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Geographies of Perpetration
Re-Signifying Cultural Narratives of Mass Violence


PETER LANG

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The Scene of the Crime: Vestiges of the Past and Cartography of Basque Political Violence¹

Abstract: Between 1968 and 2011, the Basque Country was the scene of political violence. Although there were other bloody events, the terrorist organization ETA was responsible for most of the deaths. This chapter analyzes whether the places where those killings occurred have become *lieux de mémoire*, physical spaces of memory of the victims, or whether, on the contrary, they have fallen into oblivion.

Keywords: Basque Country, ETA, Terrorism, Memory, Lieux de mémoire

On 7 June 1968, the terrorist organization ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, Basque Country and Freedom) carried out its first killing: Civil Guard José Antonio Pardines. Hours later, the author of that first crime, Francisco Javier Echebarrieta (*Txabi*), was shot dead by the Civil Guard. Between that date and the declaration of the cessation of its “armed activity” in October 2011, ETA killed about 853 people and injured a further 2,632. In addition, a sizeable number of its militants lost their lives in violent actions, in the 1980s in particular. Among those responsible for those deaths were various far-right terrorist groups and the GAL (*Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación*), an organization created by senior members of the Socialist government Interior Ministry to fight against ETA using counter-terrorism, which killed 27 people between 1983 and 1987.² Added to which were the deaths caused by police actions, terrorists killed by their own bombs, etc.

1 This article forms part of a Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities project PGC2018-094133-B-100 (MCIU/AEI/FEDER, UE), within the framework of the UPV/EHU GIU 20/02 Group.

2 In total, 914 people died between 1968 and 2011 as a result of Basque political violence (ETA, GAL, far-right terrorism, etc.). Raúl López Romo: *Informe Foronda. Los efectos del terrorismo en la sociedad vasca (1968-2010)*. Madrid: Catarata 2015. Vid. Ludger Mees: *The Basque Contention: Ethnicity, Politics, Violence*. New York: Routledge 2020.

The history and memory of terrorism in the Basque Country have been thoroughly analyzed by historiography. However, to date nobody had investigated the situation of the specific places where those deaths occurred. This chapter seeks to fill that gap, analyzing whether those crime scenes have become *lieux de mémoire*, physical spaces of memory of the victims, or whether, on the contrary, they have fallen into oblivion. Methodologically, the chapter draws from studies on places of memory, understood in this case in their most physical sense, linked to the memorization and resignification of a place where a historical event has taken place.³ Within these *lieux de mémoire*, almost everywhere in the world it has been customary to indicate the places where terrorist attacks, war crimes, assassinations, etc. have occurred.⁴ Throughout the text, special attention is paid to the differences between the spaces where the victims of ETA and other violence fell, understanding that the physical and symbolic marking of these places forms an essential part of the so-called “battle for the narrative” (in other words, the way in which the history of ETA and its victims is being told following the end of terrorism). Although I shall refer to events in other regions, I shall focus on the territory of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country or Euskadi. This will enable me to relate politics of memory regarding crime scenes to the Basque political context of recent decades. This has been characterized by the political pre-eminence of moderate or democratic Basque nationalism, opposed to ETA’s violence but also to Spanish centralism. This sector has basically been represented by the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which has presided over the autonomous government of Euskadi almost without interruption since 1980. One should also highlight the presence of Herri Batasuna (HB), a party representing the radical pro-independence left, which enjoyed significant electoral support and for many years refused to condemn ETA’s actions, which led to the party being illegalized by the courts in 2003. Subsequently dissociated from violence, following the disappearance of ETA, it continues to represent an important sector of Basque society, under the name of Euskal Herria Bildu (EH Bildu). Both the PNV and EH Bildu and the national political parties with a presence in the Basque Country—such as the conservative Popular Party (PP) and the Socialist Party of Euskadi (PSE), the Basque branch of the Spanish Socialist

3 Pierre Nora (Dir.): *Les lieux de mémoire* [1984–1992]. Paris: Gallimard 1997.

4 Per Jørgen Ystehede: Contested Spaces: On Crime Museums, Monuments and Memorials. In: Paul Knepper/Anja Johansen (Eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016, p. 338–352.

Party—have different views with regard to the politics of memory that should be implemented following the end of terrorism.

Unmarked in the Territory

For several decades, ETA’s victims were condemned to silence and oblivion.⁵ Meanwhile, a noisy minority, grouped around HB, supported ETA’s actions and protested in the streets whenever a member of the terrorist organization died. This dichotomy is reflected in the absence of any kind of marking in the places where ETA’s attacks took place. In spite of the considerable number of casualties caused by the organization on Basque territory between 1968 and 2000, not one of those spaces was marked at the time as a future place of memory. Not even Francoists were particularly interested in recalling those spaces, above all in the case of *anonymous* victims, possibly because they preferred the passage of time to erase the tracks of a terrorism cast that doubts upon the dictatorship.

Significantly, in other parts of Spain memorials were erected in places where diverse terrorist actions had occurred towards the end of Francoism or during the Transition. Particularly noteworthy in Madrid is the plaque indicating where Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, then President of the Spanish government, was assassinated by ETA in 1973, during the final years of the dictatorship. Given the victim’s personality, the Francoist authorities decided that the event should be remembered, and that plaque is still to be seen in Calle Claudio Coello. The same thing happened in another area of Madrid, in Calle Atocha, where an engraving on the house and a large monument 50 metres away commemorate the right-wing killing of five communist lawyers, in January 1977. A noteworthy case, in this instance in Basque territory, was the death of five workers at the hands of the police during a demonstration in Vitoria, on 3 March 1976. These deaths, in the early days of the Transition, had nothing to do with Basque national identity or with ETA, since these were workers demanding improved working conditions. Consequently, all the local political parties agreed that these were unlawful killings and that the victims had to be remembered. On the site of the massacre a monument was erected in their memory, and in 1986 the location was renamed Plaza del Tres de Marzo.

Why was the same not done with ETA’s victims in the Basque Country? Maybe the institutions and the democratic parties did not even contemplate the

5 Antonio Rivera/Eduardo Mateo (Eds.): *Las narrativas del terrorismo. Cómo contamos, cómo transmitimos, cómo entendemos*. Madrid: Catarata 2020.

possibility of setting up this kind of memorials in the places where ETA had committed a crime. On the one hand, the *era of memory* had not yet arrived: in general, the victims had not yet come to the fore, as would occur later; on the other, even those who opposed terrorism believed that the situation, with ETA still very strong and supported by part of society, was not yet mature enough for this kind of initiative.

However, the democratic parties had an example close at hand. For while ETA's victims fell into oblivion and the location of their deaths disappeared from memory, the spaces where some ETA activists had died in clashes with the police, or killed by far-right groups, were indeed marked. The most paradigmatic case is that of Pardines's murderer, *Txabi* Echebarrieta, killed by the Civil Guard in 1968. The fact that *Txabi* was "the first to kill and the first to die" in the history of ETA, and the locations of their deaths, barely 12 kilometres apart, lends the respective places a special symbolic value.⁶ Significantly, despite its historical transcendence, the place where Pardines was killed in Aduna is completely bare, while the site of *Txabi's* death in Benta Haundi (Tolosa) is marked by a monolith erected in 1993, although ETA sympathisers had already made it a place of memory, by means of ephemeral reminders (flowers on the anniversary of his death, etc.). The monolith is the work of the famous Basque sculptor Jorge Oteiza, but his initial idea was to install not one sculpture in memory of *Txabi*, but two, one at the scene of each death. The artist understood the initiative "as an embrace of reconciliation" and an icon of peace, symbolically connecting *Txabi* and Pardines. It is very possible that nowadays many victims' associations regard the initiative as an attempt to equate both deaths, but at that time, erecting a monument to a Civil Guard killed by ETA, when nobody was concerned about such victims, was a revolutionary idea. However, while the sculpture in memory of Echebarrieta in Benta Haundi was erected in 1993 and still stands, the monument to Pardines in Aduna was never installed. Although the precise circumstances of this contradiction are unknown, it clearly responds to the difference between the two victims: in other words, the local institutions, who had to authorise the installation of the sculptures, and pay for them, were of the opinion that *Txabi* was worthy of a monument but Pardines was not.

6 Vid. Gaizka Fernández Soldevilla/Florencio Domínguez Iribarren (Eds.): *Pardines. Cuando ETA empezó a matar*. Madrid: Tecnos 2018.



Fig. 1. Monument to *Txabi* Echebarrieta, first member of ETA killed in a clash with the police, 7 June 1968. Benta Haundi, Tolosa (Gipuzkoa, Spain). On the anniversaries of his death, the sculpture is adorned with Basque flags, flowers and posters. Photography © Santiago de Pablo



Fig. 2. Absolute emptiness at the spot where Civil Guard José Antonio Pardines died on 7 June 1968, ETA's first victim. Aduna (Gipuzkoa, Spain). "7 de junio de 1968. José Antonio Pardines". Photography © Eduardo Nave. *Fundación Centro para la Memoria de las Víctimas del Terrorismo*

Nevertheless, given the impossibility of erecting the monolith as planned, Oteiza decided to act alone and placed a small cross on the wall of an old building situated next to the site of the killing of Pardines. Thus, private initiative substituted official indifference, when it came to recalling ETA's victims. However, that cross lacked the visibility of the monument to *Txabi*, which is also a place of *living* memory, since on the anniversary of his death, the significance of the space is underlined with commemorative acts, Basque flags, flowers and posters of the dead terrorist. In fact, the cross dedicated to Pardines disappeared when the building was demolished years later, but nobody protested or lamented the symbol's absence.⁷

A similar case is that of the four members of the Anti-capitalist Autonomous Commandos (a short-lived branch of ETA that split from the latter during the Transition), killed in a clash with the police in the bay of Pasaia in 1984. The place was marked by an inscription with the text "Shot dead by the national police. The people does not forgive" and a visually striking memorial, representing the silhouettes of the fallen terrorists. The house in Bilbao where HB leader Santi Brouard was killed by the GAL in 1984 was marked just one year after his death, with a plaque that read "In honor of all the *gudaris* [Basque combatants], warmest thanks". Brouard's case is very different from the aforementioned examples, as, though HB was illegalized years later on account of its relationship with ETA, he was not a terrorist killed in a clash with the police but a democratically elected politician (Deputy Mayor of Bilbao and Member of the Basque Parliament), killed in cold blood by a terrorist group opposed to ETA. It is logical, therefore, that an attempt was made to preserve the memory of the place where this crime had been committed.⁸ What is not so logical is the fact that in similar cases, but perpetrated by ETA, it was decided that the scene of the crime should fall into oblivion. This was what happened with Gregorio Ordóñez (PP), who, like Brouard, was a member of the Basque Parliament and Deputy Mayor (of San Sebastián) and who was assassinated by ETA in 1995, in the city's old town. Unlike with Brouard, for over two decades, all traces of this crime were erased. So there were two yardsticks, depending on whether one was a victim of ETA or of far-right or para-police forces. The latter had no support within society,

7 *El Diario Vasco* (San Sebastián), 03.05.2020. Years later, there were further failed attempts symbolically to link both places by means of a human chain.

8 In 1997, a street in Bilbao was named after Brouard, and years later, a sculpture in his memory was unveiled close to where he was killed.

whereas ETA continued to have sympathisers and those who did not share its ideas were afraid to express their opposition.

Starting to Remember

The situation changed early in the 2000s. This was due in part to ETA's assassination of the young PP councilor in Ermua, Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997. Given its special circumstances, this incident prompted unprecedented social mobilization of rejection of ETA and support for its victims, which continued during the ensuing years. Moreover, the historical memory movement, which advocated the recovery in Spain of the memory of the victims of Francoist repression during the Civil War and the dictatorship, led many people to consider the need to do something similar with the victims of ETA, far more recent in time.

It is significant that, while the Basque Country began to be filled with markers indicating the specific places where acts of Francoist repression had been carried out, memorials began to appear at the scenes of various killings committed by ETA between 1998 and 2003: retired Civil Guard Alfonso Parada, PSE leader Fernando Buesa and the *ertzaina* (autonomous Basque police officer) Jorge Díez in Vitoria; Municipal Police Chief Joseba Pagazaurtundua and journalist José Luis López de Lacalle in Andoain; *ertzainas* Ana Isabel Aróstegui and Javier Mijangos in Beasain; Socialist politician Juan María Jauregi in Legorreta or businessman José Mari Korta in Zestoa.⁹ All these memorials were erected between 2000 and 2004, invariably at the initiative of Town Councils governed by the PP, the PSE or the PNV. The majority are monoliths, which stand out in the urban landscape, with symbols associated with peace and freedom. As has occurred for a long time in the case of *Txabi*, many of these monuments are now kept *alive*, with memorial acts organized at the scene of the crime on the occasion of every anniversary. Some of these memorials correspond to particularly significant victims, but this is not always the case. The clearest example is that of the aforementioned Miguel Ángel Blanco. In spite of the historical impact of his death, the site of his killing is not marked in any way. This *anomaly* is understandable because this is a bleak location, in the middle of the countryside, far from the city center.

9 Jesús Alonso Carballés: Espacio urbano, memoria y olvido de las víctimas. In: *El Valor de la palabra* 4 (2004), p. 93–114, p. 106.



Fig. 3. Official monument in memory of the killing on 22 February 2000 of Socialist politician Fernando Buesa and his bodyguard, Basque police officer Jorge Díez. Vitoria (Álava, Spain). Photography © Santiago de Pablo

Another interesting case is that of Dolores González Katarain (*Yoyes*), a onetime ETA leader who was killed by her former colleagues in Ordizia in 1986, accused of being a “traitor” to the organization. Her death was the cause of considerable consternation, but the scene was not marked. Not until 1998 did Jorge Oteiza take advantage of the installation in Ordizia of one of his sculptures, in honor of a local artist, so as to also “include” *Yoyes* in the memorial, as it stood barely 100 metres from where she was killed. This almost accidental inclusion does not appear to have been sufficient for the family and friends of this particular victim of ETA, and in 2011, on the anniversary of her death, they decided to place a wooden stele at the scene of *Yoyes*’s murder, with her photograph and the inscription “For daring to differ and for acting freely”. This memorial was provisional, but her next-of-kin replace it on the occasion of every anniversary.¹⁰ In Legutio, an impermanent memorial (a photograph of the victim, a few verses and some flowers) recall Civil

10 *El Diario Vasco*, 08.09.2011, 15.03.2013 and 11.09.2019.

Guard José Manuel Piñuel, killed by an ETA bomb in 2008. This initiative is especially interesting, as its ephemeral nature recalls the candles and flowers placed in many locations immediately after a terrorist attack (2004 in Madrid, Nice in 2016, etc.).¹¹ Unlike the memorial to *Yoyes*, in Legutio its author is an anonymous citizen, who was unrelated to the victim and did not even live in the locality, fully aware that they were acting “in a hostile place”. Indeed, the Legutio Town Council has always been governed by the radical nationalist left (HB and EH Bildu) and therefore has expressed no interest in remembering the victims of ETA. That citizen has made a point of rendering permanent the ephemeral, “secretly” turning up every Sunday, for almost ten years, to clean and preserve the memorial.¹²



Fig. 4. Memorial at the site of the death of Civil Guard José Manuel Piñuel in 2008 in Legutio (Álava, Spain). An anonymous citizen installed it on a temporary basis, but to this day maintains and renews it. Photography © Santiago de Pablo

11 The first tragedy recorded in this manner was the death of Princess Diana of Wales in Paris in 1997. Vid. Guy Lesoeurs: *Diana du pont de l'Alma. Les pèlerins de la flamme*. Paris: Téraèdre 2004; Cristina Sánchez-Carretero: *El archivo del duelo: análisis de la respuesta ciudadana ante los atentados del 11 de marzo en Madrid*. Madrid: CSIC 2011.

12 *El Correo* (Bilbao), 14.05.2017.

Along with monumental memorials to recent victims, throughout the 21st century, the Basque capitals have approved the placing of simple plaques wherever ETA or other terrorist groups have carried out killings within their municipal area. Vitoria was a Pioneer in these types of initiative, which rescue victims from the *years of lead* (1977 – 1987), during which nobody remembered them. In 2007, its City Council approved, with the votes in favour of the PP, the PSE and PNV, the installation of 23 very simple plaques, placed on the ground, which sometimes go unnoticed. They include no reference to ETA because, according to the (PP) Mayor at the time, they were not intended to be “tombstones, but messages in favour of freedom, democracy and the dignity”. They only include the victim’s name, the date of their death and a sentence in allusion to peace, borrowed from diverse authors, almost always foreign (Aristotle, Mahatma Gandhi, Isaac Asimov, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Camus, Manuel Azaña, etc.).¹³ Later, Bilbao and San Sebastian followed Vitoria’s example and decided to mark with plaques the sites of ETA’s killings, and of the deaths of other victims of political violence, understood in a broader sense.

Contested Locations

The recent marking of crime scenes in the Basque Country, which I have just explained, has not been peaceful. On the contrary, these memorials have been the object of dispute, in a symbolic struggle framed within the aforementioned battle over the memory of ETA. The City Councils of Bilbao and San Sebastian, governed in recent years by the PNV, were slow to implement their decision to place the inscriptions in memory of the killings. This prompted protests by associations like COVITE (Collective of Victims of Terrorism in the Basque Country). This association interpreted the municipal delay as evidence of the PNV’s alleged *half-heartedness* against ETA, due to the former’s Basque nationalist roots. By way of protest, COVITE took the initiative in September 2014 and placed an inscription at the spot where a household employee had been murdered by ETA in Bilbao in 1987.¹⁴ This campaign, the slogan of which was “One victim, one plaque”, continued in San Sebastian, where in May 2015, COVITE members placed 73 plaques in places where ETA had carried out a killing. Most of these plaques were removed shortly afterwards by the City Council, as they had been erected without municipal authorization. However, by 2017, neither Bilbao nor San Sebastian had fulfilled their promise to mark the locations of attacks in their

¹³ *El Correo*, 13.03.2007.

¹⁴ *El Confidencial* (Madrid), 11.03.2017.

streets. For this reason, on 11 March (anniversary of the 2004 Jihadist attack in 2004 in Madrid and European Day for the Victims of Terrorism) COVITE again decided to take action and erected a total of 62 signs, overnight, in both cities. On this occasion, they included not only the victims of ETA but also of the GAL and far-right groups. The two City Halls, governed by the PNV, again removed these “clandestine” plaques, an action criticized by the PP and some victims’ associations. The president of COVITE admitted that the act had been an attempt to “challenge” the Councils of the two Basque capitals: “If they want to remove the plaques, at least they will have to look for them and find out where the terrorist crimes were committed.”¹⁵

The Mayor of San Sebastian explained that COVITE’s attitude was unacceptable, because the memory of the victims should be assured of “the widest possible political consensus”.¹⁶ Finally, between 2018 and 2020, both City Councils began to place official plaques at the locations where killings of any nature had taken place, following Vitoria’s example and with the approval of each victim’s family. In San Sebastian, EH Bildu accepted the erection of the plaques, but “with certain misgivings”, as it sought to “acknowledge every victim of the conflict” (in other words, equate victims with members of ETA killed by their own explosives, prisoners, etc.). In fact, its councilors did not attend the unveiling of the plaques in memory of Juan María Araluce, president of the provincial government assassinated by ETA in 1976, along with his chauffeur and bodyguards. Neither were they present in the case of the aforementioned PP leader Gregorio Ordóñez, though on this occasion “at the express wish of the family”, who did not wish EH Bildu to attend. These plaques feature the victim’s name, the date and the words “Victim of ETA” which, as I have said, did not appear in the case of Vitoria.¹⁷ This represents a step forward in the specific recognition of ETA’s victims. Yet, as the victims of “other violence” were also going to have a sign marking the scene of their deaths, the San Sebastian City Council decided that “the plaques should be a different color, according to the type of victim”. This was an attempt to avoid “making a mixture in which everything was the same”, which could provide “scope for narratives that justified” ETA’s existence.¹⁸ In fact, the PP does not attend acts that are organized in memory of ETA members killed in

¹⁵ *El Correo*, 11.03.2017 and *El Diario Vasco*, 11.03.2017.

¹⁶ *El Confidencial*, 11.03.2017.

¹⁷ *El Correo*, 10.01.2020, 25.01.2020 and 26.01.2020.

¹⁸ *El Diario Vasco*, 01.06.2019 and 07.10.2019.

clashes with the police, as these represent, in their opinion, an attempt to equate victims and persecutors.¹⁹

All this reflects the difficulty involved in trying to find a consensus in the politics of memory of terrorism in the Basque Country. However, although differences exist between the PP, the PNV or the PSE, the people who find it most difficult to accept the memory of the places where ETA has committed crimes are those who still yearn for terrorism as an instrument with which to achieve an independent Euskadi and who refuse to accept the defeat of ETA. Thus, in San Sebastian, unknown individuals, no doubt nostalgic for ETA's violence, have on several occasions vandalized the plaques commemorating the assassinations of Araluce and Ordóñez. The City Council condemned these incidents and pledged to repair the memorials, which were not mere "Street furniture", but "tributes to murder victims".²⁰ The private memorial to Civil Guard Piñuel in Legutio has also been attacked on multiple occasions. Those responsible were arrested in 2019 and tried for "humiliation of victims of terrorism".²¹ Paradoxically, according to Pascal Ory, this vandalism evidences the efficacy of memorials: if someone wants to destroy them, it is because they are fulfilling their mission of recalling the victims, which is why there are sectors that wish to eliminate them, erasing their memory.²² In turn, the association Dignity and Justice denounced the Tolosa Town Council for preserving the stele in honor of Echebarrieta at the scene of his death. This was a counter-attack on the part of sectors opposed to ETA in order to prevent that space from becoming a glorification of the leader of the organization, although the City Council replied that it lacked the legal capacity to do so, since the monument was on private land.²³

Conclusion

In any violent conflict (wars, terrorism, etc.), physical marking of crime scenes is an important element of politics of memory. This has occurred in diverse

19 *Gasteiz Hoy* (Vitoria), 29.12.2016.

20 *El Diario Vasco*, 07.12.2019; *El Correo*, 10.08.2019, 24.08.2019 and 03.02.2020.

21 *El Correo*, 17.10.2019.

22 Pascal Ory: L'histoire des politiques symboliques modernes: un questionnaire. In: *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 47.3 (2000), p. 525-536. Cited in Alonso: Espacio urbano, memoria y olvido de las víctimas, p. 108.

23 *Libertad Digital* (Madrid), 31.05.2008.

parts of the world, by preserving concentration camps, torture centers, bombed areas, locations of shootings or of political assassinations, sites of deaths of those resisting dictatorships or foreign invasions, etc.

The case of Basque terrorism reveals certain particularities, arising from its chronology and the difficulty involved in constructing a memory shared by society as a whole. Because of this, the location and memory of crime scenes have reflected very different strategies and rhythms in the case of victims of ETA and of far-right terrorist groups or of police violence, including terrorists killed by the police. While some of the latter were soon honored with memorials recording the location of their deaths, the tendency to forget those killed by ETA meant that for a long time the places where they died remained unmarked. It was not until the early 21st century that their memory was recovered, including the physical location of their murder, which previously had been entirely erased. However, not all these places have received the same treatment, as there is a difference between a plaque, which may go almost unnoticed, and a monument, the memorial nature of which is reinforced with every passing anniversary. This treatment has depended on the identity of the victim, the era in which the crime occurred, the location (whether or not this was somewhere accessible, in a city, a town or the countryside, etc.) and, above all, the party in power in the corresponding locality. The marking of scenes of Basque political violence is inseparable from the war of memories that has persisted in the wake of ETA's disappearance: while some parties wish to preserve the memory of these events, those with links to terrorism in the past show no interest in remembering the victims of ETA, or at least seek to frame their deaths within an equal "conflict" between the Spanish state and ETA. This explains why, while the spot where some victims died has been marked and turned into a *lieu de mémoire*, others remain empty, falling into complete oblivion. The difference between the places where Pardines and *Txabi* (Civil Guard and member of ETA, respectively) died, on the same day, back in June 1968, only 12 kilometres apart, could not be more significant: while in Pardines's case it is empty, in *Txabi*'s it has become a place of glorification of the fallen *hero*.

Physically marking the places where victims of ETA met their deaths is currently a political impossibility, as the Town Councils in the hands of EH Bildu have no interest in doing so. In attempt to fill this vacuum that still affects many ETA crime scenes, private initiatives have opted for virtual marking: this is the case of Willy Uribe and Eduardo Nave, who have photographed every scene of an ETA killing, preserving through books or exhibitions the memory of these spaces. Or the web pages Map of Terror (COVITE) and Map of Oblivion (a

private initiative), in which these locations are indicated on Internet maps, along with basic information relating to each murder²⁴. This use of the virtual, when a physical memorial is not possible, is one more example of the importance of conserving the memory of places where heinous events took place, to help future generations not to repeat the errors of the past.

24 Vid. Willy Uribe: *Allí donde ETA asesinó*. Barcelona: Los Libros del Lince 2011; Eduardo Nave: *A la hora, en el lugar*. Madrid: PHREE 2013; *Mapa del Terror*. <https://mapadelterror.com> [12.06.2020] and *Mapa del Olvido*. <http://mapadelolvido.blogspot.com> [21.07.2020].

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Belchite: A Crime Scene Peopled by the Dead and Their Ghosts

Abstract: Belchite was the scene of a famous battle in the Spanish civil war, where in the summer of 1937 it was at the center of a furiously-disputed front line. What most singles out this case are the visible marks that this violence left on the village—for the ruins were purposely preserved. Belchite is thus the first martyr-town in European history. This case illustrates the complex relationship between a multiple crime scene and the bodies inhabiting it.

Keywords: Mass violence, Spanish Civil War, Commemoration, Belchite, Ghosts

Lying 40 kilometers south-east of Zaragoza, Belchite is a large village in the heart of an area lacking any of the greenery of the Ebro valley: once past the foothills bordering the valley, Belchite inhabits an arid, windswept limestone plateau traversed by narrow creeks. The visitor is struck by the grimness of this semi-arid countryside, further intensified by the devastation: for indeed, Belchite was the scene of a famous battle in the Spanish civil war, where in the summer of 1937 it was at the center of a furiously-disputed front line. There are various ways in which the wave of violence that struck this village was exceptional: several years of combat leaving much of it in ruins; three waves of repression; the exodus and extreme destitution of its inhabitants; a slow reconstruction marked by the systematic use of forced labor; banishment and exile of many citizens, and economic emigration of others. But what most singles out this case are the visible marks that this violence left on the village—for the ruins were purposely preserved. Belchite is thus the first martyr-town in European history: it is the first of a long list of war ruins preserved after the Second World War, including Oradour-sur-Glane, the *Frauenkirche* in Dresden, Coventry Cathedral, the *Gedächtniskirche* in Berlin¹.

1 Stéphane Michonneau: *Fue ayer. Belchite: un pueblo español frente a la cuestión del pasado*. Zaragoza: Prensa Universitaria de Zaragoza 2017.