members (and other political activists) of that era.<sup>67</sup> ETA is also considered the principal enemy of the state in post-amnesia, post-Franco Spain, and therefore someone to answer for the crimes of political violence in a broad sense in the present. ETA serves, thus, as a whipping boy for political criminality, given that the Amnesty Law ends up providing the legacy of Francoism with an

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<sup>66</sup> The nature of this distinction is, not surprisingly, due to the insufficiency of the Transition itself referenced in Ch. 1. See for example the work of Paloma Aguilar Fernández in *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política* (2008) or the article by Cristina Moreiras-Menor, "Historia a contrapelo: Estado de Excepción y temporalidad en la Transición española." For other contributions to an understanding of the antagonistic nature of the Transition and the related discourses on memory, see Victoria Prego's *Así se hizo la Transición* (1995); Teresa Vilaros's *El mono del desencanto: Una crítica cultural de la Transición española (1975-1993)* (1998); Joan Ramón Resina's *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy* (2000); Cristina Moreiras-Menor's *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática* (2002); and Alberto Medina Domínguez's *Exorcismos de la memoria. Políticas de la melancolía en la España de la transición* (2001).

<sup>67</sup> The law provided members of the ETA (and other "political criminals") with legal protection for aggressions committed prior to December 15, 1976, including "delitos de sangre" such as the assassinations of Melitón Manzanás in 1968. It also set the tone and provided a legal basis for the "Pacts of Silence" during the Transition.

unexpected immunity.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, a global framework for addressing terrorism, known in Europe as "Enemy Criminal Law," allows for unprecedented limitations on basic freedoms in order to limit terrorism (Gómez-Jara Díez 4). The laws that have grown out of this trend, such as Spain's Ley de Partidos Políticos (2002) and Article 578 of the Spanish Penal Code, end up being powerful and potentially abusive tools. In the sphere of government, the risk of association with criminal enmity, reinforced by these laws, has created a climate where condemning ETA and professing victimhood are practically prerequisites for participating in politics. This climate has taken hold in such a way that the "victims of ETA constitute a kind of ideal ego of a new, seemingly incontrovertible model of democratic statesmanship" (Crumbaugh "Are we all...?" 378).

If ETA's obsessive commitment to armed struggle in the past could be described as a saturation of subjectivity understood as action, this new model of statesmanship favors a subject who, like the victim, has been rendered inert. The history of victimhood (and the history of its manipulation) remains strong in Spain and even victim's rights groups construct and reinforce discourses that disguise the elements of conflict that produced victims in the first place. Certain cultural works such as Iñaki Arteta's *Trece*

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<sup>68</sup> The Ley de Amnistía de 1977 was opposed at the time of its passing by Alianza Popular, composed of individuals closely aligned with the dictatorship such as Manuel Fraga. Alianza Popular, which would later become Partido Popular, was one of the few groups to oppose the Ley de Amnistía and abstained (along with the radical Basque left) from voting in its favor. In a relatively recent news article by Mónica Ceberio Belaza, she cites Alianza Popular's position at the time: "Operar con el concepto de amnistía, que borra el delito, para hechos atroces de muerte a sangre fría, implacables, proyecta dudas sobre la legitimidad de tales hechos, lo que puede resultar socialmente intolerable y gravemente pernicioso." This fits into what will be described later, in reading Justin Crumbaugh's article, as the Partido Popular's effective manipulation of victimhood. Meanwhile, it ignores the extensive crimes committed on Spanish soil since the beginning of the Spanish Civil War up until Franco's death (and later if you consider, for example, the activity of the Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación).

*entre mil* (2005) play into these trends, reflecting the prescriptions of the Spanish Penal Code, while others, like Julio Medem's *La pelota vasca* (2003), try to recast the problem by allowing for multiple, contradictory perspectives; both of these trends are similarly reflected in academic criticism. As a response, this chapter mounts an attack on the totalizing vision of victimhood found in Arteta's work but also does not propose a solution in the style of Medem's "polifonía humana" (18-19). Instead, it examines Jaime Rosales's unconventional depiction of both the victim and the political subject in *Tiro bat buruan/Tiro en la cabeza* (2008), which portrays the attack on two *guardias civiles* by ETA members in Capbreton, France in 2007. Through an understanding of finitude, this discussion aims to leave a space open for political agency while recognizing the debt to the dead that still demands our attention.

### **Section 1: Historical Memory, The Victims of Terrorism, and the Weight of the Past**

Numerous scholars have chosen to comment on the issue of historical memory by describing the shape and state of the academic space where these problems might be addressed, rather than confront the structures that produce the violence at risk of being forgotten or remembered. In the introduction to a special issue on historical memory in Spain in *Hispanic Issues On Line* (2012), Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini write that "we are witnessing a crisis of overproduction from scholarly as well as creative angles, as these years of imaginative and critical pondering of the events of recent history

seem to have reached a point of exhaustion" (9).<sup>69</sup> The authors note that the remembrance of the past continues to be a relevant topic, but their position is too sympathetic to the idea that the academic field is a marketplace. They reproduce this logic by writing about the field in terms of the available positions left for the taking (10). Txetxu Aguado provides a form of clarification when he says "lo que cansa no es tanto la temática en sí como la repetición de los mismos lugares comunes, de la puesta en escena de los mismos estereotipos" (11). The issue for Aguado is not so much one of "most positions having been staked," as Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini write (10), but that the same positions appear over and over.

In response to these authors, Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones directs the debate back to the problematic nature of memory itself, by insisting that "we should not conceive the Spanish historical memory as a pluralistic market of recollections where there are potential consumers (so to speak) for each one" ("A secret agreement..." 91). He does not discount the importance of "Multiplicity and variety" that Aguado ask for, but specifies that they "are not ultimate goals, but a starting point" (91). The same author adds that the challenge of a true plurality of memories is that, given their origin in conflict, they are "antagonistic, controversial and quarreling" (91).<sup>70</sup> The issue then is not

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<sup>69</sup> Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini point out Isaac Rosa's ironically titled novel *¡Otra maldita novela sobre la Guerra Civil!* (2007) as an example of the degree to which an "overabundance of interest" in the issue of historical memory, specifically in the realm of cultural production, has reached "productive saturation" (1).

<sup>70</sup> The basis for this conflict is not the "ontological difference" that Schmitt identifies as the reason for enmity, but is instead the conflict generated through the violence of repression or exploitation, around a wrong or a harm, to use the terms discussed via Rancière in Chapter 2. Gómez López-Quiñones is building specifically on Chantal Mouffe's notion of "antagonistic pluralism" (Mouffe 1-9 qtd. in "A secret agreement" 91). His justification for employing this concept in the following quote provides an

a saturation of positions but the avoidance of disagreement that must take place at the encounter of memories that are fundamentally unequal, dissimilar, and incompatible.<sup>71</sup> In this sense, attempts to address the victim, and historical memory, benefit from contact with the examination of a politics of hostility discussed in Chapter 1 and the need for a different conceptualization of decision discussed in Chapter 2. Here, however, the confrontation takes place through language, adding to the discussions in previous chapters about the moment of politics by reflecting on the *aftermath* of that moment. The discourses on the victim, then, are a kind of *apparition* of a politics of hostility, a ghost that tries to fight off the already dead enemy while also making itself visible in the

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appropriate summary of the challenges of equating dominant discourses with truth: "I find Mouffe's idea apposite because it helps us envision how divergent historical memories of the Spanish Civil War interact with each other. . . These conflicting memories are not peacefully positioned side by side, as if displayed in a fetishistic exhibition of accumulated symbolic capital (plurality for the sake of plurality). There is a deep-rooted tension between these memories, which quite often contradict/negate each other since they belong to irreconcilable political traditions. Their own existence is, in summary, bound to the fight for legitimacy and to the delegitimation of other conflicting political memories. There is constant friction between left-wing and right-wing memorialistic factions, and these contradictions and incompatibilities are being continuously resolved and reopened in a struggle for hegemony; that is, for a position of social ascendancy and political preeminence" (91-92). An excellent example in film of this friction is Julio Medem's *La pelota vasca* (2003), upon which Gómez López-Quiñones has written similarly about conflict. The film generated such controversy upon its release precisely because it threatens to delegitimize the homogenizing narratives about victimhood in Spain, upsetting the structure of social ascendancy.

<sup>71</sup> In a response framed by an understanding of politics as consensus, Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini play devil's advocate with Gómez López-Quiñones by arguing that "The focalization of official discourse on a conflictive and often painful past may seem politically counter-productive, as it generates the sort of conflict that one may deem scarcely urgent and highly divisive socially, especially in a country still marked by the Civil War" (3). It is useful to reference this position, whose attitude echoes the dominant discourse in Spain since the Transition. However, it is necessary to recognize that truly conflictive language never manifests itself fully in "official discourse." Even contentious legislation like the Historical Memory Law, which is contentious enough that the Partido Popular treats as a kind of lie, contains self-defeating language that keeps it from acquiring a truly antagonistic character. This is developed in the section below on Law and the Self Destruction of Democracy.

debates on historical memory.<sup>72</sup> While the work in these pages does not aim to be a comprehensive treatment of the expansive debates on historical memory, it links them with the issue of the victim through a shared basis in conflict and acts as a first point of insertion.<sup>73</sup> It is not a *new* position, but an attempt at seeing together known positions that conflict and contradict, with all their noise, in contrast to the silence of official discourse.

The second point of insertion speaks to a spirit in the debates on memory that is seen as *passé* even as it demands continuous renewal. The abstract nature of addressing the victim through books, movies, laws, and scholarship, allows for the fact that we are discussing the dead--and that the dead continue to make demands on life in the present--to be overlooked. Even the language of the most fervent advocates for the victims, such as the Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo, fails to honor the dead by adhering to

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<sup>72</sup> Justin Crumbaugh states in clear terms the basis for thinking the relationship between the victims of ETA and the victims of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism: "Given that the project of historical memory has blossomed in the context of a media obsession with the 'lucha contra el terrorismo,' though, it is important to be conscious that those killed, wounded, tortured, and imprisoned by Nationalist violence and postwar repression, as they become publicly constituted as victims, implicitly enter into an imagined dialogue with the victims of ETA" ("Are we all...?" 367). Historical memory then is "not only about its stated objective of revisiting the past in order to achieve justice and national reconciliation in the present" but about challenging "the conservative monopoly over victimhood itself" (367).

<sup>73</sup> The fact that the core of these issues grows out of real historical conflict complicates the insistence on dialogue and reconciliation in the discussions on ETA, as if the excesses of conflict could be washed away. That is not to say that conflict should be *reversed* in the retaliatory positions of ETA, or in groups like the Partido Popular or the Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo (AVT, discussed below), which favor intense criminalization over the possibility of reconciliation through dialogue. Dialogue and reconciliation should not be discounted--I would like to think they allow for important sites of healing--but they also risk a major violence by ignoring the historical factors that frequently enough allow for no compatibility, no cohabitation, no reconciliation whatsoever. The question, then, is why must the issue be limited to either reconciliation through dialogue *or* retaliation? Reconciliation might be a be successful in a small percentage of cases, just as legal retaliation might be effective in others, but neither of these options are sufficient, and, together, they leave a host of other permutations unexplored.

rhetorical formulas and by focusing instead on the dissemination of anti-terrorist ideology. What they refer to as justice looks more like revenge, achieved by demanding legal changes that push ETA members further towards a place of absolute criminality.<sup>74</sup> I can provide no recipe for justice for the victims here. I do hope, however, that the present criticism of the structures that reproduce and rely on violence can be viewed as aiding the work of mourning. Rather than propose an alternative poetics for addressing the victims or propose new metonymies for remembering, the current study proceeds in the spirit that Joan Ramón Resina summarizes as "a sense of urgency prompted by an obligation to the dead" (118). It therefore holds out a flag to the so-called *passé* figures, the ghosts, the phantoms, the specters, the apparitions, the spooks, the *revenants*, which one might prefer to dismiss. Their return is as appropriate as ever. And their untimeliness is precisely what continues to make them significant.<sup>75</sup> I would avoid insisting on a prescribed mode for

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<sup>74</sup> A look at news sources as well as the AVT's website shows its activity to be a combination of *homenajes a las víctimas*, and political actions aimed at increasing victims rights while limiting the rights of accused terrorists and potential terrorists. The AVT's documents, not unlike ETA's, read like pamphlets and assume the reader's full identification with their ideological message. They assume that history begins with the attack, and the consequent loss of life, and everything prior is irrelevant. In a paradoxical way, their narrative places the terrorists and their actions at the origin of political life, since before any attack takes place the message of the AVT is irrelevant. What I mean is that the group's supremely narrow focus, which generally excludes the history of conflict in Spain since the Civil War, allows their message to be alloyed with other major discourses of forgetting.

<sup>75</sup> Derrida responds to the accusations of the "untimely" nature of his engagement with Marx in the 1990s, decades after his peers in French philosophy: "Already I hear people saying: 'You picked a good time to salute Marx!' Or else: 'It's about time!' 'Why so late?'" He explains "I believe in the political virtue of the *contretemps*," bringing us back to a concept central to Chapter 2. Derrida continues, "And if a *contretemps* does not have the good luck, a more or less calculated luck, to come *just in time*, then the inopportuneness of a strategy (political or other) may still bear witness, precisely [*justement*], to justice, *bear witness*, at least, to the justice which is demanded and about which we were saying a moment ago that it must be disadjusted, irreducible to exactness [*justesse*] and to law" (109-110). If we consider this thinking in relation to Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini's

responding to this obligation to the dead, but emphasizing the obligation seems necessary here, and is perhaps necessary in any treatment of the violence of the past. Despite the passing of the years and the risk of repetition, this burden does not change and in a way it grows as the multiple histories of violence that make up the Spanish political landscape risk being reconciled out of view.

Resina's remarks are published in 2000, when Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) has a place of special importance for the study of memory in Spain.<sup>76</sup> Marx writes in the

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diagnosis of the field, it follows that their consideration of its saturation has little if any function when it comes to deciding when is the right moment for bearing witness to or doing justice to the dead.

<sup>76</sup> The work by Resina cited here was published in the volume for which he was also the editor, titled *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*. The work of Jo Labanyi, Alberto Medina Domínguez, Cristina Moreiras-Menor, and Joan Ramón Resina all represent significant contributions in Spanish cultural studies to the dialogue surrounding Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Labanyi helped bring Derrida's notion of 'hauntology' to prominence in the article titled "History and Hauntology; or, What does One do with the Ghosts of the Past?" published in the same volume edited by Resina. Labanyi explains that the ghosts Derrida refers to are a figure for "the victims of history who return to demand reparation," allowing the past to populate the present so that we might learn to "live with its traces" (66). Resina, in words that build on Derrida's insistence on learning to speak to ghosts, writes that "the way to consort with ghosts" is "in insurmountable proximity" (118). Resina continues: "Ghostly voices must be listened to, but that which the voices convey must be painstakingly documented, so that a bedrock of proof meets the attempts to monopolize memory" (118). He echoes Derrida's claim that we "should learn to live by learning. . .how to talk with him[the ghost], with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech (*Specters* 221). The ghost that returns and the apparition that haunts are ideal figures for thinking about the effects of a forgotten past on the present. They also leave an opening for a different orientation towards the future, given that the temporality of the ghost is not bounded by a single chronology, existing in multiple times including the past, present, and future, in what Derrida calls the "non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present" (*Specters* xviii). Thus the temporality of the ghost is not unlike the temporality of decision, discussed in Chapter 2. The irruptive potential of the ghost lends itself to thinking about a plurality of conflictive memories, such as that described by Gómez López-Quiñones previously. Already in 2001, Moreiras-Menor (in a reading of Goytisolo's *En los reinos de taifa* alongside Derrida's *Specters*) writes about the crossroads of decision and dilemma, "el dilema, la reflexión, la política de la memoria" as



beginning of his *18th Brumaire*, in the phrase later taken up by Derrida in *Specters*, "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (15). He prefaces the phrase by saying that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx 15). This quote is already a summary of the cause and effect of political violence in 20th and 21st century Spain, explored at length previously. The current treatment of terrorism, defined by a variety of extra-legal measures, is shaped by ETA's origins as a response to Franco's power beyond the law. ETA takes the state of exception

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presenting the possibility of interrupting the hegemonic narrative of consensus. Here, mourning is understood as "conocimiento, como poder de transformación a partir del antagonismo abierto con el discurso hegemónico que 'todavía organiza la represión' ([Derrida] 1994, 9)" (165-166). The same author reminds us of the implications of the specter for thinking multiple temporalities, since "Traer los espectros al relato de la historia es conectar, aunar, al pasado con el futuro" (166). In this way, Gómez López-Quiñones's insistence on antagonism is already in play in the field, even as it must similarly be renewed in the face of an academic market of the kind Aguado and Gómez López-Quiñones are describing.

This issue of the repetition of the figure of the ghost, and the need for such a figure, came up in conversation at the Cine-Lit VIII conference in February of 2015 held in Portland, Oregon. One scholar noted that the figure of the ghost has become commonplace, in the same way that "all the positions" for Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini in the debates on historical memory have been staked. But the argument that a particular theoretical position or figure is less relevant because it has been widely used has no weight. The various manifestations of the ghost would more reasonably prove its effectiveness, while also calling for its renewal, considering the clear tensions that remain regarding historical memory in Spain in cultural criticism and the legal sphere. I am therefore attempting to use *Specters of Marx* with an awareness of the cautions against overuse and abuse of a theme, described by Txetxu Aguado, but with an emphasis on the continued effectiveness of this *spirit*. Just as the Amnesty Law seems to preclude the agency of the Historical Memory Law, the multiple temporalities of the ghost (referenced above) unseat the orchestration of amnesia by providing a link between the violence of the Spanish Civil War, Francoism, and the violence of the ETA, while marking the relation between historical violence (centered on political domination) and the structural violence of capital, which continues alongside other forms of state violence until the present. The ghost is thus a mark that simultaneously points to the finitude and fragility of life *and* the weight of the "dead generations" on the living.

as its starting point and mirrors this activity, which is responded to by the Spanish State in an exceptionality that further distances political activity from a concept of justice. A knot forms where the pain of death and loss tempers future modes of action that similarly reproduce each other. ETA's decades of intransigence are seen similarly in the stances of the Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo (AVT), which manages to make even the inflexibility of Mariano Rajoy seem hospitable towards ETA.<sup>77</sup> The burden of the past is

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<sup>77</sup> See for example the document produced by the AVT prior to a January 2015 protest titled "10 razones por las que las víctimas del terrorismo saldrán a la calle el próximo 24 de enero para denunciar las traiciones del Gobierno de Mariano Rajoy." The document, published online at <http://www.avt.org>, describes the inaction of the ruling Partido Popular as "traición," it calls the Spanish government's begrudging compliance with the European Court of Human Rights' ruling on maximum prison sentences "artimañas jurídicas," and despite Rajoy's belligerent unwillingness to negotiate with ETA, the AVT accuses his administration of "blanqueamiento de los pasados terroristas." I have tried to summarize the 10 points as accurately as possible without reproducing the AVT's hyperbolic tone:

- 1) Any political party that could potentially have ties with ETA should be banned;
- 2) Terminally ill political prisoners should remain in prison regardless of their state of health;
- 3) The ruling government should find ways to circumvent the limits identified by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on prison sentences;
- 4) The potential for abusively long prison sentences should be evaluated not in terms of the duration of all the sentences a prisoner has served but on a sentence by sentence basis;
- 5) Electoral laws should be changed to limit the ability of citizens in exile with ties to terrorism to participate in political processes;
- 6) The Spanish government should limit initiatives like the Basque Government's "Plan de Paz y Convivencia," which promotes the idea of, in the AVT's words, "un falso conflicto político y buscando equiparar en todo momento a las víctimas como si de dos bandos enfrentados se tratara" ("10 razones");
- 7) Reforms should be made to the Penal Code to make life-sentences possible (meaning, that, again, they should find a way to circumnavigate the ECHR's ruling);
- 8) Harsher measures should be taken to link convicted terrorists to attacks whose actors still have not been identified;
- 9) More should be done to keep convicted terrorists in prison, regardless of good behavior, health, attempts to participate in reconciliation, etc.
- 10) Reconciliation and "reinsertion" projects like the Vía Nanclores (put into play when Zapatero was in power) give prisoners too much freedom.

The AVT's position seems to be that anyone associated with ETA is a super-criminal and if the law begins to treat them like so-called normal criminals, it risks invalidating what the AVT describes as the guarantee made to the victims of "la reparación a través de la

thus not without its challenges: "Such work must be constantly and patiently renewed with a view to discharging the debt with the past, and it must be done, contrary to the protocols of ordinary justice, by patiently carrying the burden of proof and painstakingly revisiting the historical fault lines where evidence can be gathered" (Resina 119). We must employ, then, a great deal of skepticism when examining the AVT's interpretation of the history of armed struggle in Spain as stemming from "un falso conflicto político," ("10 razones"). According to this logic there is no history except for that which begins the moment there has been an attack and also a victim. The real conflict that exists whenever two heterogeneous elements (histories, individuals, ideologies) butt up against each other is ignored in a fashion that leaves the past unaccounted for.

Thus, despite a great deal of work trying to address the issue of the victim, the burden to the dead, to the victims of many forms of political violence, remains heavy in the present. In reading the quote from Marx cited previously, Derrida elaborates on the meaning of this weight in *Specters*:

If the dead weighs on the living brain of the living, and still more on the brains of revolutionaries, it must then have some spectral density. To weigh (*lasten*) is also to charge, tax, impose, indebt, accuse, assign, enjoin... And the more the living have to answer for it. *To answer for the dead, to respond to the dead.* To correspond and have it out with obsessive haunting, in the absence of any certainty or symmetry. (136)

The acknowledgement of this debt and the attempt to "have it out with obsessive haunting" is, in part, the ongoing attempt to address loss. It explains why the saturation of the issue of historical memory is less significant than *which* areas have been saturated.

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justicia..." ("10 Razones). The AVT's conception of justice, thus, favors a radicalization of the principals of "Enemy Criminal Law" already being applied to terrorism and discussed later on in this chapter.

And in light of Marx's insistence on the histories that we inherit, answering for the dead and having it out with them is an attempt to address the structures that continue the push towards the production of death. In a phrase that echoes the call for vigilance referred to previously, "*Infinite responsibility, therefore, no rest allowed for any form of good conscience,*" writes Derrida in the "Dedication" at the beginning of *Specters*, to the memory of Chris Hani.<sup>78</sup> The task of responding to this weight is continuous, despite the frequency of scholarship referring to the "ghosts of the Spanish past," and in spite of the contributions that may already make the weight of this "spectral density" less cumbersome and less painful.<sup>79</sup>

## **Section 2: Light Against Light: The War within Discourse**

Efforts to avoid violence by ignoring the realities of conflict risk giving way to other forms of violence. Up to now, violence has been analyzed in terms of its instrumentality in the political realm in Chapters 1 and 2. Slavoj Žižek provides useful

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<sup>78</sup> Derrida wrote these words but they bring to mind Dani Arroyo-Rodríguez's reiteration, in speech and in practice of the phrase. See for example his recent interview with Alfons Cervera in *Transmodernity* (Fall 2013), "En la intemperie del consenso. Entrevista a Alfons Cervera."

<sup>79</sup> The discussion of this burden dovetails with Chapter 2's treatment of responsibility in the passive decision. In this sense, the question of how to approach the problem of memory, "saturated" as it is in Spanish cultural studies, cannot be limited or defined according to a calculation of the available positions remaining. Even here where there is a repetition of what have become common references in the field (Derrida, Labanyi, Moreiras-Menor, Resina), this repetition is necessary in order to link the problem of historical memory with the victims of terrorism.

terms for continuing this study by differentiating between objective violence and subjective violence:

subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence. First, there is 'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its forms...a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning. Second there is 'systemic' violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems (*Violence 2-3*)

Terrorism is a clear example of the subjective violence Zizek is referring to, perpetrated by an identifiable figure who can be made responsible for the crime. Since terrorism is viewed as distinct from systemic violence, the obsession with its victims is conditioned by the visibility of the terrorist as the subject of violence par excellence. The attack on Carrero Blanco examined in Chapter 1 is a paradigmatic case, as would be the attacks on the Twin Towers in the U.S. in 2001. Similarly, assassinations by ETA receive a special tally and are linked to an author while the regularized violence of the economy and the state are nearly impossible to quantify, let alone link to a specific actor. Objective violence is harder to identify because it "sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent" (2). In its "systemic" form, objective violence is "the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence" (9). This objective violence could be linked to Rancière's notion of the *police* referenced in Chapter 2, or the work of State Apparatuses outlined by Althusser in his well-known essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (141-148). Objective violence and subjective violence are by no means separate, since the formation and appearance of the violent subject takes place in

concert with the operation of dominant structures through what Foucault calls "power-effects" (29), and through what has now been referred to as symbolic violence.

The mention of symbolic violence is not insignificant, as it refers to the violence inherent in language, "in the very symbolisation of a thing, which equals its mortification" (Zizek 61). Zizek clarifies: "Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it"(61). This explanation echoes Samir Haddad's summary of Derrida's understanding of the "originary violence" of language in *Of Grammatology*: "This is violence against the integrity of the proper name. The unique is only ever thought within a system of differences, and, so inscribed, its uniqueness is lost. . . The work of difference, which for Derrida is the work of language, does violence to the proper in denying its status as One" (125). Alongside this originary violence there is "a secondary violence that seeks to deny this and maintain the integrity of law, and a tertiary violence that may follow from the impossibility of this maintenance" (125). Although not equivalent, we can think of this secondary violence as functioning in a similar fashion to what Zizek calls systemic violence, as it tries to maintain a certain moral order, while tertiary violence is similar to Zizek's subjective violence, made visible by its rupture with the law, "a violence that arises from the law's failure to erase the play of difference" (Haddad 125). This tertiary violence, as the violence that manifests itself through a subject against the backdrop of the law, is also then the violence of ideology as it interpellates through recognition/misrecognition (Althusser 172). Symbolic violence, as

the violence within language, conditions the violence of the system (and the law) as well as the violence performed by the subject.

In light of the schema developed so far, the means of addressing the violence of a certain political subject that has given up its commitment to armed activity must shift to interventions that take into account systemic and symbolic violence. Despite references to the "normalización de la vida política en Euskadi" (San Sebastián 11) as a potential goal of the work left for language and the law, none of this work can be considered neutral--especially considering the already well established pattern of violence in Spain's recent history. This is the "war within discourse" that Derrida is referring to in "Violence and Metaphysics" that, given the fundamentally violent nature of speech, requires the speaker to do violence as a way of avoiding "the worst violence" (146). This war within discourse involves a persistence that echoes Resina's explanation of a painstaking return to the historical fault lines:

This *vigilance* is a violence chosen as the least violence by a philosophy which takes history, that is, finitude, seriously; a philosophy aware of itself as historical in each of its aspects (in a sense which tolerates neither finite totality, nor positive infinity), and aware of itself, as Levinas says in another sense, as economy. But again, an economy which in being history, can be at home neither in the finite totality which Levinas calls the Same nor in the positive presence of the Infinite. Speech is doubtless the first defeat of violence, but paradoxically, violence did not exist before the possibility of speech. The philosopher (man) must speak and write within this war of light, a war in which he always already knows himself to be engaged; a war which he knows is inescapable, except by denying discourse, that is, by risking the worst violence. (146)

There is a great deal to digest in "Violence and Metaphysics" but, given the constraints of this project, we will focus here on the idea of the choice between a lesser violence and a greater violence. In this passage, Derrida's understanding of history is in line with the

understanding implied in Marx's words referenced earlier, that historical processes and their conditions are violent as is their transmission to the generations of the living. To take finitude seriously is to take death and the burden to the dead seriously. Derrida recalls the words left to him by his friend Dominique Janicaud, "Finitude is inscribed in the very structure of life, in the fragile destiny of the planet as well as of all other beings" (261 qtd in *Rogues* 117). The notion of inheritance exists precisely because life is not continuous and "the infinite does not inherit" (*Specters* 18). Memory functions similarly since what is not at risk of perishing has no need to remember or to remind. In trying to address the violence of history, we must recall that our concern for the dead is conditioned by our experience as creatures that die. As such, a philosophy which takes finitude seriously is a philosophy which recognizes the limits of life: "To bear witness would be to bear witness to what we *are* insofar as we inherit, and that--here is the circle, here is the chance, or the finitude--we inherit the very thing that allows us to bear witness to it" (68). This inheritance is *language*, but it also perishes and indicates perishing as each word is left on the page. This finitude is the same finitude which forces a decision at the edge of what is knowable, calculable, and foreseeable.<sup>80</sup> Choosing a lesser violence therefore involves cautiously abandoning the sacred insistence on the victim, the totality of the victim.

Samir Haddad takes exception with the position in "Violence and Metaphysics" that one can choose a "lesser violence" by taking finitude seriously, because "one cannot align a lesser violence with a knowledge of one's finitude" (134) and "there is simply no way we could choose a path that is guaranteed to lead to a lesser violence in political

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<sup>80</sup> See the discussion of knowledge in Section 6 and the conclusion of Chapter 2.



action" (141). Haddad demands that Derrida provide a guarantee of the violence chosen as being lesser, in order for it to be a guide of any sort in forming a course of action. But in the choice between a greater and a lesser violence, Derrida is not suggesting that a lesser violence can be assured, which would go against all of his thinking, but that a level of violence is and *will* be certain, will be guaranteed, if one chooses silence and ignorance about the limits of human life and activity. The choice, then, is not about the guarantee of a greater violence versus the guarantee of lesser violence, but rather it is the guarantee of a sustained violence that ignores history and thus allows its burdens to be inherited and compounded versus the *possibility* of a lesser violence. One way to "guarantee" greater violence in this case is by ignoring that the history of ETA is a history of conflict and by assuming that ETA or any form of subjective violence emerges out of an inexplicable psychosis with no history.

### **Section 3: Law and the Self-Destruction of Democracy**

In the structure of violence just analyzed, law is specified as the secondary violence that tries to limit and control originary violence. It is the violence of the system and understanding its restrictions within the aforementioned "economy of violence" influences the way we choose to respond to it. In Spain, the effects of the law are significant when it comes to the issues of historical memory and anti-terrorism. A test case that reflects major efforts to answer for and respond to the dead, while also posing as a strong reminder of the challenges of this work, is Spain's Historical Memory Law,

passed in 2007. The challenge is heightened when we view this law in conjunction with the 1977 Amnesty Law. While these laws act against each other, arresting answerability and leaving official investigations at a standstill, anti-terrorist legislation fulfills the demand for an accountability without conflict by turning the principles of democracy against itself. The following section explores this issue in the legal realm before turning to key responses made by cultural critics.

The Historical Memory Law begins with a reflection on the "espíritu de reconciliación y concordia, y de respeto al pluralismo y a la defensa pacífica de todas las ideas, que guió la Transición" (Página 1) while recognizing shortly thereafter, "las graves violaciones de Derechos Humanos cometidas en España entre los años 1939 y 1975" (Página 1). The language of the law, which is enabled by "la democracia española y las generaciones vivas que hoy disfrutan de ella," suggests it is truly an attempt to speak to *las generaciones muertas* (Página 2). The law does not shy away from referencing the problems of discrimination, forced labor, concentration camps, exile, guerrilla fighters, and unjust imprisonment. It contains provisions for excavating the mass graves which litter every region in Spain.<sup>81</sup> It proposes to remove monuments celebrating Francoism while establishing policies to increase knowledge about Spain's past. It makes a small gesture in the form of reparations to the victims (and their family members) for suffering wrongful imprisonment or execution. Mónica López Lerma recognizes the "undeniably positive contributions" of these aspects of the Law while insisting on its serious shortcomings. She notes that the law, despite referencing a great deal of the violence

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<sup>81</sup> An online map, prompted by this very law, uses a series of triangles to identify the hundreds of mass graves referenced by the law across the Iberian Peninsula. Available here: [http://mapadefosas.mjusticia.es/exovi\\_externo/CargarMapaFosas.htm#](http://mapadefosas.mjusticia.es/exovi_externo/CargarMapaFosas.htm#)

produced by the Civil War and by Francoism, not once does it mention the Spanish Republic (López Lerma 31), despite claiming to promote "[e]l fomento de la memoria democrática" (Página 2). This exclusion of a legitimate democratic past, prior to the Civil War, is based in the kind of fear referenced previously, that "to revive its memory may break the spirit of reconciliation and concord of the Transition in which the law was founded," (32). López Lerma writes how, in the same way that conflict roiled under the surface of the Transition, "the law conceals the fact that it passed amidst fierce controversy and a lengthy legislative process" (35).<sup>82</sup> She concludes that "the law does not embody true reconciliation," noting that true reconciliation "is frequently the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and in some instances, annihilation" (Gillis 5 qtd in López Lerma 35). Instead, it is "the *commemoration* of reconciliation. The law's re-appropriation of the spirit of the Transition may function rhetorically as a charm to guard against reproducing the conditions that led to the Civil War, but it reveals Spain's deep fears of confronting the ghosts of the past" (35). At present, it is hard to evaluate the work the Historical Memory law is capable of achieving, considering that the budgets it relies on are controlled by the same political party that opposed it so vehemently. That does not

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<sup>82</sup> López Lerma provides the details of this conflict: "For instance, mainstream political forces and the outgoing government of the right-wing Popular Party (PP, 1996–2004) disagreed with the law, claiming that it would split the country, revive the conflict between the two Spains, and endanger the spirit of the Transition. PP voted only in favor of some aspects of the law, such as providing financial support to the victims and the banning of commemorative services in the Valley of the Fallen by Franco's supporters (Robertson, 2008). Leftist parties such as United Left-Initiative for Catalonia Greens (IU–ICV), and regionalist parties such as the Catalan Convergence and Union (CIU) presented alternative texts which demanded, among other things, that Franco's sentences ought to be declared null and void, and voted in favor of the law only after having added several amendments to the final bill. The Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) voted against the law, claiming that it was insufficient and did not do justice to the victims." (35).

make it symbolically insignificant, especially considering the loci of conflict it makes visible, such as the *guerrilleros* or the mass graves. But it manages to partially defeat itself as a document for the recovery of memory, both internally through its insistence on reviving the spirit of forgetting that defined the Transition as well as historically, since the crimes most in need of investigation under the Historical Memory Law are off limits.<sup>83</sup>

The language of reconciliation from the Transition that invades and nullifies the Historical Memory Law, not surprisingly fits into the evolution of consensus as a necessary part of the economic system. Gómez López-Quiñones calls this the "liberal scheme of *recognition*," which "de-politicizes political disputes, neutralizing their disruptive potential and accentuating an all-too-easy inclusive accommodation" ("Agreement..." (88). Previously, the Amnesty Law "recognized" the struggles of those

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<sup>83</sup> Despite requests from the United Nations in 2013 that Spain overturn the Amnesty Law and investigate the crimes against humanity that took place under Francoism, it remains in effect and mitigates one of the few official paths for addressing the past found in the Historical Memory Law. And, certainly, it could not be as simple as overturning the Amnesty Law, whose intent was not to protect Francoism but to protect the groups and individuals who, like ETA, were persecuted by Francoism because they opposed it. The result of this deadlock is that since 2013 courts in Argentina have taken it upon themselves to judge the crimes of Francoism. This is interesting since for years one of the strongest voices for initiating legal proceedings on human rights issues came from Spain in the figure of the well-known jurist Baltasar Garzón. Garzón gained notoriety for pursuing or recommending legal action against the likes of Augusto Pinochet, Henry Kissinger, and the administration of George W. Bush, in addition to politicians and the military in Argentina, related to the 1976-1983 dictatorship. The greatest irony is that Garzón was forced to put his legal career in Spain on hold after attempting to use the recently passed Historical Memory Law to investigate Francoism in 2008. The 1977 Amnesty Law was cited as one of the legal barriers to pursuing the investigation. The details of his suspension are more complicated than can be fully explained here, but the connection between his path away from a legal career in Spain and the decision to investigate the crimes of the past is relatively clear. He currently heads the legal team for Julian Assange.

who fought against Francoism, giving them a clean slate. In the present, this recognition gets applied to Francoism as well. Meanwhile, the Historical Memory Law "recognizes" the atrocities of Francoism, but with a limited recourse to investigating them.<sup>84</sup>

But where legitimacy is at stake, recognition cannot be absolute and depends on the use of some negative against which a dominant stance can be defined. Few figures provide a better negative or represent incompatibility with democracy better than the ETA activist/terrorist. The failure of official means to address the wounds of the past links the treatment of pain with the desire to persecute in such a way that the "infinite abysses of imputability open on to mourning" and "accusation mingles with mourning to cry out from an infinite wound" (Derrida *Politics* x). Similarly, the events that attempt to address pain and justice in the same step "always threaten to carry limits away to their bottomless bottom" (x). The effect here can be described with the term auto-immunity, explained in the context of self-destructive democracies in Derrida's *Rogues* (30-41).<sup>85</sup> In

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<sup>84</sup> Despite referring to a politics where "everyone" is recognized, the Althusserian connotation of recognition is not out of place here since this kind of recognition is a means of producing ideological identification on a broad scale. It is useful to remember that part of the recognizing function of ideology is "'misrecognizing' historical reality" (Ferretter 79). Recognition as an acknowledgement of difference in contemporary Spain indicates a *desire* for there to be a true acknowledgement of the wrongs of history while also demonstrating the inability of ideology to truly recognize the plurality of positions (and the antagonism they entail).

<sup>85</sup> Put succinctly in Derrida's words, the idea is that "democracy protects itself and maintains itself precisely by limiting and threatening itself" (*Rogues* 36). The risk of this protection, of course, is that by threatening itself, it turns suicidal: "autoimmunity consists not only in harming one's protections, and in doing so oneself, committing suicide or threatening to do so, but more seriously still, and through this, in threatening the I or the self, the *ego* or the *autos*, ipseity itself, compromising the immunity of the *autos* itself: it consists not only in compromising oneself but in compromising the self, the *autos*--and thus ipseity. It consists not only in committing suicide but in compromising *sui-* or *self-*referentiality, the *self* or *sui-* of suicide itself. Autoimmunity is more or less suicidal, but, more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself of

trying to "cure" itself of the sickness of terrorism, Spain has taken part in the fundamentally anti-democratic activities of state-sponsored terrorism, torture, and unlimited detainment. With the issue of the victim specifically, this type of self-protection with a self-destructive character is formalized in laws that contradict major international legal agreements like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The AVT, to continue with the previous example, clamors for the application of life imprisonment, currently outlawed in Spain, as well as the reinstatement of the Parot doctrine, which would make prison sentences effectively longer. In short, greater restrictions on human freedoms are acceptable if there is *any* chance these restrictions will limit future terrorist aggressions.

There is a trend in the legislation referenced here that fits into what is understood as "Enemy Criminal Law" in Europe, theorized by German law professor Günther Jakobs over the course of 15 years, between 1985 and 2000 (Gómez Jara-Díez 3).<sup>86</sup> The concept has a special importance in Spain ("Derecho penal del enemigo"), precisely because of the country's history with separatist violence. It is similar to the discourse in U.S. politics that justifies taking rights away from the enemy combatant, thereby facilitating his/her torture and unlimited detainment in places like Guantanamo. Carlos Gómez Jara-Díez, writing from a legal perspective, summarizes Jakobs's position:

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its meaning and supposed integrity" (45). Derrida uses the example of Algeria in 1992, when elections were canceled to keep the Islamist Salvation Front from taking power. The result was over a decade of civil war.

<sup>86</sup> I include the dates referenced by Gómez Jara-Díez which show that this theorization appears prior to the passing of many of the strictest anti-terrorism laws in Spain, in addition to existing in published form before the attacks on the Twin Towers in the U.S. in 2001. This would indicate to a degree that the strictness of the doctrine is specific to Europe, despite what one might think.

this scholar noted that in current Western legislations there are certain provisions that are not aimed at law-abiding persons (that he generically termed as “citizens”), but to potential dangerous individuals (that he broadly identified as “enemies”). In the latter case, sanctions are not imposed retrospectively, i.e., punishing prior wrongdoing, but prospectively, i.e., preventing future harms. In this light, Jakobs identified three chief features of what he labeled as “enemy criminal law”; that is, criminal law directed against enemies: first, punishment comes well before an actual harm occurs; second, it contains disproportionate, i.e., extremely high, imprisonment sanctions; third, it suppresses procedural rights. Needless to say, all these features and tenets are exacerbated in case of terrorist offenses, which represent the highest expression of enemy criminal law. (1-2).

At first glance, this summary of enemy criminal law, shares a great deal with the previous Chapter's discussion of calculability: it is without a doubt a legal framework in the spirit of Carl Schmitt, adapted to the European present.<sup>87</sup> José Antonio Ramos Vázquez affirms that, in the case of Spain, "la mayoría (por no decir la totalidad) de los tipos penales que castigan conductas relacionadas con el terrorismo constituyen un paradigma de Derecho penal del enemigo" (773). He is writing specifically about Artículo 578 of the Spanish Penal Code, Ley Orgánica 10/1995, which punishes "enaltecimiento o la justificación del terrorismo" along with "menosprecio o humillación de las víctimas de los delitos terroristas o de sus familiares" with up to two years of prison.<sup>88</sup> Another law that fits into

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<sup>87</sup> In my reading up to this point, there appear to be specific textual links between the work of Carl Schmitt and the work of Jakobs. However, I do not have time to flesh out this relationship here. I am referring to Jakobs because of the way in which his theorization provides the basis for anti-terrorist legislation in Spain that conditions the sphere of discourse that is the focus of this Chapter.

<sup>88</sup> Ramos Vázquez questions the arbitrary application of the law and its potential for abuse, reading two instances in which the spokesperson for Batasuna, Arnaldo Otegi, was accused of *enaltecimiento*, once in 2006, and again in 2007. The first instance resulted in a sentence and the second no, despite the similarity of the speech acts in question, both performed by Otegi. Ramos Vázquez characterizes the law as: "un instrumento normativo en el que las previsiones constitucionales adquieren perfiles extraordinariamente vagos, quedando a merced de los principios de eficacia y oportunidad, cuando no a los vaivenes de la vida política" (Ramos Vázquez 793). He also notes that only other precedent for the

this framework is the Law of Political Parties (Ley Orgánica 6/2002, de Partidos Políticos), adapted in 2002. It contains the doublespeak of much of this type of legislation, not unlike the Historical Memory Law, expressing its goal of "garantizar el funcionamiento del sistema democrático y las libertades esenciales de los ciudadanos" by allowing for the illegalization of political parties to avoid "que un partido político pueda, de forma reiterada y grave, atentar contra ese régimen democrático de libertades, justificar el racismo y la xenofobia o apoyar políticamente la violencia y las actividades de bandas terroristas" (Exposición de motivos I).

The broad description of what the law hopes to prevent, including racism and xenophobia, minimizes the fact that its target is ETA or any political party potentially related to ETA. Forms of terrorism or related activity are the most frequently cited activities that can lead to illegalization according to the law. Article 9, titled "Actividad," perplexingly prescribes prohibition any time political parties are anti-democratic: "Un partido político será declarado ilegal cuando su actividad vulnere los principios democráticos" or when it harms "sistemáticamente las libertades y derechos fundamentales" (9.2, 9.2.a). The law is strategically fused to legislation like Article 578

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constitutionality of Article 578 is the Constitutional Court's (el Tribunal Constitucional) decision to uphold the constitutionality of Spain's "negacionismo" law, against Holocaust denial, 607.2 of the penal code. It is not explicit here but this is not the first place where ETA's crimes are compared to genocide. This requires further thought and investigation, but at first glance poses some serious problems.

In a recent case (2015), Article 578 was used to sentence rapper Pablo Hásel to two years in prison. Because the law has no provision or precedent for "imminent danger," where the hate speech violation is determined also according to the risk it poses at the moment of its utterance in a specific context, it seems clear that Hásel is in violation of the law. It also seems that the application of this law to an artist whose life and work show little if any connection to terrorism, aside from his controversial verbal affirmation of it, poses a real risk for freedom of expression.



discussed above, since a political party can be banned for giving "apoyo político expreso o tácito al terrorismo" (Artículo 9.3.a) and for "homenajear o distinguir las acciones terroristas" (Artículo 9.3.h). This law, in the spirit of Enemy Criminal Law, makes the decision to ban a political party not on what the party or its members have done but on who they are and who they might be.<sup>89</sup> Together, this is not a complete picture of the legislation defining the issue. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the extent to which discourses on political violence, historical memory, and the victim have a direct relationship with the law and, consequently, the sphere of influence defined by the enforcement of the laws.

#### **Section 4: Current Contributions to the Issue of the Victim**

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<sup>89</sup> Given the vague nature of some of the law's language, the possibility of ties between ETA and political parties like those on the Basque nationalist left (*la izquierda abertzale*) such as Sortu, Bildu, and Amaiur can be grounds for prohibition of the party. Since the law was made effective, numerous groups have been banned. These include the parties that were known to represent ETA such as Herri Batasuna, Euskal Herritarrok, and Batasuna. But over time, especially since ETA's declaration in 2011 to definitively stop using weapons, the cases against political parties on the *izquierda abertzale* have grown increasingly tenuous and abusive. Rather than have ties to ETA, the party can be banned for containing members from previously banned parties (which had ties to ETA). It is as if ETA, wishing to remain a force for politics, would have better luck as a clandestine, illegal terrorist organization since its efforts to influence politics through legal means have been systematically destroyed. Considering that ETA's activity since 2011 is effectively null, the Ley de Partidos Políticos has become a more severe impediment to democratic participation. An example of this is the group Sortu, which was banned in 2011 from even presenting candidates in an "ilegalización preventiva" but was finally declared legal in 2012. Parties like the recently formed left populist group Podemos, with not even the slightest connection to ETA, have been the focus of attempts by figures like Esperanza Aguirre to abuse the Ley de Partidos Políticos. These attempts have been unsuccessful and are unlikely to succeed but they remain a legal possibility and a true threat to democratic principles.

The reflection on legal issues in the previous section does not substitute the work done otherwise through unsanctioned texts, images, and conversations, like those found in cultural works and through their criticism.<sup>90</sup> "La filmografía y bibliografía sobre las víctimas del terrorismo comienza a ser abundante," writes Txetxu Aguado in 2010 (226). He includes an effective summary of the literature and film produced on the issue, mentioning works like Julio Medem's *La pelota vasca: La piel contra la piedra* (2003) and Iñaki Arteta's series of documentaries about the victims of ETA, including *Trece entre mil*.<sup>91</sup> With the exception of Medem's *La pelota vasca* (and Saizarbitoria's *Ehun*

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<sup>90</sup> That is also not to say that cultural criticism "does" anything. See the cautions against this illusion made by Jacques Lezra discussed in the conclusion of Chapter 1. The claim here is simply that there is a cross-pollination of language that takes place as readers of a variety of texts, from many disciplines, inevitably consume, adopt, modify, and reproduce ideas from the breadth of their textual encounters. At the very least, these encounters have effects in the realm of thought, even if the effects are not quantifiable or identifiable.

<sup>91</sup> Aguado gives an excellent introduction to this growing cultural archive in a footnote, noting works such as Julio Medem's "polifonía" of perspectives in *La pelota vasca: La piel contra la piedra/Euskal pilota: larrua harriaren kontra* (2003), taking into account the victims of ETA violence and the victims of state violence; the testimonial documentaries of ETA's victims by Iñaki Arteta *Voces sin libertad* (2004), *Trece entre mil* (2005), and *El infierno vasco* (2008), to which we can add Arteta's recent *1980* (2013), which chronicles the effects of one of ETA's bloodiest years in history; the retelling of Fernando Buesa's death at the hands of ETA in *Asesinato en febrero* (2001), by Eterio Ortega Santillana; *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008) by Jaime Rosales, about the killing of two Spanish *guardias civiles* by ETA members in Capbreton, France; *Todos estamos invitados* (2008) by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, which portrays the suffering of a university professor threatened by ETA while suggesting that what is required with ETA is a kind of amnesia (232). Aguado's chapter is specifically about the novel *La carta* (1990) by Raúl Guerra Garrido, about a store owner threatened by ETA. The same author also wrote *Lectura insólita de "El Capital"* (1977), about the kidnapping and killing of a Basque industrialist. Aguado is reading *La carta* alongside Fernando Aramburu's collection of stories *Los peces de la amargura* (2006), with a focus on the clash of identities. Although I differ with Aguado in his approach, which prioritizes a reading of subjectivity in the characters he analyzes, I agree with the spirit of his conclusion that we should "hacer causa común con la dedicatoria del libro de Aramburu 'a la impureza'" (237), which in this case is an *impureza* in thought, where one is willing to grapple with the contradictions of the self and of society (237).

*metro*, in a different way), nearly all the works in the previous footnote prioritize the experience of the victims of ETA.<sup>92</sup> By doing so, they participate to a greater or lesser

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We can add to Aguado's list with the film *Zulo* (2005) by Martín Ferrera, which shows the experience of a man held by ETA in one of the group's infamous *zulos* or "cárceles del pueblo." While the majority of these works shows the effects of ETA on those external to it, the film *Yoyes* (2000) by Helena Taberna shows how ETA turns upon itself, in the retelling of the attempts by María Dolores González Catarain, aka "Yoyes," to re-enter Spanish society. On the other side of the equation, while it is not popular to portray or even discuss ETA members as victims, it is necessary to point out Ramón Saizarbitoria's *Ehun metro/Cien metros* (1976), which depicts the last 100 meters of an ETA activist's life as he is gunned down by the *guardia civil*.

In another categorization of works that perhaps provide a productive response to the irreconcilable tension at the center of Medem's *La pelota vasca*, we have works like the documentary *Al final del túnel/Bakerantza* (2011) by Eterio Ortega Santillana and Elías Querejeta. There is also J.A. González Sainz's novel *Ojos que no ven* (2010), which takes into account multiple perspectives of victimhood without nullifying the agency of the victim, and Jokin Muñoz's *Bizia Lo/Letargo* (in a similar vein).

<sup>92</sup> Few works in recent years portray the complexity of Spanish political life as well as Medem's *La pelota vasca: la piel contra la piedra* from 2003. In the words of the director, the goal was to "provide a space for the greatest number of different voices, like a human poliphony in which each individual could sing to its own tune." ("Memory") This insistence on sound, through music, landscape forms of music or other types of art, characterizes the film as it combines interviews of players from every part of the political spectrum, Basque folk songs, clips from a variety of narrative and documentary films about ETA, footage and audio of the Basque sport known as Pelota, along with images of paintings, sculptures, and landscapes. The first written text of the film employs a tricky term, dialogue, which according to the Partido Popular would be synonymous with negotiating with terrorists, but nonetheless insists on its support of *all* the victims related to the "conflicto vasco." The film puts into question the possibility of a unified view of politics and makes an effort to present the "Basque question" as a problem shaped by a complex set of historical forces, conflicting ideologies, and a plurality of voices. It does not use this plurality, or poliphony, as a way of artificially accepting difference in the sense of recognition referred to previously, but instead provides a space for the kind of antagonism referenced previously. In a reading of *La pelota vasca* that responds broadly to the problem of politics in Spain, Antonio Gómez López Quiñones (once again) highlights the central issue: "este film nos recuerda que cualquier deliberación verdaderamente democrática acoge la lucha constante por redefinir sus presupuestos filosóficos, su lógica comunicativa y sus esquemas lingüísticos. En *La pelota vasca*. . . Estos temas (en definitiva, la decisión de sobre qué y cómo se habla) conforman la columna vertebral de una conversación democrática. En ésta puede haber hegemonías, pero no restricciones preambulares que repriman (en nombre de un consenso de partida) lógicas discursivas, lenguajes culturales, o metadiscursos que cuestionan los principios

degree in the battle for a hegemonic narrative that excludes the terrorist subject from political life, especially in works like Arteta's *Trece entre mil*.<sup>93</sup> The goal here is not, of

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más básicos sobre los que se establece un intercambio" ("Del dialogo..." 154). This conclusion is just as relevant today as ever.

<sup>93</sup> Aguado writes about the documentaries made by Arteta, written together with Alfonso Galletero, saying "son conmovedores sin caer en el sentimentalismo ni hacer concesiones fáciles" (226). I agree with Aguado in that Arteta's works take a strong, almost unparalleled stand in presenting the testimonies of family members of those attacked by ETA. They are perhaps the best example on film of an attempt to narrate what those who have been persecuted and attacked by ETA (and by the public that supports it) have been through. I would argue however that they do perform a *strong* sentimentalism, and one that fits well within what has become a more pervasive ideology in the "comparative victimism" described by Tony Judt and referenced by Labanyi (87) and Portela (423). Arteta relies on problematic comparisons at a variety of levels. *Trece entre mil*, for example, begins with a description of the economic state of the Basque country, highlighting the privilege and the wealth of this area compared to other regions in Spain. By doing this he reinterprets the notion of politics proposed by ETA, with its insistence on freedom (*askatasuna*), and places it instead in a framework of equality understood in material terms, describing the high standard of living in the Basque country, as a way to show that ETA's demands are no longer justified. Arteta is right in that some parts of the Basque country benefit from greater material wealth than other parts of Spain and that ETA's political position is untenable, but he misses the point by assuming that a demand for freedom can be equated with, or replaced by, the achievement of other social goals. *Trece entre mil* tries to honor unequivocally those people affected by ETA, through interviews with survivors, friends, and family members of thirteen individuals killed by the organization, but does so by excluding the polemic plurality of discourses that make Medem's film (for example) both honest and controversial. While Arteta's film provides an important language and a space to the experience of those that have suffered political violence at the hands of ETA, its controlled use of language overdetermines the victims of ETA as the sole subject with a right to politics, adding to what Justin Crumbaugh might describe as a "world where everyone," and not only victims, 'are reduced to bare life,' in the sense Agamben gives the term ("Victim Discourse..." 671). As such, for a viewer who identifies with the victims of ETA, the film is successful in its portrayal of the pain of those who have suffered. But the success depends entirely on reaching a viewer who is at least partly or entirely antithetical to ETA's interests. For anyone who is in conflict, out of a sympathy towards ETA's victims alongside an understanding of the historical basis for ETA's actions (and the group's own experience as a victim), then the film looks more like a voice for the ideology shared by the Partido Popular, justifying a push to greater conservatism. The category of the victim takes on a universal value in a film like Arteta's, and participates in what Crumbaugh characterizes as the new "metric of intelligibility," wherein any discourse that acts, thinks, opposes, or historicizes without immediately gesturing to the victim can be called out as violating the victim's (the friend's) sanctity, therefore becoming the enemy in need of real or figurative annihilation

course, to insist that the terrorist should be allowed greater social and political latitude, but to examine the confluence of factors that allows for a cycle of violence, subjective and objective, to continue its course unchallenged.

Cultural works circulate within this economy of violence, participating in what Justin Crumbaugh calls a "politico-symbolic field where the victim reigns as master signifier" ("Victim..." 658). This space has made itself resistant to change given the way in which "speaking—in ventriloquist fashion—on behalf of the slain or the suffering appears to be a pre-condition for legitimacy and leverage in the struggle for power. In other words, in Spain victimhood, like grievability, is a metric of intelligibility" ("Victim..." 658). The same author historicizes this metric of intelligibility, referring to an "enshrinement of the victims" to describe the effects of writers like Pío Moa and César Vidal, whose projects are aimed at "upstag[ing] historical memory with a new wave of historical revisionism, arguing that the true victims of the Spanish Civil War were not the defeated Republicans but those slain by the so-called 'terror rojo'" ("Are we all...?" 374). He similarly applies the concept to works like Jon Juaristi's best-selling critical history of Basque nationalism, *El bucle melancólico* (1997). He concludes that the "result of Juaristi's analysis...is the production of a truly authentic form of victimhood which is predicated upon the construction of a pathological victimism" (374). The pathological character is fleshed out near the end of the article, where Crumbaugh relates the "enshrinement" of the victims of ETA, such as Miguel Ángel Blanco, to the regime's self-

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("Victim..." 658). This is seen in the denunciation of Medem's film by the Association of the Victims of Terrorism (in Spain) for being sympathetic to terrorism, because it interviews historical members of the organization alongside others who consider themselves victims of Spanish state torture and terror.

portrayal as the victim of great wrongdoing since the Spanish Civil War (el "terror rojo," referenced above) in films like *Raza* (1941) and the *Noticiarios y Documentales* (NO-DOs) (380-381). This treatment was necessary "in order for the regime to be able to distance itself symbolically from the violence it perpetrated" (381).<sup>94</sup>

Given the success of these efforts, Spain's conservative right regains sympathy as the "true" victim of unconscionable violence while simultaneously reinvigorating its political activity in what Crumbaugh has described as a "fetishistic substitution of the conservative political subject" (368).<sup>95</sup> He borrows the concept of "interpassivity" from Žizek, explaining that "The victim does not act but rather is the one whose symbolic task it is to remain passive on behalf of the subject, suffering helplessly at the hands of the Other in place of the living" (378).<sup>96</sup> This conception of the political subject is especially relevant considering the discussion about subjective vs. objective violence, in which the terrorist subject is deemed most dangerous because of its visibility, while the State and

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<sup>94</sup> Based on Crumbaugh's conclusions, we can say that the discourses surrounding the victim fit into the triad described by Foucault as "power, right, truth" in *Society must be defended*. Here "truth" is not that which is incontestable but rather it is a discourse that is "produced, accumulated, put into circulation, and set to work" (24). This discourse "establishes the limits of power's right," "lays down the law," and "conveys and propels effects of power" (25). This is another way to understand the effects of the "'media afterlife' of Miguel Ángel Blanco" described by Crumbaugh ("Are we all...?" 368). He explains that "Blanco's death changed the way both democracy and fascism are discussed in Spain in part because the event transformed the field of victimhood itself," allowing the conservative right to "enshrine" the victims of terrorism ("Are we all...?" 372).

<sup>95</sup> To introduce the idea of a "more legitimate" victim, Crumbaugh borrows the phrase "Cult of True Victimhood" from Alyson Cole's study of U.S. politics, *The Cult of True Victimhood: From the War on Welfare to the War on Terror*, published in 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Crumbaugh provides the reference from Žizek and further develops this idea: "In Žizek's words, 'the [human] object is primordially that which suffers, endures it, for me, in my place: in short, that which enjoys [i.e. brushes with the horrors of the Real] for me' (*Plague* 116). The slogan 'We Are All Miguel Angel' is the explicit affirmation of this substitution." ("Are we all...?" 378).

the conservative political groups that represent Franco's legacy are considered "harmless," given that they form part of the "zero level" of objective violence, which is nonetheless extreme.<sup>97</sup> Crumbaugh therefore provide a crucial series of arguments for thinking about the theoretical, historical, and legal relationships between the issues of memory and terrorism, especially in the context of the arguments presented in this work so far. He does not, however, point towards a way out of this double bind.

Other scholars like Edurne Portela and Annabel Martín are invested in an awareness of the structural violence that interests Crumbaugh but are more focused on the ways in which literature and the arts might generate an alternative to political violence. Their work conveys a spirit or a desire for the possibility of this alternative, but the position is not without certain limitations. Portela presents this desire in the form of a question: "¿pueden ser la literatura o el cine herramientas para despertar una imaginación ética que cambie el modo en que vivimos en esta sociedad, ahora en transición hacia la paz, que nos haga pasar de la indiferencia a una actitud de compromiso con la reparación?" (428). Portela echoes the words of the critics she is in dialogue with, such as Martín who writes that "el proceso [de reparación y de memoria para las víctimas y sus familias] no puede terminar ahí, porque también a nivel personal, en las psicologías particulares, queda una labor ético-política a desarrollar. Y aquí es donde obra otra

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<sup>97</sup> Crumbaugh builds on Jo Labanyi's conclusion in the article titled "Historias de víctimas..." that an overt focus on the victims of political violence keeps us from seeing the structures that make such violence possible, adding that "the excessive focus on victimhood is a flawed strategy of building democracy inasmuch as it consists of a universalizing ethical stance defined in opposition to an ostensible enemy" ("Are we all...?" 379). The victim is, of course, the opposite of the enemy. The victim is the result of the enemy's evil. And by consecrating the victim, politics as a reproducible, predictable politics of enmity can continue as usual--following the previous chapter's analysis of this issue. This is all the more relevant given the structures that make up Enemy Criminal Law discussed previously.

fuerza: la de las artes," (401 qtd in Portela). This ethical-political imperative forms part of what Martín describes as the need to "repensar ciertas utopías y aprender a trazar una ruta política que incluya una pedagogía para la paz" ("El contorno..." 199). This spirit is repeated in similar references to the work of Txetxu Aguado and Aurelio Arteta regarding the role of fiction (of art, of literature, of film) as a way to "plantear nuevas maneras de ser en esta sociedad e imaginar un futuro alternativo" (Portela 427). For Portela, the central problem in the fight against political violence as indifference allied with silence, made possible in a society "que por décadas ha guardado silencio ante la violencia y ha mostrado indiferencia hacia la misma, ya fuera una indiferencia que surgía del miedo o de la complicidad pasiva con aquellos que la ejercían" (419). Summarizing work by Spanish philosopher Victoria Camps, Portela makes the link between cultural activity and action ("conducta") by saying that "a través de la ficción, se puede despertar la emoción, la ternura, el miedo, la repulsión o la angustia y, así, influyendo en los sentimientos también se podrá influir en las conductas (308–09)" (428). She concludes, in reference to the works *Letargo* by Jokin Muñoz and *Los peces de la amargura* by Fernando Aramburu that "la literatura tiene la fuerza de imaginar y comunicar lo no dicho hasta ahora, o dicho en susurros, en el ámbito social y político."<sup>98</sup> At the same time she proposes that this literature can "obligar al lector que ha participado en la construcción de esta sociedad silenciosa e indiferente a verse reflejado en esos mismos personajes y a despertar del letargo de la complacencia" (438).

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<sup>98</sup> Portela's article deals with Aramburu's book *Los peces de la amargura* (2006) and his more recent *Años lentos* (2012). She focuses her most incisive writing on Jokin Muñoz's novel *Bizi Lo* (2003), translated into Spanish as *Letargo* (2005)



The perspectives summarized above represent significant positions in cultural criticism but their attempt to respond to the aftermath of political violence is problematic. I agree with Portela that fiction has a unique ability to elicit an emotional response but I am hesitant to affirm that a certain text can produce the obligation that these authors desire, especially without engaging in a criticism of the structures that the cultural objects purportedly intervene in. For art to have a predictable function it must be confined to strict ideological limits (that reflect specific political interests) or it must be subjected to an ideologically determined misreading. This is the problem with works like *Trece entre mil*, or even Aramburu's *Los peces de la amargura*, referenced by Portela. For readers sympathetic to a narrative of victimhood, in which the terrorist is understood as the enemy, these works have the desired effect and indeed produce the proper emotional response. For readers who identify with the motivations of the terrorist (even when they do not agree with the methods), these works produce the opposite reaction and may incite greater indifference. And since cultural works do not always function within the framework of legitimacy/illegitimacy, as is the case with *La pelota vasca* for example, it is the critic who would be misreading by working towards a specific, politically defined outcome. Martín is especially interested in the possibility of reconciliation and forgiveness in what she eloquently calls a *pedagogía para la paz*.<sup>99</sup> But the concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness, in spite of their significance, may miss the mark entirely since they exclude the realities of conflict, disagreement, and harm. This exclusion risks slipping back into the space of consensus, and the violence of consensus, which grows as

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<sup>99</sup> See, for example, her article from 2012 "And When Time Stood Still: Building a Road for Peace, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness in Euskadi (The End of ETA Armed Conflict)."

it is displaced spatially and temporally. The affirmation of art's ability to provide some kind of alternative pathway comes at the cost of accepting that *una pedagogía para la paz* is also potentially *una pedagogía del conflicto*, or a *pedagogía* whose path may lead anywhere. That does not exclude such an affirmation from representing a necessary orientation towards the future--something that is missing in Crumbaugh's position--but if it is truly an orientation towards the future, it is an orientation with no guarantees, unbounded by any conditions. This is an orientation that must be hospitable to the conflict, the harm, the intractability of the ghosts of the past--ghosts that ignore ideology--and equally prepared to welcome their arrival from the future. Given the goals here of examining a work that represents a structural criticism and also a reflection that does not predetermine a mode of addressing the victim, in what is left I would like to focus on the film *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008) by Jaime Rosales.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Jaime Rosales has produced several short films since 1997 and released his first feature-length work, *Las horas del día*, in 2003. His productions are meditations on film form as well as investigations into the realities and challenges of life in Europe in the neo-liberal era, frequently including reflections on death. They paint an intimate picture of the day-to-day experiences of individuals or family groups whose lives intersect with or produce an unexpected violence. Paul Julian Smith recently described Rosales as a "fully-fledged auteur who has combined uncompromising themes and techniques in his five features to date" (48). Martí-Olivella notes the comparison of Rosales's style to "Robert Bresson's understatement" and "Yasujiro Ozu's stillness" (4). The Catalanian director's films demand patience and a willingness to forego standard expectations of entertainment, requiring the spectator to actively contemplate, examine, and question the his films. Rosales works almost entirely with film stock, uses non-professional or inexperienced actors, and dialogues are often unplanned, sparse, or non-existent. His first feature, *Las horas del día*, is about the day-to-day life of a shop owner in Madrid whose monotonous existence belies the fact that he is a murderer; in *La soledad* (2007) Rosales uses split screens in what has been described as *polivisión* to show the parallel lives of two women, lives that are interrupted by a terrorist attack; *Tiro en la cabeza* (2008) follows a man from dusk till dawn as he engages in ordinary activities before participating in the assassination of two *guardias civiles*; *Sueño y silencio* (2012) is shot in black and white and uses contrasts in sound and color to produce a meditation on grief;

## Section 5. Disarming the Question of the Victim in *Tiro en la cabeza*

In the short description Aguado gives of *Tiro en la cabeza* he writes that it "desató la polémica por su insistencia estilística en los silencios de las conversaciones y la intrascendencia de la vida de los terroristas" (226). The well known critic for *El País*, Carlos Boyero, described the film as producing "un tedio excesivo," writing that "la visualización de la grisácea cotidianeidad de este profesional del horror me parece tan estéril como pretenciosa" (37). The reviewer, who does not pretend to hold any affection for avant-garde cinema, concludes by saying that the movie "Está realizada pensando en la fraternal acogida de los templos del arte. Seguro que es el sagrado lugar que le corresponde. Que se disfruten mutuamente" (37). The film has been reviewed more favorably by John Hopewell, who quotes Rosales to conclude: "My film supports moderation. Its ideas are positive. People need that" (A13). Hopewell channels Rosales's again when he describes the film as an "absurdist tragedy," with the goal of dispelling two myths: the myth of the ETA activist as a national hero and the myth that he is a murderous monster (A13). In narrative terms, the film is easy to describe precisely because so little is said. Nonetheless it presents significant formal challenges to the viewer and, as a result, allows for "widely varying interpretations" (de Pablo 353). Jaume Martí-Olivella, author of one of the few in-depth treatments of the film, writes that it is

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*Hermosa juventud* (2014) portrays a series of struggles in the lives of a young unemployed couple. Rosales has garnered positive critical attention, receiving a host of awards including Goyas and repeated accolades at the Cannes film festival.

"arguably the most radical and unsettling of the Spanish cinematic figurations of the terrorist to date" (1).<sup>101</sup>

The film begins with an image of the horizon, positioned exactly in the middle of the frame, sandwiched between the blue-green of the sea and the light blue of a cloudless sky. Presented with this image, we can say we are at a beginning that is also an edge, or an end, as well as a center. This is how the viewer is introduced to *Tiro bat buruan/Tiro en la cabeza* from 2008.<sup>102</sup> For anyone familiar with the careful attention Rosales pays to form in productions like *Las horas del día* (2003) or *La soledad* (2004), the insinuation that *Tiro en la cabeza*, translated into English as *Bullet in the Head*, might be compared

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<sup>101</sup> Martí-Olivella chooses to focus on the transformation the terrorist undergoes as a "werewolf" figure, using the concept developed in Giorgio Agamben's *Homo sacer*. Through an analysis of this figure he argues that the film produces a "double critique or...a double silencing, that of the terrorist and that of the victim, both voices subsumed (or erased) by the very violence of terrorism and by the State's appropriation of the discourse on terrorist violence (12). I am interested in further exploring the link Martí-Olivella establishes between *zoe* and *bios* in the film but my reading focuses to a greater extent on the ideological effect of formal elements in the work. The only other article to treat *Tiro en la cabeza* at some length, titled "La figura del terrorista en el cine español. De la lucha justificada a la cotidianidad," by Susana Torrado Morales, and Gabri Ródenas, is still a superficial analysis of the way in which the film mixes fiction and reality, calling the work "un documental falso," for greater cinematic effect. Nonetheless, their chapter provides an excellent chronology of the filmic works portraying the ETA since the 70s.

<sup>102</sup> The film is frequently referenced as *Tiro en la cabeza* (*Bullet in the Head*), but this is not the full title, which includes the words *bat* and *buruan* in Euskara. *Bat* is the cardinal number one but also acts as an indefinite article in this case while *burua* means head and *buruan*, with a prepositional suffix, indicates location. The complete title is represented graphically on screen with different shades of text indicating that the title is written in two languages, **TIRO BAT BURUAN EN LA CABEZA**. At times, the film is incorrectly referred to as *Tiro en la cabeza/Bat buruan*, even though the complete title in Euskara, a language which borrows the word *tiro* (shot) from Spanish, must be *Tiro bat buruan*, and therefore *Tiro en la cabeza/Tiro bat buruan*. In this way Rosales, who is not Basque, does not speak the language, and has never titled any of his films in any language but Spanish, has prepared the film's viewers for a particular kind of interpellation within the Basque context.

with John Woo's *Bullet in the Head* (1990), a non-stop blast of fully-automatic, helicopter supported shootouts, or with the recent *Bullet to the Head* (2012) by Walter Hill, starring Sylvester Stallone, is jarring. It is also a clear indication of the film's intention to unseat the viewer's expectations. Rather than the tanks and helicopters of Woo's film, or the actual bullet to the head that begins Hill's movie and is repeated ad nauseam, the film by Rosales starts with an image of the sea meeting the sky.

In the director's commentary on the film, Rosales says the opening shot is notable because the sea "no está ni muy calmado ni muy revuelto," and it places the viewer, like the horizon, in between, at a crossroads, in tension (Rosales).<sup>103</sup> The fact that the horizon is situated in the middle of the screen and that the sea "no está ni muy revuelto ni muy calmado" may suggest a kind of impartiality, but it may also be a *request* for impartiality, or for care, in a motion picture that feels more like a sequence of photographs or paintings than a film. Here the crossroads is a space for contemplation, especially in the context of the work done up to now, where the need to respond to the weight of the dead butts up against a legal framework that limits not just memory but democratic principles themselves, all of which risk a certain violence.

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<sup>103</sup> Any references to Rosales are taken from the director's commentary included with the *Tiro en la cabeza* DVD. The full quote from Rosales summarizes the director's intentions in this first shot: "El plano inicio de cualquier película me parece muy muy importante....En este plano estoy especialmente contento porque desde un principio vemos un mar que no está encuadrado de forma habitual. Está hecho con un telefoto, la línea de horizonte está exactamente en medio y de alguna manera también es un mar que no está ni muy calmado ni muy revuelto. Entonces tiene que ver con lo que se ha contado en la película; ese personaje que...en una aparente banalidad, luego pasa del otro lado."

The first, peaceful images of the work emphasize this tension, in a film that tries to be the retelling of the assassination of two *guardias civiles* by ETA members in Capbreton, France in 2007. The film must, by necessity it would seem, speak to the heinousness of the attack. But this opening suggests nothing of the sort. Despite the color and the sound in the first shot, the images bring to mind Sigfried Kracauer's summary of early attitudes about moving pictures saying that "film would continue along the lines of photography..." capturing "such kindred subjects as undulating waves, moving clouds, and changing facial expressions" (148). There is another tension here as the viewer is affirmed as the movie-going subject through something as simple as landscape photography, while also protesting for being exposed to the unexpected. After some thirty seconds of viewing and listening to the ocean, the brightness and the natural colors of this first scene contrast sharply with the image that follows: a frame that is almost entirely devoid of light. Only three points of light in close proximity, a reflection perhaps, are visible. They appear at the same height as the horizon in the previous scene, but just to the left of center. After a few seconds of this darkness, to the right of center we begin to see light from an interior as blinds, *persianas*, which we can hear, are being raised. It is nighttime or early morning and we are outside someone's window. A few more seconds pass and the silhouette of a bearded, middle-aged man approaches the curtains and opens them to glance outside, as if someone were watching him. The shot is somewhere between a long shot and an extreme long shot, with his standing figure filling about half the screen, but the experience is perplexing because the use of zoom lenses gives the impression that the camera is closer than the vantage point would allow for.

The word critics have used to refer to what is being revealed in the film is "banality," the first dull moments of a man's day, which is reinforced in the next shot of what appears to be the same person at a newsstand. This is now a medium shot, with half of the character's body filling the screen, but turned away from us so that all we see is his back, and the back of his head. The decision to present the main character to the viewer in this fashion, from behind, with a view of his head, is repeated throughout the film. These shots from behind paint the protagonist as vulnerable and put the spectator in the position of a hunter, an aggressor, a sharpshooter, raising questions about who is the victim and who is responsible for the violence in this film. Although the viewer is perhaps put in the position of an aggressor, he or she also provides the only set of eyes that might witness the crime. As a witness who sees but is not present, and is also never visible to the protagonist, even as he peers out his window, the spectator benefits from what Derrida calls the "visor effect" and "can safely see without being seen or without being identified" (*Specters* 8). It would seem that from this position, the spectator can also watch, speak, command, and judge with complete protection while remaining free from accusation, risk or harm.

A close look at the scene tells us this is a newsstand in a Spanish speaking country, with magazines like *Futbolista* and a sign printed in wavy letters that says "SE RECARGAN MOVILES." The word *móvil* indicates that it is likely Spain. Advertisements for multiple flavors of gum, Orbit this, Orbit that, Orbit the other, Trident, Splash, Splash, Splash, remind us that this also one of the "non-places" of the neo-liberal market, to use Marc Augé's term. Together with the first image of the sea, we have in three parts what Rosales considers to be the film's opening: a bright, open,

outside space, an artificially illuminated interior, viewed at night from the outside and therefore only partly accessible, and the dull landscape of the neo-liberal city. Similarly, a relationship has been established with the viewer that implies a connection between visibility, vulnerability, violence, and the victim.

Despite the disjuncture, the clash, the misidentification that is taking place in the opening of this unconventional film, these first scenes are effective: the image of the sea, along with a title that is presented in both Basque and Spanish, *Tiro bat buruan / Tiro en la cabeza* give more clues as to where we are. The Basque region is associated with the ocean, whaling, fishing, shipbuilding, the coast. It therefore situates us spatially. In a cultural and political sense, the image of the ocean also references the credit sequence of Iñaki Arteta's *Trece entre mil* from 2005, discussed previously. The ocean is a common reference in other works about the victim, like *Asesinato en febrero* and *Al final del túnel*, both by Eterio Ortega Santillana, as well as Julio Medem's *La pelota vasca*.<sup>104</sup> The disjuncture between the title screen and the image of the ocean is thus only apparent, given the intertextuality shared by these films (and despite the different aims of their authors). Nonetheless, the clash is real considering that Rosales's movie provides minimal information with which to evaluate how the individuals that appear on screen fit into the equation of political violence that is reputedly the focus of the film. Other films about the victim, including those showing perspectives from across the political spectrum such as *La pelota vasca*, leave no doubts about the political affiliations of characters or interviewees: all are identified or clearly associated with one "side" or the other, as

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<sup>104</sup> Martí-Olivella makes similar observations about the relationships to films like *La pelota vasca* and *Trece entre mil* in the figure of the ocean (7).



terrorists, as police, as politicians, as victims of ETA, or victims of torture by the police, etc. These works permit the viewer to separate the criminals from the victims from the journalists, and so on. Rosales, on the other hand, leaves no room for "imputability" at this point: no criminal to identify, to despise, or to root for. The viewer is as close to an aggressor or a criminal as can be found in the film. The spectator is also the only apparent witness, or nothing, or no one at all.

There is no regularly audible dialogue through the entire feature and you do not hear the protagonist, Ion, speak more than a handful of words.<sup>105</sup> In fact, only two words are audible from Ion or from any character throughout the duration of the film:

"Txakurra! Txakurra!" Ion yells the word for "dog" in Euskera twice, but more context is required to make this utterance intelligible. As the film progresses, it shows itself to be a selection of moments that take place over several days in the life of an unknown man (Ion). The work is filmed primarily in city settings in the fashion of surveillance footage, at a distance from the protagonist with telephoto lenses in a style that Martí-Olivella describes as feeling "trapped, almost kidnapped," turning the viewers into "both spies and voyeurs" (4).<sup>106</sup> Scenes are shot in real time but are edited discontinuously, with noticeable ellipses. The sound that accompanies the picture in *Tiro en la cabeza* is direct, corresponding with the camera location and relaying the sounds of the street: cars driving past, muted conversations, footsteps, doors opening and closing. However, given the camera's distance from the protagonist, and the presence of physical barriers (doors,

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<sup>105</sup> It is only from the credits at the end we find out the main character is named Ion, another spelling in Basque of "Jon." This is the only way we find out any of the character's names.

<sup>106</sup> Martí-Olivella notes the relation to Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation*.

windows, etc), the viewer is not privy to the conversations and interactions of Ion.

Together these factors are a constant reminder of the medium of film itself, what Jean-Louis Baudry refers to as its "technological base," which has a destabilizing effect on the viewer's ability to identify ideologically with the film (46).

What we know is that Ion wakes up, goes to the newsstand, goes to the park, meets a friend, goes to a party, meets a woman. In short, he sleeps, he wakes, he eats, he walks, he has sex, he is a human. While these portrayals show Ion to be ordinary, in the context of a film in which the viewer almost seems to be hunting Ion, or waiting to see Ion hunt, or waiting to see Ion hunted, they are a reminder that the ordinary and the banal participate in a system that contains the potential for extreme violence. That which seems inconsequential because it is part of the fabric of the everyday is not distinct from the violence that suddenly makes itself visible. Truly, subjective violence happens in conjunction with the everyday, terrorist violence is inseparable from the social and economic fabric of contemporary Spain, and official history is entirely unsafe from being contaminated by the memories of violence it suppresses.

The film returns to the theme established by the title and the opening sequence when we see Ion at the Amara train station in San Sebastian, confirming that this is the Basque country and potentially a site of violent activity. Suspense builds slightly with this knowledge. The camera is shooting perpendicular to the train tracks, this time in a longer shot, where Ion stands on the platform. In the next shot, Ion has moved further down the platform into the shadows and the camera is now shooting parallel to the tracks, closer to Ion, apparently located on the platform as well. Ion is hard to see in the shadows but appears to be speaking with another man of similar appearance: tall, middle-aged,

ordinary dress, glasses. Meanwhile, the camera focuses on an older gentleman in the foreground who walks with crutches in a determined fashion, towards the camera, on his way to the door of the train. There is a strong suggestion of the potential for violence here, with the image of someone whose very stride is a reminder of the finitude of life. The violence suggested by the title haunts the viewer as the younger men speak suspiciously in the background. In the foreground, the gentleman's pace emphasizes the relationship between finitude and urgency, as he tries to make it to the train in a dignified manner. There is a suggestion, also, that the effects of violence impose a slowness and perhaps require a slowness as well, in response.

The scene changes again and we see Ion through an apartment window, in a frame similar to the first exterior shot, but now it is nighttime and there is a party. Ion is talking to a young man, then to a woman, then he is in the kitchen kissing and embracing the woman as they undress. By now the viewer has a feel for the overall composition, framing, and rhythm of the film. In addition to the lack of sound and the use of telephoto lenses, there is a proliferation of windows, doorframes, and perpendicular intersecting lines, reminiscent of Piet Mondrian. The shot changes and we have another insinuation of violence: an automatic teller machine, framed by rectangular sandstone blocks. The image points to the violence of financialization but is also a reminder that ATMs are frequently the target of molotov cocktails in *kale borroka*, or street struggle. You could say this also points back to ETA's ideological roots, which tried to bring Basque nationalism together with an anti-capitalist position. The relationship is emphasized more fully as Ion, in a new scene, is shot from afar inside an FNAC store, surrounded by walls of products, devices, and screens. These images of commercial space, which Rosales has

taken care to include from the beginning of the film, form a questionable beauty, a palatable veneer on the consumption that has geographically reconfigured the destruction of life caused by exploitation and primitive accumulation. This is a clear reference to the objective violence of the system described previously. The reality of this violence is reiterated by the documentary on animal death and industrial farming playing on the television display in FNAC as Ion browses the electronics section.

So far the only "evil" to be found in this individual is his participation in the same violence of the system that whoever is reading this essay is also participating in, including the author. This is, again, the violence that kills on a broad level but seems to have no agent, no dictator, no terrorist to whom the crime may be imputed. Up to now, the film has disavowed the idea of the super-criminal terrorist while reminding us of the structural violence that he, and we, also form part of. And although our expectations of a brilliant action thriller have been deflated, we take a certain comfort in *not* having to address the violence of ETA up to this point, even though certainly it is inevitable. Certainly there will be a moment of the insane violence we are expecting.

It may begin, we think, when Ion makes a phone call from a telephone booth in the fashion of mobsters and drug dealers, even though we have seen him talking on his cell phone previously in the film. He then meets, Iñaki, the same friend he spoke with in the shadows at the Amara train station. The pace of the film changes as the two friends get into a red car and head to France with Jaione, who is driving. There they stop at a roadside cafe where a pair of Spanish *guardias civiles*, out of uniform, are also eating. One of them goes to the restroom. Then, there is a moment of recognition, where the other locks eyes on Ion. In Althusserian fashion, the police turns his head once, then

again, and with his eyes hails Ion, perhaps identifying him from police records. In this scene, the camera is filming the young *guardia civil* from a location very close to where the eyes of the *guardia civil* are pointing, and suggests the closeness established up to this point between the viewer and Ion. Ion cannot help but notice the man move his head repeatedly and assumes he has been spotted by an enemy. First Ion, and then the other two, respond to this recognition in proper fashion, by saying with their eyes and their changing facial expressions, *txakurra*, "dog," which is derogatory slang in Basque used to refer to a police officer. With a fear that is noticeable in their faces, the agents of the state quickly get up to leave. Ion and company run after them.

The sequence that follows is filmed continuously from a single stationary camera that pans right as the individuals leave the establishment, moving left and right again as necessary to capture the action throughout the scene. Ion yells "Txakurra!" twice after the *guardias civiles*, in the only intentionally audible dialogue in the work. He and Iñaki chase the unarmed officers to their personal vehicle while the camera films from behind, facing the trunk of the car. The viewer is thus located behind Iñaki and Ion, who are behind the police officers, their eyes and guns trained on the heads of these men. In the vehicle, an interrogation ensues before Jon and Iñaki shoot the officers repeatedly and then flee. The moment is both candid and gruesome and leaves one feeling ill. Ion, Iñaki, and Jaione are shown driving off. The final movement of the camera as it follows the car out of sight is interrupted by a still close-up of the name of a sporting goods store, Decathlon. Then, a similar shot of a banner advertising a photography shop, "Photo Price: la liberté en développement." The continuous shot containing the foot chase, the confrontation, then the shooting, now interrupted by these images of publicity, identifies

this as the meeting place of subjective and objective violence; this is reasserted as the camera cuts directly from the images of commerce to a medium close-up of the dead *guardias civiles*, their heads shown from the side and framed by the passenger window.

Those who we can now identify as terrorists are shown moving fast along the freeway as they escape. The camera is also in motion, most likely mounted in an automobile moving parallel to the red car, and shows another medium close-up that now focuses on Ion's face, also framed by the car window. This framing of course links Ion to the men he has just killed. His facial expressions suggest a combination of concern, fear, doubt, and sadness as he looks out the window in silence. The group must split up and pulls into a small parking lot and Iñaki drives off. Ion and Jaione steal a white car, taking the owner hostage. They drive into the forest where they leave the owner tied, but not before comforting her with a hand on the back. The gesture seems necessary but almost impossible to understand, not unlike the sadness in Ion's face that cannot possibly be the face of a murderous monster. The car pulls away and the film ends with an image of the forest, the opacity and verticality of the trees and greenery in sharp contrast to the open horizon with which the film began.

## **Conclusion**

Many of the film's central issues are layered together in these last scenes that also reference the major problems in the chapter up to now. The whole of the film has played with a series of identifications and misidentifications. From the beginning of the film, it is impossible to know who or what Ion is and even after the attack, he is not identifiable as an outright monster. If we invert the terms used to establish a hegemonic narrative of

legitimacy, even as a terrorist, Ion "is" a victim: the victim of cultural repression, of police violence, of the potential violence of the law. If we imagine the viewer as occupying an identical space to that of another potential protagonist, a police surveillance team perhaps, this scenario holds more weight. In what may or may not be an anecdote, this weight is real for Ion Arretxe, the actor who plays Ion in the film. Arretxe was detained, tortured, and held for days before being released with no charges filed, for suspicion of involvement with ETA as a young man in 1985. This, of course, does not take place in the film but it is a possibility that complicates the terrorist/victim binary while also implicating the spectator, who observes Ion's activity much like the police team that might detain and torture him.

The possibility that materializes in the film, however, is that Ion *is* a terrorist and the consequences of his ideological programming are heinous. These consequences are portrayed in the image of the two dead *guardias civiles* that lasts nearly 15 seconds and identifies with clarity, finally, one of the film's positions. The intimation of the fragility of life, in the scene where an old man slowly makes his way to the train door at the Amara station, reaches full force here as a reminder of human finitude. The duration of the image and its insertion at the crossroads of subjective and objective violence makes it unthinkable as anything other than death; not a sacrifice; not an exchange for political capital; not an act of heroism. These men are not to be revered as police and the people who killed them are not revered as *soldados del pueblo*. Instead, the dead men are seen as perishable humans and their loss weighs on the viewer as strictly that. It is certain that Ion and Iñaki are the authors of this crime, but the debt to the dead, the responsibility to the dead, is shown here as multiple and cannot be limited to those who pulled the trigger

versus those who are "free" from its sins. These crimes find themselves sewn into a framework of violence, a history of violence, where the viewer has the option of mediating and responding to this convergence.

By now the basis for the viewer's discomfort with Ion's actions should have more to do with the closeness developed between Ion and the spectator rather than the proof that Ion is a kind of monster. Ion is not a werewolf and does not "transform." He is the same Ion from the morning we meet him in his pajamas to the final scene as he drives off with Jaione in the stolen white car. While Rosales claims that by excluding dialogues he leaves no space in the film for the insanity of ideology, he cannot exclude the history of ideology within Ion. The realism of the film and its construction through ellipses allow for this history and allow Ion to be both the banal subject of everyday existence *and* the political subject with a history of ideology founded in enmity, channeled in a program that pushes him to act in a specific manner. The spectator is engaged in a similar process and despite Marti-Olivella's suggestion that Rosales has kidnapped us, there is no doubt about who is in charge of the viewing experience and the decision to see or not see the film. If you made it this far, it is almost because you *needed* confirmation of the "bullet in the head." If you left before this point in the film, it is perhaps because you did not get confirmation soon enough. In a sense, the violence and the deaths it produces make the film intelligible and consumable. This violence interpellates *us*, confirms our interest in it and desire for it, and our disappointment in this strange object of cinema when we do not find it. We, the movie-going subjects, become the bridge to the structural, objective violence of capitalism and at the same time to the violence perpetrated by Jon, Iñaki, and Jaione. And from beginning to end we are not unlike these three, as the camera suggests,



living our lives, traveling along, at a party, with our lovers, on a Sunday drive to France. Unless of course we are presented with this, with the "unexpected" that we somehow knew was coming.

Throughout the film the viewer occupies at least three positions: first as a potential aggressor closing in on Ion, then as a witness/accomplice to Ion's crime, but also as a kind of phantom, hidden by the armor and the visor that is the artifice of film, protected from the reality presented by the work but not unaffected by it or incapable of influencing it. These positions simultaneously complicate an understanding of the political subject and the victim. The potential for objectifying the deaths of these men, for having their deaths appropriated by the cult of victimhood, is challenged by the way the film puts the viewer in a position of simultaneous identification/misidentification. The narrative of legitimacy surrounding the victim, which decries death from a position of righteousness while mirroring the opposing "righteousness" of the terrorist, falls apart. That does not mean that the film magically undoes ideological thinking. It does not avoid being appropriated for its value as "art cinema" or avoid rejection for failing to develop a nuanced perspective of the history informing Ion's ideological position. These are all risks and potential criticisms of the film, which along with its peculiar form may even produce disinterest, "tedium," or indifference, contrary to the idea that art has the power to awaken. The film does, however, leave a *space* for awakening, and for the *possibility* of a response to the dead. Rather than link mourning to the "banality" of accusation and imputability, mourning is left to forge its own path where there is no certainty, no trend, no predetermined modes of action. Instead there are questions *about* history, *about* ideology, radiating out from the figure of the dead. Rather than treat the victim as the

beginning of history, or the end of history, one may do justice to the dead by asking *why*, by responding with more questions, and by following the questions regardless of how often they turn back on themselves. Despite the protected position of the spectator, the spectator too can insist on these questions, can embrace the haunting that takes us back to these intersections of violence that are not coincidental. While the film is simple in its summary--the invalidation of the myths of friendship and enmity through contradictory portrayals of the same figure--what it succeeds at doing structurally is more significant. Faced with an impasse in official discourse on the victim, and the threat of the law's violence or other forms of symbolic violence, Rosales chooses a path of apparent silence from which one might pose an unarmed or a disarmed question, a question that truly faces the future openly (Derrida *Politics* 150). This question without armor, without a visor, without a prescribed course, may be the only way to "learn to live, finally," with the ghosts of then and now, and the ghosts of the future.

## Conclusion

Nuestro pueblo, nuestra cultura, nuestra identidad y nuestra lengua, nosotros, nosotros y ellos, ¡cuántas veces no se lo habría oído repetir a ella y a su hijo y a tantas gentes a cuento de lo que fuera! Se diría que no había cosa que no pudiera terminar en eso.

-J.A. González Sainz in *Ojos que no ven* 64-65

What is, what was, the modern republic? Does it have a future? Can the modern republic, the formal regime for the contingent distribution of sovereignty (of divisible sovereignty) across the wounded concept of the class of subjects, be imagined outside of the terrorism of identitarian mythology?

-Jacques Lezra in *Wild Materialism* 204

The end of ETA seems to follow a pattern of repetition and failure, not unlike the escape from the Cárcel de Segovia in 1976 discussed in Chapter 1. In that instance, escape from prison did not produce freedom, but rather a series of re-imprisonments. Even after being released from prison legally under the 1977 Amnesty Law, the escaped prisoners still faced the horizon of decision and uncertainty that would be the future of Spanish democracy, in an ongoing and unfinished "Transition" from dictatorship.

Similarly: "Es el tiempo de la decisión y del *riesgo*" writes Joseba Zulaika, during what he thought was already the end of ETA, after its last permanent ceasefire in 2006 (*Polvo de ETA* 8). Zulaika invokes the language of the organization while reflecting on its final days: "Euskadi y Libertad. Fue la libertad la que forzó el inicio de ETA y ha sido ella la que ha forzado su final. Ya no existe el gran "Otro." (8) By now, this Other can be understood through familiar figures: "ETA, el Estado español, el soñado Estado vasco...éstos han sido el gran "Otro" (*le grand Autre* de Lacan) de la subjetividad nacionalista vasca...esas grandes palabras han sido forjadas por los miedos y los deseos de la subjetividad nacionalista" (42). However, Before Zulaika could finish writing *Polvo de ETA*, the organization had made new rubble in the bombing of the T4 Terminal at Madrid's Barajas Airport. It would be foolish, then, not to be skeptical of "the end of ETA." But why would we be anything but skeptical at this point?

There have been many false starts to the end of ETA's militarized activity but it seems that, finally, the organization has concluded its dedication to armed struggle. The fact that ETA is "not to be trusted," does not change the fact that the signs point in a different direction. ETA is no longer insisting (in its predictable fashion) on independence and socialism in the Basque country as a precondition to disarming, as it did in 2006. Instead, since 2011 there have been what could be considered "good faith" attempts at disarming, in addition to repeated proposals to negotiate with the Spanish government. This is not the point, however, since it does not matter what ETA does or does not do now, having made itself politically irrelevant, continuing as Zulaika says in "su propio estado de excepción," remaining there "incluso cuando la dictadura mudó en democracia formal" (49). This was the problem of its dedication to hostility as outlined in

Chapter 1, which was later analyzed as a form of calculability in Chapter 2, as a means of controlling the present and defining the future, of avoiding the moment of "la decisión y del riesgo" (8), since both had been determined in advance.

As this project has moved from the era of the dictatorship and the model of hostility in Chapter 1, through a rethinking of decision in Chapter 2, to the "democratic present," focused on the victims of terrorism in Chapter 3, a current has been forming, pointing to a shift away from the problem of hostility towards the issue of capitalism. There is a movement, for example, in Ramón Saizarbitoria's *Los pasos incontables*, away from the truth of art and clandestine resistance to the convenience and comfort of banks and a culture industry. Iñaki Abaitua has to choose between his novel or the dictionary commissioned by a Catalan Bank, between political militancy and suicide, even as he, in a way, subverts both of these options. In *Tiro en la cabeza* by Jaime Rosales, the terrorist (who may also be the spectator), travels from his programmed life as a consumer--surrounded by CDs, by electronics, by televised death in FNAC--to his programmed life as an assassin. This violence is punctuated by commercial advertisements and is a reminder of the relationship between the visible violence of the political subject and the imperceptible violence of the system. This symbolic violence extends, as was argued, to language and the decisions we make within language.

In *Polvo de ETA* still, Zulaika writes how the *txakurra*/dog that is the object of ETA's enmity (the reader will remember that *txakurra* is the only audible dialogue in *Tiro en la cabeza*) has become a *Puppy*:

En otro tiempo, los *txakurras* eran el enemigo principal de ETA, y contra ellos cometió muchos atentados. ETA ganaba su legitimidad a base de

atentar contra ellos. Así se establecía la demarcación fundamental entre amigos y enemigos. Con frivolidad, podríamos decir que el perro que se ha impuesto a ETA ha sido el perro neutro *Puppy*, el perrito de postal para consumo de turistas. Cuando el enemigo era un temible perro ladrador, ETA era alguien. Ahora se ha convertido en un perro de flores, un juguete simpático, una foto de recuerdos, ETA se ha quedado sin enemigo. (65)

*Puppy* is a massive dog shape topiary sculpture by Jeff Koons, situated outside Bilbao's Guggenheim museum, formed out of steel and earth and covered in a variety of flowers.

It is the perfect symbol of whimsical frivolity: "Olvidad por favor el discurso de la transgresión, la resistencia, el sacrificio... ya no son necesarios, dice *Puppy*" (63).

Channeling Zizek, Zulaika continues: "Olvídate de tus viejos valores y tu mala conciencia. Haz dinero tranquilamente y consúmetelo todo por el Real de tu perverso placer. Entre otras cosas, ¿no es acaso este Real de consumo capitalista obsceno el que ha determinado el alto el fuego de ETA?" (63). There is no way to "prove" Zulaika's assertion that the end of ETA is taking place to clear the way for obscene capitalist consumption (or the fact that ETA ended its *alto el fuego*, and then declared it once again), but there seems to be an undeniable correlation between pacification and consumerism.<sup>107</sup> The same holds true for the production of culture, where ETA's role as a politically inert figure opens it up to be the focus of new films, new histories, new novels, new comedies. Films like *Ocho apellidos vascos* (Dir. Emilio Martínez Lázaro, 2014), which gained notoriety for being one of the most commercially successful productions in

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<sup>107</sup> Arnaldo Otegi, in the transcribed interview printed in Julio Medem's book version of *La pelota vasca*, laments the consumerism that is, in his eyes, the most obvious threat to his cultural identity: "Nosotros [los vascos] pensamos que, el día en que en Lekeitio, en Zubieta, se coma en hamburgueserías, se oiga música rock americana y todo el mundo vista ropa americana y deje de hablar su lengua para hablar inglés, y todo el mundo esté, en vez de estar contemplando los montes, funcionando con Internet, pues para nosotros ese día será un mundo tan aburrido, tan aburrido que no merecerá la pena vivir" (433).

recent Spanish history, or the flourish of memoirs by *guardias civiles* or individuals threatened by ETA, prove this point. It certainly would not be better for writers and directors to avoid producing works out of fear for their lives, but the works produced in an apparent void of political conflict clearly have a different relevance and worth.

All of this is not to say that the work done in this project, by arguing that a mode of hostility continues to govern politics in Spain, is null in the face of rampant consumerism. The legal structures that limit the politics of memory and reinforce the distinctions that make enmity a central means of addressing conflict will find new venues for exclusion in a Spain whose cultural and economic composition is changing. The turning wheel of hostility will adopt new terms, new identities to consecrate and other identities whose space will be denied. Although there is no way to *know* what the future holds, one must nonetheless read the signs, remain vigilant: "Es el tiempo de la decisión y del *riesgo*" (8). But, that is nothing new.

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