



LOOKING THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE'S EYES

Ethics, Terrorism and Identification in Jordi Évole's Documentaries: The Case of *Don't Call Me Ternera* (2023)

VÍCTOR ITURREGUI-MOTILLOA ¹

¹ Universidad del País Vasco/University of The Basque Country, España

KEYWORDS

Audiovisual journalism
Terrorism
Ethics Interview
Documentary cinema

ABSTRACT

*This article presents an analysis of the documentary *Don't Call Me Ternera*. By reimagining the interview format, the film prompts an ethical examination of the bond between those who have suffered at the hands of ETA terrorists and those who have perpetrated violence. The analysis is further enhanced by a review of the political and media controversy preceding its release, as well as a concise comparison with other journalistic works by Jordi Évole. Furthermore, a theoretical framework has been developed to examine the representation of individuals involved in acts of bloodshed, whether as victims or perpetrators.*

Received: 15 / 07 / 2024

Accepted: 14 / 09 / 2024

1. Media Controversy, Ethics and Politics

In the context of the 71st San Sebastian International Film Festival (SSIFF), the 2023 film *Don't Call Me Ternera (No me llame Ternera)*, directed by Màrius Sánchez and Jordi Évole, was premiered on 22 September 2023 as the opening film of the Made in Spain exhibition. Nevertheless, the preceding announcement of the documentary's inclusion in one of the non-competitive categories of the San Sebastian event effectively initiated the political and media controversy on 22 August (Naiz, 2023). To fully comprehend the impetus behind the uproar preceding, during, and following the film's public debut at SSIFF and its subsequent release on the Netflix digital platform, it is imperative to gain insight into the film's synopsis. In the film, journalist Jordi Évole conducts an interview with Basque terrorist and politician Josu Urrutikoetxea, who is a member of the E.T.A. gang. Urrutikoetxea, who is known as Ternera, resides in France on probation and awaits trial in Spain. He was a prominent figure within the organisation and participated in at least two known attacks: the assassination of the then Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973 and the murder of the mayor of Galdácano, Víctor Legorburu, in 1976.

In light of the aforementioned details, as is customary with artistic works pertaining to terrorism in Spain, public opinion, originating from unidentified individuals on social media platforms, professional film critics, and other political and social figures or organizations, gave rise to an ethical and cinematic discourse. This discourse was characterized by a common thread, whether it was to disavow or to accept, which centered on the accusation of whitewashing a terrorist by Sánchez and Évole.¹ It is worth noting that Rodríguez Fouz (2021) has identified a recurring accusation levied against works of fiction or documentary filmmaking that seek to adopt a plural, collective approach and provide a platform for all parties involved. The event that initiated a significant degree of controversy was the signing and subsequent publication of a manifesto by 514 individuals. This manifesto demanded that the SSIFF withdraw the documentary from its programming, citing that it "justifies and trivialises the actions of murderers and accomplices, while also placing victims and resisters on the same level" (López, 2023). In response to this request, which could be characterised as an attempt at civil censorship, the director of the festival, José Luis Rebordinos, issued a communiqué in which he denied having received the letter. Additionally, the director asserted that the mere presence of a terrorist as a protagonist does not inherently imply complicity or sympathy towards that individual. He argued that cinema, as a medium, has a multifaceted role, including serving as a historical record, and has often depicted protagonists who have perpetrated unjustifiable violence, yet about whom there has been a willingness to investigate. In his concluding remarks, Rebordinos asserted that "to give voice is far from being right".

It is also pertinent to consider the responses of the other two individuals involved, Urrutikoetxea and Évole, who similarly made statements through the media. In an interview with the newspaper Berria, the aforementioned individual stated that "it is neither new nor surprising that the aforementioned issues are being echoed from this particular media outlet and the political forces that move around some interests and others" (Esnaola, 2023). Additionally, he criticized the film for lacking a "political thread and contextualization" (Esnaola, 2023). The second party, the interviewer, provided multiple interviews to the national press, wherein he reiterated that his objective was not to legitimise or justify the testimony of a terrorist; rather, he sought to capitalise on the opportunity, given that "it is the first time that a member of ETA's leadership has spoken out on issues that only they can explain" (Muñoz, 2023). Additionally, Aulestia posits that "the paucity of press interviews with ETA over the past fifty years can be attributed to the necessity for the organisation to maintain its ability to convey its messages unimpeded. This assertion is supported by the observation that the number of interviews conducted with ETA has remained at 44 over the aforementioned period" (Aulestia, 2022, p. 193). The Basque politician and writer notes the following, regarding the scarcity of journalistic encounters with relevant members of the gang

It was not due to the sensationalist zeal or manipulative intentionality of the professionals and media who attempted to contact the organisation, requesting an interview or meeting with the intention of reporting on it. The risk was that it would be impossible to express oneself

¹ It should be borne in mind that almost 20 years ago, in 2003, another similar controversy shook the SSIFF with Julio Médem's documentary *La pelota vasca*, a story that also involved former members of ETA or those convicted of terrorism, which was criticised and censored before it had even been seen.

unequivocally, to respond to an endless number of questions, or to control the final headlines. (Aulestia, 2022, p. 194)²

In the midst of this exchange of opinions and accusations, the majority of the criticisms published by the major Spanish media outlets were almost unanimous in denying the whitewashing of the terrorist or of terrorism, regardless of their judgement of the film's cinematographic quality. Notable among these were the reviews published by Pepa Blanes in Cadena SER and Raquel Loredó in Caimán. Additionally, the following reviews were published: those in Cuadernos de cine by Javier Zurro, in El Diario by Gregorio Belinchón, and in El Cultural by Juan Sardá.

In its subsequent annual report, the SSIFF (2023) stated that it did not hesitate in the face of this diatribe, on the grounds that the film should be seen first and subjected to criticism afterwards, rather than vice versa. The festival reaffirms its commitment to defending freedom of expression and its belief in the capacity of film to effect transformative change (p. 4). In this instance, the key to the matter lies in the principle of seeing before judging. This rigorous examination of form and content will therefore serve as the theoretical and methodological foundation for this research.

1.1. Journalistic-Audiovisual Form and Substance: Methodology

In order to undertake the study proposed above, I have designed a dual methodology that combines theoretical and bibliographical work with the analysis of the content and forms of the object studied. In terms of the theoretical framework, a concise critical and doxographical discussion has been constructed on the topics of terrorism, violence and its victims in the media and cinema. It should be noted that this section does not seek to define or elucidate the meanings of these three terms; rather, it aims to situate the research within coherent and pertinent thematic and theoretical axes. The analysis itself is based on two main and complementary tools. The analysis will focus on the content and the journalistic and deontological aspects of the documentary *Don't Call me Ternera*, as well as other programmes by Jordi Évole. This study has been conducted in accordance with two principal works and their respective methodologies. With regard to the content, the postulates of Chase (2011) on narrative have been followed. With respect to the forms, the method employed is filmic analysis, a tool that enables the elucidation of the processes through which a thematic principle is transformed into a formal principle (Zunzunegui, 2016). Casetti and Di Chio (1991, p. 25) define filmic analysis as the development of an "explorative hypothesis," which in this case explores a political, ethical, and journalistic idea among cinematographic signifiers. Furthermore, the study of narrative structures is based on the techniques of focalisation, ocularisation and narrative order, among others, as classified by Gaudreault and Jost (1990). It is also based on the notion of metalepsis, as defined by Genette (2004).

Concurrently, an analysis of the narrative and filmic aspects of journalistic documentary discourse has been conducted with the assistance of several highly regarded bibliographical references in this field. The research will adopt a conceptual framework that considers the documentary as a "persuasive effect" (Zumalde and Zunzunegui, 2019, p. 33), whereby a reality is reinterpreted through the use of verisimilitude, rather than viewing it as a film genre in opposition to fiction. In light of the aforementioned considerations, we posit that this methodology, of a structural semiotic nature, represents the optimal approach for elucidating the meaning and sense mobilized by audiovisual and narrative signifiers. Irrespective of whether these resources are plastic, such as camera movements, staging and composition, or narrative, such as editing, temporal alterations and narrator's point of view.)

It is important to note that the objective of this research is not to derive a criterion of aesthetic or representational correctness from politically themed discourses nor to evaluate the veracity or validity of the data and statements expressed by their characters. It should be noted that any ideological stance, whether favourable or unfavourable to the works and their authors, has been entirely disregarded. In

² Other journalists have opted for a strategy of practically harassment and demolition in their street interviews with ETA terrorists, as in the case of Cake Minuesa in *Intereconomía* and *OK Diario*. RTVE, for its part, conducted and broadcast an interview with a repentant ETA member on *Informe semanal* in 1994, a character who appeared anonymised and concealing his identity and voice, with a dark and ominous *mise-en-scène* in keeping with the style of the time.

light of the above, we align ourselves with Arregi's (2015) assertion that "the choice of the perspective of the victims of ETA as the basis of the study does not imply a lack of awareness of other forms of violence and suffering" (p. 20). The methodology employed in this study is not limited to the examination of media discourse and the opinions of individuals, but rather, it delves deeply into the core of the subject matter. In my view, this substance can be interpreted by scrutinising its form and narrative. In essence, however, the objective is to establish a theoretical foundation for the question posed by Marzabal (2021) in relation to ethically complex narratives such as *Don't Call Me Ternera*: "What is the function of art, and of cinema in particular, in the domain of moral reflection, if the question of how to act morally is no longer posed by the work itself?" (p. 178).

2. ETA's Terrorism and its Media and Film Representation

The representation of ETA's violence in Spanish audiovisual productions has been a constant source of interest and debate. The conflict that pitted the gang against the Spanish and French states and Basque and Spanish society, marked by decades of criminal, political and institutional violence, has been reflected in numerous and varied ways in news journalism, fiction and film and television documentaries. These forms of expression, it should be noted, have significantly influenced the collective perception of reality and the formation of public opinion through the construction of narratives. This section will focus on the way in which these two media have dealt with the complex plot of ETA violence, paying particular attention to how the victims and the terrorists themselves have been portrayed on screen. Taking as a starting point Veres and Llorca's (2016) assertion that 'terrorism occupies a prominent space in media narratives and cultural industries' (p. 6), this section will raise some general considerations about the treatment of filmmakers and journalists who have filtered the multifaceted reality of the conflict through screens and audiovisual narratives. We will be guided by Batista's words, which put the issue in black and white: "The media usually deal with the complex issue of ETA from the position of someone who takes part in a conflict, not from the position of someone who distances himself from it in order to try to understand it in general or in particular" (Batista, 2001, p. 11).

If we accept that "terrorism is communication" (Aulestia, 2022, p. 9) in a bidirectional way, i.e. understood as a symbolic and violent tool of terrorists and as a method of raising awareness, making visible and, in some cases, manipulating this violence through the media, we can speak of feedback that is both a condition for the existence and persistence of the terrorist phenomenon. In other words, terrorism 'manufactures a specific language' (Rivas-Nieto and Plaza, 2015, p. 392) that is accepted and metabolised by media and communication agents and their managers and consumers, which would be other social, political and cultural agents and society itself. In short, terrorists use media and victims, media use terrorists and their victims, and audiences respond in one way or another to this use in different directions of the communicative and political flow. Communication, publicity and terrorism are thus three inseparable concepts.

As Veres (2017) notes, the use of written or spoken language to define terrorism in the media and public discourse is crucial. This is further reinforced by the persuasive and attractive nature of audiovisual language, which is employed to formalize these or other issues in images and sounds. This "dominant rhetoric of terror" (p. 91), this language imposed by those who perpetrate it, modify it or linguistically condition it, finds its counterpart in a contested rhetoric, narrative and audiovisual approach to cinema and investigative audiovisual journalism that in some way criticizes or denounces violence. This statement is followed by a cautionary note. "It is imperative that we exercise caution to prevent the terrorist from exploiting the journalist as an unwitting ally by employing seductive or coercive tactics to advance his ideology through the strategy of equidistance" (Rivas-Nieto and Plaza, 2015, p. 399).

As Mota et al. (2023) observe, there has been a notable increase in the number of journalistic documentaries, as opposed to fictional productions, in both traditional media outlets and digital platforms over the past five years, with a particular focus on the post-ETA reality (pp. 141-143). The conceptual and narrative nexus that links a significant proportion of these works is the testimony of the principal and secondary characters involved in the conflict. This testimony "represents the primary documentary source, particularly that of victims. It is the emotional approach that is central to these works that allows for the voices of those who have suffered to be heard" (2023, p. 144). The following

section will examine how audiovisual accounts have given a testimonial voice to victims and perpetrators.

3. The Victims' Image

The portrayal of victims in audiovisual journalism and documentaries represents a pivotal element that influences the collective interpretation of violent events. In this regard, we concur with the observations put forth by De Pablo et al. (2018): "The influence of cinema on society's perception of ETA is evident; however, there were instances when societal perceptions preceded cinematic representation" (p. 22). Both cinema and other means of audiovisual expression, in the view of these authors, "cannot be separated from the *war of memories*" (2018, p. 22).

Some of these productions, which mark the advent of contemporary representations of terrorist violence, focus on the victims, personifying the human suffering and tragedy associated with terrorism. In the context of ETA's violence, however, the representation of victims has received particular and disparate attention, marked by the complexity of the political conflict and social polarisation. A substantial body of research indicates that the victims of ETA were the "great forgotten ones" (De Pablo, 2017, p. 341) largely overlooked until the late 1990s. This can be attributed to a complex interplay of political, social, and audiovisual factors (De Pablo, 2017; De Pablo et al., 2018). Calleja and Sánchez-Cuenca (2006) posit that "hundreds of assassinated people barely deserved media attention at the time of the assassination and received late political and social recognition" (p. 7). In turn, Jiménez and Marrodán (2019) posit that "to write the history of terrorism in Spain, it is unquestionable to pay attention to the murdered and their families, as well as the group of wounded, who also represent a fundamental piece of this puzzle" (p. 20). Two filmmakers who were pioneers in rescuing the victims from oblivion through film are Eterio Ortega, with his celebrated documentaries *Asesinato en febrero* (Assassination in February) (2001) and *Perseguidos* (Pursued) (2004), which are part of a naturalistic and realistic trend, characterised by a clear focus and few characters. Another filmmaker who has made an important contribution to this field is Iñaki Arteta, whose films *Trece entre mil* (Thirteen out of a Thousand) (2005) and *El infierno vasco* (Basque Hell) (2008) focus on the testimonies of families who were victims and/or had to leave Euskadi due to social pressure.

In the field of audiovisual journalism, the prevailing narrative has been constructed around the use of emotional and graphic imagery. Images of attacks and their consequences have constituted a pivotal element in the formation of media-constructed reality. The figure of the victim, whether an innocent civilian or a member of the security forces, has been presented as a tangible testament to human suffering. The portrayal of victims in attacks was a common practice, employed with the intention of presenting the horror in an unfiltered manner and raising awareness among viewers in a manner akin to a shock doctrine (Jiménez and Marrodán, 2019). It is, however, important to note the variability in representation depending on the political orientation of the medium in question. It is also noteworthy that the information, films and series produced in the Basque Country by the Basque public television channel ETB, which has been under the control of a nationalist government since its inception in 1980, have been subject to a different approach. 009 addressed subjects related, to varying degrees, to the prevailing political ideology, particularly those pertaining to Basque history and society (De Pablo, 2017, pp. 59-61). Additionally, generalist documentary films were produced that explored the historical and political roots of the conflict. Up until that point in time, the manner in which the subject was treated by television was interpolated into the narrative developed by products such as *Los Justos* (The Righteous) (2001), produced by Vía Digital. This was a "pedagogical" approach that was, however, somewhat lacking in audiovisual quality (De Pablo et al., 2018, p. 57); or *Víctimas: la historia de ETA* (Victims: The History of ETA) (2006), a co-production between El Mundo TV and Telemadrid, which adopted a "sensationalist and lurid" approach (2018, pp. 59 and 67).

The shift in the representational paradigm occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with an increase in the visibility of peace associations and audiovisual productions centred on them. Since the tenure of the socialist lehendakari Patxi López, there has been an increase in the amount of space devoted to the victims. ETB has scheduled the broadcast of two films: *Retratos/Erretratuak* (Portraits) (2010) and *Aldana 1980* (2016). All of the aforementioned works were situated within the broader movement of reparation, dignification, and awareness of the memory of all victims of the conflict. In

conclusion, it is also noteworthy to mention the significant and diverse critical discourse surrounding *Las huellas perdidas* (Lost Traces) (2016). Additionally, the episode "Motxiladun umeak" from the investigative reporting programme *Ur handitan* (2018) merits attention for its examination of the children of victims from both sides of the conflict. A more general perspective is provided by recent docuseries produced by pay channels and digital platforms. Notable examples include *El fin de ETA* (The End of ETA) (2016), directed by Justin Webster and broadcast on Movistar+, and *El desafío: ETA* (The Challenge: ETA) (2020), produced by Amazon Prime Video.

Some have sought to emphasise the injustice and cruelty of the terrorist act, while others have addressed the political motivations behind these attacks, generating different levels of sympathy or condemnation towards the victims. Beyond the confines of conventional audiovisual representation, a pivotal factor has impeded and shaped the visibility of this phenomenon. "The political divergences between the victims themselves and the associations, and the overt exploitation of these differences by the various political parties, present a significant impediment to the establishment of a durable peace" (Arrieta, 2015, p. 45).

In the context of documentary film, there has been a notable shift towards a more reflective and in-depth treatment of victims. Documentaries have provided a forum for examining the personal narratives that underpin the statistics on victims, thereby rendering the conflict more human. Some accounts have adopted a more subjective approach, allowing the victims themselves to recount their experiences, thus facilitating a direct emotional connection with the viewer. Nevertheless, this methodology has also given rise to ethical concerns pertaining to the exploitation of human suffering for cinematic purposes. Concurrently, the portrayal of ETA terrorists has constituted a pivotal element of the media narrative. The multifaceted nature of this phenomenon is reflected in the diversity of approaches adopted by audiovisual journalism and documentary film. In numerous instances, the portrayal of the terrorist has been marred by the dehumanisation and stigmatisation of the individual, presenting them as a monolithic figure devoid of nuance and comprehensible motivations. This strategy has been employed with the objective of reinforcing social condemnation of terrorist acts and undermining the legitimacy of the political causes that underpin them. Nevertheless, this approach does not preclude the identification of certain works that eschew simplistic criminalisation, including *La pelota vasca* (The Basque Pelota: Skin Against Stone) (2003) by Julio Médem; *Al final del túnel* (At the End of the Tunnel) (2011) by Eterio Ortega; *Asier ETA biok* (2013) by Amaia and Aitor Merino, which incorporated a comic element; and *Ventanas al interior* (Windows Inward) (2012), which focused on the experiences of Basque prisoners. Such documentaries as these have initiated a new approach, one that relies on the testimony of perpetrators and employs a contextual and analytical methodology to examine the potential motivations behind ETA's violence. In this manner, the examination of the historical and political origins of the conflict has been normalised and respected, portraying the terrorists as products of a complex and polarised environment. This approach, while critiqued by those who view it as humanising or justifying those responsible for violent acts, has facilitated a more profound comprehension of the intrinsic dynamics of the conflict.

In essence, the portrayal of ETA's violence in Spanish audiovisual journalism and documentary film has been shaped by a multitude of perspectives and narrative approaches. The intricate nature of the political conflict has led to the emergence of a multitude of voices and perspectives, which have collectively shaped the construction of collective memory. The portrayal of victims and terrorists reflects the complexity of the conflict itself and also reveals the tensions and challenges inherent in the task of narrating the violence from different perspectives.

4. Évole's Style: Face to Face with the Protagonists

This section will undertake a detailed examination of the journalistic style employed by Évole, before turning to an analysis of his journalistic treatments of the thematic polyhedron of ETA terrorism and an investigation of the stylistic evolution he has undergone over time. Évole is a celebrated Spanish communicator and television presenter, renowned for creating two of the most significant and influential television interview programmes of the last decade. The programmes are entitled *Salvados* and *Lo de Évole*. The interview, as a journalistic genre, is defined by the capacity and ability of a journalist to ascertain the truth from the words of their interlocutor. This entails a number of skills, including the ability to listen effectively, to formulate appropriate questions, to ask them in the appropriate manner, and to select the most opportune moment to do so (Balsebre et al., 2008, p. 7). The Catalan journalist is

distinguished by a distinctive conversational and dialogical style, which combines elements of irony and incisive questioning, and draws upon techniques of maieutic discourse. From this starting point, the aim is to shed light on the strategies and approaches employed by Évole to conduct interviews, examining the effectiveness of his style and his contribution to the contemporary journalistic landscape. In alignment with the aforementioned authors, it is important to recognise that this form of dialogue or conversation is not spontaneous. It is, in fact, mediated by a number of factors, including the presence of cameras, the television production and its shot values, and the conditioning factors of its staging (2008, p. 152). It would be remiss to ignore the observation made by Camarero (2002) that "cinema contains an inherent ideological purpose, and images are not innocent" (2002, p. 5). The aforementioned narrative and cinematographic decisions determine the meaning and discourse of a film, even when the film is clearly and deliberately situated in journalistic objectivity.

4.1. From a Rowdy Person to a Prestigious Communicator

Jordi Évole, a Catalan journalist and presenter, has established a notable and accomplished career in Spanish television. In both the former *Salvados* and the current *Lo de Évole*, he has addressed a diverse array of socio-cultural, political, and economic issues, establishing himself as a leading figure in national television, particularly within the interview genre. One of the defining characteristics of Évole's journalistic method is his ability to strike a balance between informative depth and accessibility to a general audience. To a significant extent, this approach has been successful due to the fact that he has inherited and evolved his personality from his early experiences in television programmes produced by El Terrat, particularly when he was known as "El follonero" (The rowdy one) and working with Andreu Buenafuente. Similarly, Évole's interviews have shifted from a purely comedic approach to a more serious and measured style, incorporating elements of questioning. From a humorous street reporter to a consolidated and rigorous interviewer, in essence.

Évole's interviews are notable for their incisive approach and his capacity to elicit insightful responses from his subjects. One particularly effective technique is his ability to foster a sense of trust or hostility, thereby establishing a close or distant dialogue that encourages interviewees to share their thoughts in a more open and reflective manner, or the opposite, depending on the attitudinal starting point. This approach is evident in his ability to adapt to the tone and context of each interview, which contributes to the veracity of the communicative exchange. In this regard, the staging, camera work, editing, and locations can often convey a greater degree of meaning than the words or gestures of the individuals participating in an interview. These production dynamics have not been without controversy, with some of his interviewees offering criticism of the atmosphere he is said to generate around the interviews. Among the allegations leveled against him are the manipulation of statements through editing and the imposition of onerous logistical and production demands on interviewees during lengthy and exhausting shoots.

Évole's style has been demonstrated to have a considerable influence on audiences, establishing him as a model for those engaged in the pursuit of engaging and enlightening journalism. His capacity to convey intricate matters in a comprehensible manner and his empathetic approach to interviewees serve to maintain the continued relevance and popularity of his work. From a journalistic perspective, Évole's contribution can be seen in his capacity to delve beneath the surface of the news, offering nuanced and thought-provoking analysis. This approach not only responds to the necessity of providing an informed audience with the tools to engage with complex issues, but also establishes a standard for responsible and ethical journalism in the contemporary era.

4.2. Background on ETA-Related Figures

Thus far, eight programmes, to varying degrees, have been broadcast under Évole's label and have addressed terrorism and the political conflict in Euskadi. In the second episode of the format, a brief, high-profile interview was conducted with Arnaldo Otegi, the historic leader of the Basque nationalist left. In the fourth season, the episode entitled "En Euskadi. El conflicto con ETA" ("In Euskadi. The Conflict with ETA") featured an interview with José Barrionuevo, a Spanish politician who was on trial for his involvement in the GAL. The fifth season saw the broadcast of two episodes, entitled "Borrando a ETA" y "Reiniciando Euskadi" ("Erasing ETA" and "Restarting Euskadi"), which addressed the conflict

with ETA. During the tenth season, a media interview with the repentant ETA member Iñaki Rekarte was broadcast under the name of "ETA desde dentro" ("ETA from the Inside"). The second and more extensive meeting with Otegi took place in the eleventh season. The fourteenth season included "Bajando a las cloacas" ("Descending into the Cesspit"), which also focused on the GAL case and the figure of the politician and convicted member of the group Rafael Vera.

In accordance with the chronology of events and for the sake of relevance to the subject of the investigation, this study will focus on the two programmes devoted to Otegi and the episode on Iñaki Rekarte. In the case of Otegi, a former member of ETA and the current general coordinator of EH Bildu, who has been convicted of various offences including kidnapping and the rebuilding of the outlawed Herri Batasuna formation under the orders of the terrorist group, his first interaction with Évole is, to say the least, significant. In episode 2x35, which is characterised by a similar comic tone to that of the programme's inaugural period, the journalist makes an aside with Otegi following a political event in June 2009. The interview, which appears to have been conducted in an ad hoc manner in terms of both content and form, takes place on a flight of stairs where the two participants are seated, with an unflattering frontal composition, camera in hand and apparently in a single shot, edited with zooms and close-ups of the characters. The unattractiveness of the setting, the awkwardness of their posture, the carelessness and urgency of the interview (which lasts barely five minutes), collectively convey the attitude and level of sympathy, or respect, that the interviewer has for his interviewee. The images themselves serve to illustrate the underlying concepts in a tangible manner.

Figure 1. Still from *Salvados 2x04*.



Source: Évole, 2009.

In contrast, the staging of their second meeting adheres to the conventional norms of the journalistic genre. It is notably longer (one hour), scripted and pre-prepared, and characterised by a high level of professional production and planning. The comic effects are no longer evident, and Évole's demeanor becomes more serious, respectful, and open. The interview was conducted shortly after Otegi's release from prison in 2016. It is noteworthy that several visual techniques employed in the documentary with Rekarte and Urrutikoetxea are also utilized in the aforementioned interview. These include the use of archive inserts and other statements by victims, the shot-counter-shot with slight variations in angle and scale, and the arrangement of the interviewer and the interviewee next to a large, luminous, closed window. Additionally, the documentary features the wild location of a baserri (farmhouse) and other distinctive settings. It will be necessary to recover these details at a later stage.

It would be remiss to ignore the contrasting narratives presented in the two interviews. In the first, Évole displays several testimonies from victims on a tablet to a person convicted of terrorism (Otegi). In contrast, in the second, he presents the testimony of a terrorist (Urrutikoetxea) to a victim. The subtle yet notable inclusion of screens displaying individuals testifying before the interviewee will assume a distinct quality in *Don't Call Me Ternera*. It is my contention that this technonarrative strategy on Évole's part (if I may coin a neologism) is concerned with the identification and exploitation of the power and influence of the image as an integral component of the overarching narrative of the Basque conflict. This implies an active incorporation of the understanding that audiovisual materials and images are pivotal in the construction of narratives surrounding the ETA.

Figures 2 and 3. Stills from *Salvados 11x06*.

Source: Évole, 2016.

It is my intention to offer a succinct commentary on the programme devoted to former ETA member Iñaki Rekarte. From the entirety of the interview, we can derive an intriguing and relevant mechanism, in our estimation. Having completed his sentence, Rekarte, who had repented for the crimes he had committed, renounced the actions and ideology of the terrorist group. In this way, Évole establishes a visual and spatial metaphor that synthesises the protagonist's transformation. Initially, the interview is situated within a luminous exterior, which symbolises his departure from the gang and from prison. Subsequently, the interview is situated within a confined domestic setting, with a closed window. In other words, the former ETA member, who has literally and physically departed from the gang and prison, is compelled to return to a closed space, both literally and figuratively, in order to confront his past. This operation is of particular interest when considered in conjunction with the second interview with Otegi. The programme commences with the interviewer and interviewee and interviewed situated outside the farmhouse, in accordance with the latter's recent release from prison, and subsequently concludes and ends indoors.

Figures 4 and 5. Stills from *Salvados 10x01*.

Source: Évole, 2015.

The objective of this analysis is to examine the cinematic techniques employed by Évole and his technical team in order to formalise an idea, a vision, about the subject matter and the characters with whom he converses. Regardless of whether the approach is characterised as critical and ironic or rigorous, the configuration of shots and narrative resources used by Évole and his team serve to formalise the aforementioned idea. As previously indicated, the objective of this analysis is to examine the cinematic evolution of these forms and themes in his most recent work.

In conclusion, it is important to note that all of these elements are linked to the form that encompasses this interview. In other words, we are also interested in the audiovisual and narrative form in which this journalistic action is framed. Similarly, this perspective or idea is obtained or constructed in this form. Furthermore, the specific and significant insertion of the television interview into a larger story enables a broader understanding of the theme or subject of which the interviewee is the protagonist. The journalistic and cinematographic character and value of Sánchez and Évole's documentaries converge in their feedback, which is informed by the unique attributes of both media. On the one hand, the journalist demonstrates proficiency in conversational techniques, while on the other, the film director and scriptwriter evince an aptitude for their respective roles.

As previously stated, *Don't Call Me Terner* represents a reworking of the journalistic interview genre through cinematic, ethical and narrative means. In other words, the significance of the interview is not confined to the exploitation of valuable statements, internal contradictions or sensational headlines by

the interviewee. It should be noted that this is achieved to a certain extent. Rather, it may be argued that the film complements this task by linking the recording with Urrutikoetxea as a tool, as a key piece in the mega-narrative whose true protagonist is, as will become immediately apparent, a victim: Francisco Ruiz.

4.3. Narrative and Formal Analysis: *Don't Call Me Ternera*

Beyond the controversy, the ethical and political implications, and the statements made by the ETA member Josu Urrutikoetxea included in the film, *Don't Call Me Ternera* is an intriguing piece of cinema when analysed from the perspective of its mise-en-scène. The film's ethical and journalistic positioning is achieved through a visual and narrative identification with a character who is neither Évole nor Urrutikoetxea. With regard to the aforementioned, the subsequent analysis highlights what numerous critics have characterised as an egocentric endeavour on the part of the celebrated communicator. This approach, it should be noted, could be open to question in the context of other works by the same author, and in this instance, undergoes a suggestive modulation. However, this controversy falls outside the remit of this paper. With regard to the second point, it is evident that, despite his status as the central figure in the narrative, we have chosen to refrain from portraying Urrutikoetxea's discourse in a simplistic or uncritical manner, either in terms of form or content. This final aspect, although it is also beyond the scope of this research project, will be examined exclusively through the use of audiovisual resources.

The objective of the following pages is to illustrate, through a narrative and visual analysis, that the film presents a significant dramatic and ethical construction. A significant proportion of the footage is reduced to a series of slightly variant shots and countershots between the journalist and the ETA member, augmented by a few archival images. However, the key lies precisely in identifying the manner in which both journalists express their vision based on and through subjectivity. It is not our intention to engage in a purely journalistic analysis of the interview conducted by Évole. Instead, we will consider the audiovisual story in which it is embedded, including such elements as the way he asks questions, his performance, his diction, tone, style, proxemics, drama, and so on.

As previously stated, *Don't Call Me Ternera* adheres to the conventional format of the audiovisual journalistic interview, which is designed to be an informative, communicative, and even interpretative product. This is a multi-camera interview, recorded and framed within the sub-genre of character or personality, although it also falls into the category of "in-depth" analysis. Furthermore, the film's subject matter remains pertinent, as the terrorist group ETA, despite its dissolution, continues to be a prominent feature in the media, social and political spheres. A summary of the narrative can be presented as follows: 1) A sequence presenting the temporal and geographical context; 2) The introduction of the interviewer and the interviewee; 3) The interview with Urrutikoetxea itself; 4) Inserts that complement the core, such as infographics or archive images; 5) The closing of the interview, in the same style or different from the opening sequence.

Figures 6 and 7. Stills from *Don't Call Me Ternera*.



Source: Évole and Sánchez, 2023.

The documentary does not commence with the interview between the two protagonists, nor with contextual archive images, but rather with a meeting between Évole and ex-policeman Francisco Ruiz, an ETA victim related to Ternera. It is important to note that this meeting occurs after the confrontation with the terrorist, a fact that will become pivotal later on. Following his meeting with Ternera, Évole

informs Ruiz that they have discovered he was involved in the attack on the mayor of Galdácano, which resulted in Ruiz sustaining serious injuries. It is noteworthy that the first official recognition by the "Administration of an individual injured by terrorism occurred in 1977", with the victim being Ruiz (Jiménez and Marrodán, 2019, p. 116). As stated by these authors, "the Administration classified his subsequent effects as those of absolute permanent disability".

It is precisely at this point that the journalistic and narrative interest of the story becomes apparent. In this moment of discovery and surprise, Évole invites the victim to view the interview, which we had assumed would simply form part of the documentary. In other words, the Évole-Ternera encounter, despite being the central focus of the film, can be considered a trigger, a parenthesis, or a story embedded within the main narrative. As spectators, we observe the testimony that serves as the foundation for the film concurrently with the victim. This constitutes a temporal and persuasive strategy known in narratology as *metalepsis* (Genette, 2004), whereby there is a leap between a main narrative level and a secondary one. The film that the viewer has chosen to watch on Netflix (the interview with Urrutikoetxea) may be regarded metaphorically as being inside another film (the interview with Ruiz). As previously stated, the rationale behind this approach in the documentary can be attributed to an ethical perspective on narrative. By placing the audience on an equal footing with the character, it is also assumed that they are morally aligned. We concur with Lanceros' (2020) assertion that "it is impossible to fully empathise with the experiences of either the victims or the perpetrators of a crime. Such an endeavour is unnecessary. Neither one nor the other can be substituted" (p. 18). Nonetheless, through the process of identification and representation, the audio-visual narrative provides a symbolic space in which, for a brief period of time, the viewer is able to establish a sense of equality with the subject in question.

In this way, Évole does not merely present the interview as a conventional television product; rather, it employs the unique persona of a character with a distinctive and unanticipated relationship with Urrutikoetxea. The spectators are also the victims of the film they are about to see. In this regard, the intermittent dialogue between the victim, who is positioned in front of the television to observe the edited interview, and the ETA member, who makes his initial appearance within a foreshortened screen that distorts his image, is noteworthy. The latter is visibly uneasy and displays symptoms of coughing. In this regard, it is pertinent to draw a parallel between the metaphorical oppression of the limits of the monitor compressing the terrorist's body and the aforementioned narrative parenthesis, which, in a similar manner, contains the central interview. In essence, the aesthetic decision to commence the portrayal of the terrorist through an audiovisual filter – that is to say, a screen that is no less than a partial representation of the world – delineates the portrait that both directors have designed from the outset. This straightforward formal device, while underscoring the futility and lack of merit of unsubstantiated or anomalous critiques, illuminates the documentary's ambivalence regarding its protagonist's ideological position. Urrutikoetxea is constrained by the limitations of the screen, the narrative, and the gaze of the victim.

Figures 8 and 9. Stills from *Don't Call Me Ternera*.



Source: Évole and Sánchez, 2023.

At this juncture, there is an opportunity to construct a bridge that is both referential and plastic with another documentary that addresses a similar theme and employs a comparable device.³ This is the 1985 film *Shoah*, created by the French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann. In this nearly nine-hour-long work, Lanzmann conducted interviews with survivors of the Nazi extermination of the Jews, as well as perpetrators of the genocide and other individuals involved in various capacities, over the course of a decade. The filmic representation of the perpetrators of violence in *Shoah* is informed by an ethical stance. In other words, Lanzmann does not equate Nazis and Jews, nor does he equate perpetrators and victims. Consequently, he does not present them in a visually matching manner. Throughout the duration of his extensive cinematic work, the victims are depicted without the presence of diegetic or filmic intermediaries. In other words, their presence is rendered transparent and respectful. The bodies, faces, and voices of the subjects are depicted in a manner that is as naturalistic as possible, even when there is a moral decision behind the staging, as in the case of Francisco Ruiz.

The formal similarity that we previously referenced also encompasses a television set and a deformation. All of the individuals who were interviewed for the film are included in the final montage. However, due to technical limitations and the fact that some Nazis requested not to have their statements recorded, Lanzmann did not edit and treat the images of individuals such as Franz Schuhomel or Franz Schalling in the same manner. Instead, they appear on a single screen, distorted, deformed, and discoloured, as if through a series of distorting lenses. In this way, the Jews and the Nazis do not share a strict sense of a montage track. Lanzmann's ethical and moral approach entails the juxtaposition of the two sides in a manner that is diametrically opposed.

Figures 10 and 11. Stills from *Shoah*.



Source: Lanzmann, 1985.

Over the course of the subsequent 90 minutes, Ruiz will be absent from the montage until the conclusion, as the spectator's gaze has become merged with his own. This is due to the fact that he is watching the same documentary that Évole showed him (the directors have only inserted his face in a brief, pregnant instant, namely when Ternera confesses that he did not shoot during the attack). At the conclusion of the interstitial interview with Urrutikoetxea, the montage irrevocably unites the faces of the victim and the perpetrator, unfiltered and unaltered. The silent shot, which has been stretched out for an hour and a half, is returned in the montage, which allows for jumps in time and space.

Ruiz reappears on the verge of tears and unable to articulate a word. The clarity of his words is noteworthy, as is the absence of any sense of vengeance or anger on his part. This stance is further reinforced in the concluding scene, which depicts an open window in the hut where the former policeman engages in dialogue with Évole. This gesture may be interpreted as an expression of hope or conciliatory intent, in contrast to the prevailing tone of the documentary, which has consistently depicted the window as closed within Urrutikoetxea's narrative framework. This detail links the analysis with the examination of the programmes dedicated to Otegi and Rekarte. Both of these figures, as well as the one in this documentary, conclude in an interior space, with the element that connects to the exterior disabled. This formal and narrative pattern allows us to distill Évole and Sánchez's stance on their thinking or ideas.

³ It should be made clear that this formal linkage should not lead one to think that I am equating Nazi crimes with ETA violence

Figures 12 and 13. Stills from *Don't Call Me Ternera*.



Source: Évole and Sánchez, 2023.

5. Faces Game: A Conclusion

Don't Call Me Ternera is not only about a terrorist's confessions, opinions or omissions, but also about a victim's confrontation, at a distance in time (the past) and space (the screen), with the man who participated in the attack in which he almost lost his life. Évole and Sánchez put the spectator in the shoes (and eyes and ears) of a person who has suffered the violence of the protagonist, because only from his perspective (the authors' staging seems to suggest) can we understand a minimum of what he feels. In short, it is not difficult to intuit what Évole and Sánchez think about the person they are interviewing by listening to his questions or his silence, but this prologue and epilogue synthesise, through images and audiovisual narration, the global, dramatic and identifying construction of the film: seeing and hearing this terrorist through the eyes and ears of one of his victims. This ethical and cinematographic construction, even if it lasts only a few minutes of the film, overrides everything else (the egocentric exercise of the interviewer, the whitewashing or discrediting of the interviewee).

The film's title itself reflects the critical or ideological tone of the discourse, perpetuating in the main paratext of the film product – that is, its commercial label – the name with which the terrorist is uncomfortable and does not want to be called. This persuasive operation is reinforced by the film's official poster, which presents the black and white figure of Urrutikoetxea with his back turned, his head slightly foreshortened, thereby providing a glimpse of his identity. The words that complete the title are printed in a striking red colour, which contrasts with the overall design of the poster. In other words, even before the narrative presented in the promotional poster is revealed, his real name and face are denied. In the second section, we alluded to the dangerous game in which the media play with the language proposed by ETA. For Veres (2019), the terrorists' aliases convey a 'mythical significance' endowed with a strong 'persuasive' character (p. 111). Rather than engaging in the rhetorical game, Évole and Sánchez resolve a manoeuvre of disarticulation by mimesis, neutralising this linguistic persuasion.

Figures 14. Poster for *Don't call me Ternera*.



Source: Netflix, 2023.

The journalistic nature of *Don't Call Me Ternera* is evident in a number of ways, including the resources used, the format employed, the genre of the material, and the authors who produced it. Additionally, it can be classified as a documentary film due to the platform on which it is broadcast and its narrative and formal construction. The editing and narrative distinguish it from a conventional television interview (live or recorded) and from the interview formats currently prevalent on the Internet (recorded podcasts). The series' initial release on the Netflix digital platform has resulted in two notable outcomes. Firstly, it has gained a significant level of international visibility. Secondly, it has deviated from conventional television norms, particularly regarding the representation of victims and perpetrators of ETA. Instead, it has introduced a new narrative approach that addresses the complexities inherent within the phenomenon of terrorism.

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