

# FROM DISPOSSESSION TO REPARATION: YOYES THIRTY YEARS AFTER HER DEATH

## DE LA DESPOSESIÓN A LA REPARACIÓN: YOYES TREINTA AÑOS DESPUÉS DE SU MUERTE

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**Resumen.** Treinta años tras la muerte de Yoyes existe un nuevo marco teórico e histórico que favorece el análisis de las implicaciones políticas y simbólicas presentes en su asesinato en 1986. Un clima socio histórico nuevo favorece un acercamiento ético a las víctimas de ETA, que va sustituyendo progresivamente a la indiferencia y al desamparo anteriormente mostrados por una gran parte de la sociedad vasca. Este artículo explora la figura política y el liderazgo de Yoyes en la organización y estudia su exposición pública tras su regreso a su pueblo natal, ya que encarnaba la presencia inasimilable de una líder de ETA que había abandonado la organización y se había convertido en madre. La lógica de la desposesión es analizada partiendo de la base teórica expuesta por Judith Butler y Athena Athanasiou (2013). Finalmente, la responsabilidad como respuesta se ofrece en este ensayo como modelo ético que permite considerar a Yoyes como víctima de ETA.

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**Abstract:** Thirty years after the death of Yoyes in 1986, time has provided new historical and theoretical frameworks to address the symbolic and political implications involved in her assassination. A new socio political climate has favored an ethical approach to the victims of ETA which has partially replaced the previous indifference and neglect exhibited by a large part of Basque society. The present article explores the condition of the historical figure of Yoyes under the perspective of her activity as a political militant and studies the exposure of the ex-militant upon her return home. She incarnated the inassimilable presence of a female ETA leader who decided to abandon the organization and become a mother. Following Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013), the logic of dispossession is studied, and *responsiveness as responsibility* is offered as the ethical manner in which Yoyes should be considered under the category of ETA's victims.

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## 1. Introduction

Begoña Aretxaga published the article titled 'The Death of Yoyes: Cultural Discourses of Gender and Politics in the Basque Country' in 1988, barely two years after the assassination by ETA of the ex-militant María Dolores González Katarain, known as Yoyes, in her native village of Ordizia on September 10, 1986. The article remains one of the most lucid insights into this episode of Basque politics despite the author's initial reservations; Aretxaga admits that she does not aim to provide an answer to the question of why Yoyes was killed; neither is it her intention to assess the socio political and symbolic implications, 'for it is too early to assess these precisely' (Aretxaga, 2005: 147). Thirty years after the death of Yoyes, a reconsideration of the vicissitudes of her life and death is possible through the application of theoretical approaches that underline her agency as a political leader and build a performative connection to the victims of ETA. Additionally, a new socio political climate has favored an ethical approach to the victims of violence which has partially replaced the previous indifference and neglect exhibited by a large part of Basque society.

The present article explores the condition of the historical figure of Yoyes under the perspective of her activity as a political militant; as will be seen, the particular circumstances of her life inscribed in a most turbulent moment of Basque politics made of Yoyes a spectre in the last years of her life. The article analyses the dialectic of presence and absence according to the bodily exposure of the figure of Yoyes, who incarnated the inassimilable presence of a female ETA militant who decided to abandon the organization and become

a mother in exile. Following Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013), the concept and the consequences of dispossession connected to conditions of embodiment and agency for subjects marked by a precarious condition will be studied. Finally, response as responsibility (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013) will be offered as the ethical manner in which Yoyes should be considered under the category of ETA's victims, who have often experienced 're-traumatisation' (Joyce, Lynch & Antón, 2015: 61) derived from exclusion, ostracism and lack of social support. Reparation for the victims may take many forms; among them Gema Varona mentions analyses by 'diverse sciences ways of knowing' (Varona, 2014: 340). Such analyses may include re-readings of mythical and historical figures under new theoretical approaches, as this article intends to do through a reconsideration of the figure of Yoyes.

## 2. Yoyes as a Political Agent

As Susan N. Herman explains, when approaching the topic of women and terrorism, there is a consistent tendency to immediately associate the dreadful impact of terrorism on women rather than to admit the active participation of women as agents. Despite the fact that it is widely known that women have been active members in armed conflicts and terrorist attacks internationally, Herman reminds us that, "Women do act as terrorists - and as guerrillas, insurgents, revolutionaries, combatants, and militants" (Herman, 2009: 260). Although in recent years there have been significant efforts by scholars to study the role of women as perpetrators of violence (Eager, 2008; Poloni-Standing & Ortals, 2013; and

Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, among others), women are frequently imagined as incapable of being active participants in terrorist attacks. Such belief stems from a stereotypical distinction between femininity and masculinity, and the almost exclusive association of violence with the latter. Herman reveals three sexist stereotypes which have led to the perpetuation of such belief, 'First, that women are apolitical; second, that the division of labor between men and women is based on physical differences in the ability of men and women to undertake certain acts; and third, that a woman's primary purpose and function is to be a mother and a wife rather than having an individual identity of her own' (Herman, 2009: 262).

Gender binary thinking and the reproduction of stereotypes are visible in the manners in which female terrorists are imagined; they are either perceived as cruel and cold creatures with no human feelings or as mere supporters led by male relatives and lovers, which implies that there is a qualitative difference when a woman rather than a man commits a violent act. Two telling examples are illustrative of such perceptions; on the one hand, as Eileen MacDonald reports, 'Shoot the women first' was an instruction given to West Germany's anti-terrorist squad, based on the belief that women are more ferocious as terrorists (MacDonald, 1991: xiv). On the other hand, Antolín Matías clearly formulates the second approach when referring to ETA militants: 'The majority of women became militants because they had affective bonds with male ETA members'<sup>1</sup> (Antolín, 2002: 16). In a non-academic approach to the women

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1. Translations in the main text by the author. Original quotations are included in footnotes. La mayoría llegó a la militancia por mantener estrechos vínculos afectivos con algún varón etarra.

in ETA, Antolín's book, *Mujeres de ETA, Piel de serpiente* (Women in ETA. Snake Skin), exhibits a comprehensive catalogue of sexist remarks in its characterization of ETA's female members. Collectively, the women of the *Comando Madrid* (the most active and lethal group in ETA during the late 1980s), are thus portrayed: "They did not have much decision-making capacity and almost all of them were a source of conflict in daily living. The majority of them (Belén, Idoia, Ainhoa, Soledad...) were arrogant, domineering, manipulative, selfish, deceitful, superficial, lacking in remorse, without scruples and, above all, murderers"<sup>2</sup> (Antolín, 2002: 139). In this homogeneous depiction, individualities –only first names are provided– are subsumed in a broad pejorative characterization in which traits usually employed to negatively describe women predominate. To provide just one individual illustration, Idoia López Riaño is described as a sensual woman, a 'slave to her body and her hair'<sup>3</sup> (Antolín, 2002: 20), and 'as indomitable as a stainless steel orchid'<sup>4</sup> (Antolín, 2002: 19). The author, when further explaining López Riaño's activity, explicitly rejects her political commitment or ideological inclination; he openly states, 'She had no idea about politics; she became a member of ETA as she could have become a bank robber. She is haughty, defiant, and flirtatious. She

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2. No tenían mucha capacidad de decisión y casi todas fueron un nudo conflictivo en la convivencia. La mayoría (Belén, Idoia, Ainhoa, Soledad...) eran arrogantes, dominantes, manipuladoras, egoístas, mentirosas, superficiales, carentes de remordimientos, sin escrúpulos y, sobre todo, asesinas.

3. Idoia, era, ante todo, una esclava de su cuerpo y de su cabello.

4. Es indomable como una orquídea de acero inoxidable.

belongs to the type of women who dream with trains full of soldiers<sup>5</sup> (Antolín, 2002: 30). Significantly, such vision is openly contradicted by an open letter to the Basque newspaper that López Riaño co-authored with other two ETA members, in which she manifests her intention to keep fighting for the independence of her 'dear Euskal Herria' which is included in the book (Antolín, 2002: 28). Additionally, the insistence on the sensual attributes of López Riaño's appearance and on her constant seduction of men places her in the last of the three categories that Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry offer as the common narratives to characterize women in violent activities:

Women engaged in proscribed violence are often portrayed either as 'mothers', women who are fulfilling their biological destinies; as 'monsters', women who are pathologically damaged and are therefore drawn to violence; or as 'whores', women whose violence is inspired by sexual dependence and depravity (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007: 12).

Women terrorists are often viewed as apolitical and lacking ideology. Interestingly, the women that MacDonald interviewed in the Basque Country in the late 1980s, whose testimonies are included in the first chapter of the book titled 'Among the Women of ETA', firmly reject the notion that they became involved in the organization through boyfriends and lovers (MacDonald, 1991: 11). In this context, the figure of Yoyes is exceptional in many respects, and the most salient is that her political leadership and militancy are frequently

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5. No tenía ni idea de política, se hizo de ETA como pudo acabar de asaltadora de bancos. Es altiva, desafiante y coqueta. Pertenecer a la estirpe de ese tipo de mujeres que sueñan con trenes llenos de soldados.

recognized and underlined. She has received substantial critical attention, although the most significant studies concern the filmic portrayal of the historical figure in *Yoyes* by Helena Taberna (2000). Elisa Costa-Villaverde (2007), Ann Davies (2009), Santiago de Pablo (2012), María Pilar Rodríguez (2002), Carlos Roldán (2011) and Rob Stone and María Pilar Rodríguez (2015), among others, have highlighted the feminist tone employed by Taberna when approaching its subject and emphasized her intention to reconcile the seemingly irresolvable aspects of the protagonist's political activity and her private life.

Gender and nationalism play a significant role in the life and death of Yoyes; as Carrie Hamilton notes, "ETA's gender politics are inextricable from its nationalist ideology and its roots in the tight-knit nationalist community in the Basque Country" (Hamilton, 2007: 134). Following such ideology, despite the increasing presence of women in ETA in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, women's participation in ETA continued to be interpreted as an extension of their private lives and personal relationships (Hamilton, 2007: 137). Aretxaga argues that Yoyes's decision to leave activism and to live a civilian life, including having a child, constituted for ETA leaders a menacing clash of gender identities:

Yoyes was an anomaly in the radical nationalist world [...]. Yoyes was treated as a hero and as a traitor, but she was a mother at the same time. A mother by definition cannot be a hero or a traitor in the cultural context of radical nationalism; she is beyond these categories. Yoyes collapsed gender differentiations at a moment when ETA(M) needed them more rigidly than ever (Aretxaga, 2005: 161).

It is precisely the exceptional status of Yoyes as a major political figure which must be highlighted since her preeminence as a member of ETA's executive committee and her decisions at the political level motivated the amplification and the resonance of her movements, which eventually were instrumental in her death. Contrary to the traditional perception of women's participation in violent organizations, Yoyes's actions were never seen as tangential to the center stage of politics. Her political consciousness and the exceptionality of her as a female figure were present from the start; Koldo Iztueta relates Yoyes' integration in one of the *taldes* (groups or commandos) during the academic year 1971-1972, when she was 17. The *talde* consisted of only female members and Iztueta emphasizes Yoyes' prominent role and her ideological conviction, which was very strong (Garmendia, González, González, Garmendia & Dorronsoro, 2009: 62). Cameron Watson is one of the few critics that has emphasized the political dimension of Yoyes and insisted on her leadership of the organization in the late 1970s. He reports that in a BBC Television documentary about ETA in which several members were secretly interviewed, Yoyes appeared as 'the most dynamic, assured, and hard line' of the interviewees, and includes her statement defending political violence, 'Either we fight and we die or we die anyway. If we die fighting, well, that's the way it goes' (Watson, 2003: 143).

Yoyes's life and death reflects the impossibility of answering the question that Rob Stone and Stone and Helen Jones pose; 'where to place the female *gudari*?' (2004: 48) refers to a spatial practicability, which in the case of the ex-militant became

a non-place, a de-territorialization. The life of Yoyes is marked by mobility; from her initial move from her small town of Ordizia to San Sebastián to study education in 1972, a series of displacements marked by the need to hide from the police led her to various exiles. As Aretxaga informs, in December 1973 she escaped to the French Basque Country beginning an exile that continued in Mexico where she fled in December 1979 following her rupture with the organization (Aretxaga, 2005: 150). During her exile in France, she remained active in ETA and in 1974, when ETA was divided into the politico-military and the military branches, Yoyes chose to remain in the military section. After the death of José Miguel Beñaran Ordeñana, known as *Argala*, a key figure in the organization, by a car bomb in 1978, Yoyes was asked to assume the highest-ranking responsibilities that any female figure has ever had in ETA (Aretxaga, 2005: 150). Merely a year later, in 1979, Yoyes realized that she was in increasing disagreement with the hard line that the organization was favoring, with offensive military actions preferred over political negotiations.

Mobility in her case was inevitably accompanied by the need to hide, to remain invisible and silent. At the initial stages, during her exile in the French Basque Country, her condition was no different from that of many other refugees, who were simply escaping from the Spanish police in this traditional refuge. After her decision to abandon ETA, her situation became more volatile. The relevance that Yoyes as a political figure had reached inside and outside of ETA made her very aware of the need to remain silent, to vanish physically and politically in order to begin a new life. ETA was also very keen on

maintaining an unstated concealment of her abandonment; as Aretxaga explains, 'From ETA's point of view, since Yoyes was a well-known, almost mythical figure, her desertion, if publicly broadcast, would be demoralizing for ETA(m)' sympathizers' (Aretxaga, 2005: 150).

Media played a major part in voicing her return to the Basque Country. Contradicting her efforts to remain inconspicuously silent and unnoticed, in January 1986, one of the major Spanish newspapers, *Cambio 16*, published an issue with this headline on the cover: "El retorno de la etarra" (The return of the ETA leader"). It was the insistence on her leadership and her political stature which immediately provoked the perception of her as a traitor by the radical nationalists. As Fernando Reinares explains, this *modus operandi* is favored by terrorist organizations in order to safeguard their own survival, 'Frequently, clandestine organizations make efforts to establish mechanisms of social sanction and even of physical coercion to prevent any signs of disagreement from those who support them'<sup>6</sup> (Reinares, 1998: 88). Six years after the abandonment of all political activity, the shadow of her significance as an ETA leader was still sizeable both inside and outside the organization. The answer provided by a representative of Herri Batasuna in April 1987 is illustrative of such perception of Yoyes as a political leader and of the need by the organization to maintain a sense of disciplinary obedience: 'an army cannot allow deviations and specially from one of

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6. Con frecuencia los grupos clandestinos se esfuerzan por establecer mecanismos de sanción social, e incluso de coacción física, para impedir que entre quienes les respaldan haya quienes expresen desacuerdo alguno con su conducta.

its generals?' (cited in Letamendía, 1994: 112).

### 3. Dispossession: Returning Home

Home has always been a problematic notion in the Basque Country. Its geographical borders oscillate depending on political considerations so that Euskal Herria includes seven provinces on both the Spanish and the French sides of the Pyrenees and is the denomination favored by those who defend the right to an autonomous nation, while País Vasco comprises the four provinces in the Spanish territory. Home is usually translated as *etxea* (house) and the slogan that family members and supporters have been using continuously for decades, *Presoak etxera* (Bring prisoners home) alludes to the fact that many ex-members of ETA are presently scattered in different prisons in Spain and France as a result of a dispersion policy implemented in 1898 with the intention to minimize contact with other prisoners. Protests are frequent and there are several organizations (Etxerat, Sare) that demand that Basque prisoners are taken 'home', closer to where family members reside, to prisons in the Basque Country for humanitarian reasons.

Yoyes was not a prisoner; constant exile precluded any chance of arrest; nevertheless, she was alert and sensitive to the dangers involved in her return and feared reprisal. Butler and Athanasiou define the complex notion of dispossession in the political field as 'processes and

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7. Un ejército no puede permitirse el lujo de la traición de sus militantes y mucho menos de uno de sus generales.

ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalizing powers' (Butler & Anastasiou, 2013: 2). Among the possibilities of dispossession, they mention loss of land and community, precarization, and even loss of life. This section places Yoyes precisely in a context marked by progressive dispossession by both the Spanish State and ETA, a process that culminated with her assassination.

Stone and Rodríguez have examined her evolution in terms of an ongoing loss of institutional, political and geographical belonging. In their reading of the film, they note,

[I]n exile she is granted special refugee status that defines her as stateless because she meets the criteria for exclusion from the community that she once sought to construct from within. Consequently, when her refugee status is rescinded and she fails to qualify for the research grant because the criteria includes domiciliation in Spain she falls outside the criteria for *both* exclusion *and* inclusion (Stone & Rodríguez, 2015: 103).

Her return to the Basque Country increases her sense of displacement and dispossession. Rather than being welcomed at home and embraced by her community, she is soon accused of being a traitor and threatened to be killed. Although the menaces become more acute at this time, Yoyes had been previously warned of the fate that was awaiting her should she chose to come back home. In her diaries, she is lucidly aware of the danger; she is conscious of the need to state her complete withdrawal from the political world many years before to clarify her situation and her new position in life. At the same time, she is aware that ETA refuses to acknowledge it and fears an open declaration which may be perceived as a weakness. Finally,

Yoyes knows that the Spanish police may play with the card of reinsertion by using her as a paradigmatic example of former ETA members who decide to abandon the organization and who must publicly repent from all previous actions. She feels 'caught between two fires' (Garmendia et al, 2009: 166-167).

In such circumstances, her decision to return to the Basque Country may be interpreted, following Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, in the context of territorial dispossession, by which the normative forces determine who may or may not remain in a given territory: "The intertwined bodily and territorial forces of dispossession play out in the exposure of bodies-in-place, which can become the occasion of subjugation, surveillance, and interpellation" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 22). Yoyes was, in fact, being surveilled and interpellated. Accusations of treason were painted on the walls of her hometown; she received ominous phone calls; and there was a perception by the population of her as a repentant ETA leader, which made her daily bodily presence in her hometown all the more dangerous<sup>8</sup>.

Yoyes' decision to stay in the Basque Country, despite all menacing signs, is an act of reterritorialization. Butler and Athanasiou refer to such insistence to remain in specific places as a radical refusal to stay in one's proper place, "Those territorially dispossessed of their land refuse to stay in their assigned "proper place" [...] precisely by staying in place, or claiming the right to stay in place,

**8. Interestingly, the making, distribution and reception of the film by Helena Taberna Yoyes were marked by a series of vicissitudes that reduplicate the obstacles and difficulties that marked Yoyes's real life and death (see Roldán 2011).**

and demanding their proprietary rights in land” (23). Yoyes was becoming acutely aware of the risk; she writes in her diary in the months previous to her death, ‘It is as they were all in agreement to kill me<sup>9</sup>’ (Garmendia et al, 2009: 243). In these last months, her dispossession takes the form of a lack of embodiment; she has been replaced by a ghost. She writes in her diary, ‘There is a ghost with my name that is wandering around, a ghost that has been in the making for years, since they started speaking about me without knowing me, and that has been kept alive in the last six years, though I have tried or thought that it was dying<sup>10</sup>’ (Garmendia et al, 2009: 243). Yoyes clearly differentiates the spectre, the substratum, the result of her mythification, and her true human being, her body and flesh entity that has been replaced by the former, ‘In the myth, the body and flesh person that is a substratum only exists as such substratum; she is not human<sup>11</sup>’ (Garmendia, 2009: 244). Yoyes is, during the last months of her life, conscious of the ghostly nature of herself, in an in-between state which Butler and Athanasiou thus describe, ‘the specter involves a return to some sort of bodily presence, be it displaced, dismembered, enclosed, or foreclosed’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 16-17). At this point, Yoyes makes a futile attempt to convince herself and others that she is

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9. Es como si todos se hubieran puesto de acuerdo para matarme.

10. Hay un fantasma con mi nombre que anda rondando por ahí, un fantasma que se vino gestando desde hace años, desde que empezaron a hablar de mí sin conocerme y que en los últimos seis años ha continuado vivo, aunque yo he tratado o he creído que moría.

11. En ese mito, la persona de carne y hueso que es un sustrato no existe más que como tal sustrato, no es humana.

not a specter –a ghost or a substratum– and in order to prove that, tellingly, she underlines the fact that she is a mother: ‘I exist! I feel like everybody else! I have a son! I want to live, I had him because I wanted to live!<sup>12</sup>’ (Garmendia et al, 2009: 244).

In her diaries, Yoyes maintains the illusion of separating her past as a political agent and a member of ETA from her future life as a civilian and, particularly, as a mother. From a very early stage, she records in her diaries the conviction that she could only become a mother in a second stage after her abandonment of the organization; in the last months of her life she insists on her decision to become a mother when she felt that she would be forgotten, ‘when I felt that I would not be involved anymore I had Akaitz, a wonderful child who absorbed me<sup>13</sup>’ (Garmendia et al, 2009: 243). Yoyes perceived the pregnancy and the birth of her son Akaitz as the final point to mark her disassociation with all political involvement and, as she writes in her diaries, as a new life that closed the door to death (Garmendia et al, 2009: 112). Cristina Ortiz has studied Yoyes’ decision to become a mother as transitional moment towards a performative affective option for life (Ortiz, 2015). As Aretxaga and Hamilton have shown, such clear distinction was not possible in the ideology of the community where the collapse of gender differentiations rejected the separation of her roles as a political activist and as a mother.

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12. ¡Yo existo! ¡Yo siento como todo el mundo! (...) ¡Tengo un hijo! Quiero vivir, ¡Lo tuve porque quería vivir!

13. Cuando sentí que no me involucrarían de nuevo tuve a Akaitz, un niño maravilloso que me absorbió un montón.

## 4. Reparation: Precarity and Mourning

Carrie Hamilton argues that Yoyes's status as mother facilitated 'the subsequent construction of her as primarily a victim of ETA, in spite of her significant role as an ETA activist and leader' (Hamilton, 2007: 142). Hamilton does not provide further explanation or justification for such assessment, but as a mother, Yoyes becomes closer to the traditional paradigm of victims. The majority of ETA militants killed in circumstances linked to their belonging to the organization and, particularly, most of the victims of ETA, have been male. In such context there is a preeminence of mothers and widows who are now instrumental in several victims' associations. Yet, Yoyes was not the mother to mourn the loss of her son; it was her own funeral that took place instead.

Aretxaga carefully analyzes Yoyes' funerary homage, which took place in Ordizia about a month after her murder. The complexity and the paradoxes that marked her life continued to be present after her death. If, as Joseba Zulaika explains, in the funeral homages that are ritually performed for ETA members upon the return of the dead bodies to their native towns, mothers have a central role often holding the ashes of the dead son (Zulaika, 2010: 111), then the case was inverted here, since Yoyes was the only female member of the organization to have been killed by her former comrades. Nevertheless, as Aretxaga informs, Yoyes' funerary homage was performed in a similar manner to those organized for members of ETA murdered by the forces of the Spanish State, 'As in the case of ETA(m)' funerary homages, Yoyes' was

held in the social center of the village: the main plaza. Similarly, there were singers, *bertsolariak* (troubadors), poetry readings and speakers' (Aretxaga, 2005: 157). Yoyes resists categorization in terms of belonging to clear-cut sides in the conflict of Basque violence. She was a terrorist and she was a victim of ETA, and simultaneously, both statements can be opposed. Yoyes denies the former characterization in a passage in her diaries in which she rejects the binary, dichotomic way of thinking which defined her as a terrorist and as a traitor, 'I never considered myself a hero; I cannot consider myself an anti-hero. I was not a terrorist but a political militant; the fact of not being a militant anymore does not automatically make me a promoter of the system<sup>14</sup>' (Garmendia et al, 2009 :244). At the same time, victims of ETA may oppose the inclusion of Yoyes among them, claiming that she herself was an essential member of the organization and therefore complicit with its crimes. As Orla Lynch and Javier Argomániz note, given the complexity and competitive nature of claims to victimhood, 'defining who is considered a 'victim' can become inherently politicized, mirroring the divisions of the conflict itself' (Lynch & Argomaniz, 2015: 6).

This last section of this article defends the inclusion of Yoyes among the victims of ETA. Yoyes was killed when she had abandoned all political involvement, but we should not forget that the victims include the family members that are left behind. In this case, the situation is particularly

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14. No me consideré héroe, no puedo considerarme antihéroe, tampoco fui terrorista sino militante política, el hecho de no serlo no me convierte automáticamente en parte potenciante del sistema.

poignant, since Yoyes was assassinated in the presence of her son Akaitz, who was three at that time. After decades in which victims of ETA experienced several processes of re-victimization such as exclusion and ostracism from society, a new social and political consciousness is allowing a context for victims' reparation. The indifference and even the complicity of a large part of the population in the Basque Country –especially in the 1980s, when victims of ETA were seen by many as ‘the unavoidable collateral damage of an ongoing conflict’ (Joyce, Lynch & Egoitz, 2015: 61)– needs to be replaced by a sense of *responsiveness as responsibility*, as formulated by Butler and Athanasiou. Such notion continues the line of thinking expressed by Judith Butler in *Precarious Life* (2006), in which the author questioned a dimension of political life connected to our exposure to violence and our complicity in it, ‘with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows, and with finding a basis for community in these conditions’ (Butler, 2006: 19). The loss of a person, of a place or of a community, Butler claims, affects us; we experience dispossession as a process that, rather than being a temporary mourning process, becomes a radical alteration of our own being. In Butler’s formulation, ‘Who “am” I without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do’ (Butler, 2006: 22).

Regarding the life and death of Yoyes, this notion has different readings at the private and public levels. The desire to collect Yoyes’ writings and to publish them in the form of diaries responds to the need by her sisters and friends and her widower to keep her voice alive, to maintain her

presence after her death, but also to fill the void that her disappearance left in them. Juanjo Dorronsoro writes about the absence left by his wife and on the impossibility to follow the advice of friends that recommend to close the windows of memory and to silence the echo of her life. He alludes to the condition of dispossession which both himself and his son Akaitz experience and concludes, ‘We cannot reduce to nothing those eyes that were fire, that gaze that was light, that face that was life<sup>15</sup>’ (Garmendia et al, 2009: 234). Beyond Yoyes’ immediate family, Butler’s notion may be extended to the social body of Basque society so that, as Annabel Martín urges us to do, we integrate those resulting from violent political death in our collective identity. She claims that victims have occupied the place of otherness and have experienced dispossession without an ethical reparation, and restoration is now needed (Martín, 2015).

Restoration takes several forms, one of which involves building a political discourse based on a historical memory that looks back at the past to overcome the oblivion that Basque society adopted as a survival strategy for decades. A recent report studies the social response to political violence in the Basque Country between the years 1968 and 2010, and concludes that in those years there were 914 violent deaths, of which 92% (845) were perpetrated by ETA. However, regarding social protest and demonstrations, the totality of attacks to ETA members (100%) generated demonstrations and other forms of social protest, whereas only 20% of assassinations by ETA were followed by

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15. Ahora no podemos reducir a la nada esos ojos que eran fuego, esa mirada que era luz, ese rostro que era vida.

a demonstration (López 2014). An initial social support of ETA in the 1970s and early 1980s gave way to a gradual apathy and a lethargic tendency to avoid the recognition of the suffering of the victims, which manifested itself as complicity with the status quo. Yoyes' sisters and friends write, 'We curse the complicit silence of people who one day said they were friends of hers'<sup>16</sup> (Garmendia et al, 2009: 7).

Responsiveness as responsibility is the political performative answer to situations of precarity and dispossession offered by Butler and Athanasiou. They urge readers to take responsibility and to consider what enabling spaces of politics open up 'in occasions where we find ourselves affected, undone, and bound by others' calls to respond and assume responsibility' (Butler & Athanasiou 2013: 106). In such view, social connection and interdependency are emphasized in an organic configuration of a community in which people share a sense of an ethical commitment. Such ethical commitment has been lacking in a society that has often avoided such responsiveness by considering victims as others, by imposing separation to avoid guilt, and by accepting oblivion as a soothing relief to avoid confronting the past. Affirming Yoyes' characterization as a victim of ETA despite her strong political beliefs and her militancy in the organization is a necessary step to understand this episode of a turbulent past in the Basque Country under a different lens and to look for new forms of social coexistence.

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16. Maldecimos el silencio cómplice de gente que un día se dijo amiga suya.

## 5. Conclusion. Yoyes: ¿A Community of Sentiment?

Rob Stone and María Pilar Rodríguez (2015) base their analysis of Basque Cinema on the work by Georg Sorenson, *The Transformation of the State: Beyond the Myth of Retreat* (2004). He opposes a community of citizens, which is one of strong, defining links between citizens and the state based upon an exchange of political, legal and social-economic rights and obligations, to a community of sentiment, in which a context of flux instead of rigidity permits different ways of belonging and to rethink collective and individual identity (Stone & Rodríguez, 2015: 6-7). The figure of discussion, Yoyes, exemplifies the desire for a community of sentiment, open to transition and change, fluid in its acceptance of political modulation, welcoming to admission of wrong doing, receptive to local and global developments, and unresolved towards a future in the making. What she met, instead, was a community of citizens rigidly represented by both the Spanish State and the media that conveyed its interested agenda, and ETA, ready to kill before admitting defeat. Gender played a role in that sense; the community of citizens did not allow for a transformation of traditionally fixed roles while Yoyes was ardently seeking new developments in a previously unexplored path.

In contemporary attempts to study the figure of Yoyes, it is crucial to avoid a reduplication of such attitudes. Dichotomic and binary thinking should be replaced by honest introspection; studies need to project the true nature of the political agency of Yoyes as a leader and a member of the executive committee of ETA

without excluding her characterization as a victim of ETA. Complexity and paradox marked her life and death in a most intricate and convoluted time in Basque politics. Reconciliation is taking place in the Basque Country and steps are being implemented to restore the memory of the victims of ETA and to respond in a responsible manner. 'It is not true that what has passed is in the past,' claims George Herbert Mead (1929: 235). Yoyes is very much part of the present; thirty years after her assassination news reports bring her face back to the audience providing an opportunity for reflection and re-examination. This article similarly remembers her experience marked by intolerance and rigidity and opens the door to a new understanding of this controversial figure as an invitation to a future community of sentiment in which flexibility and responsibility are the ethical responses to complex political contexts<sup>17</sup>.

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