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Genre hybridisation on television



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Introduction

This 36th edition [vol. XIV(1)] of *Quaderns del CAC* offers interested readers a critical and multi-perspective reflection of the single theme that comprises part of its content: the hybridisation of genres on contemporary television. This monograph looks at the trends in hybridisation, as well as encouraging consideration and evaluation of the various forms and practices of operators and programme makers in this respect. Our aim is to focus on conventional generalist channels, either on commercial television stations or in mixed systems of publicly and privately-owned TV.

To start this edition, our guest author, **Milly Buonanno**, an internationally renowned Italian sociologist in the field of television studies, discusses the cultural role of the biographical genre, particularly when ordinary people become the stars of TV biopics. Along the lines known as the "post-heroic world" by some authors, Buonanno dares to go further and suggests the emergence of an antiheroic society ("The biographical genre in an antiheroic society and the happy anomaly of Italian fiction").

Gérard Imbert starts the "Monographic theme" of genre hybridisation with an essay on the impact of reality TV on all television programming and the consequent blurring of the boundaries between its classic functions and the identities projected by viewers ("From hybridisation to liquefaction of categories and identities in post-television"). **Fabiola Alcalà**, **Salvador Alsius** and **Francesc Salgado** tackle this area from the perspective of the professional ethics of journalism, warning of the dangers involved in some practices and trends for the quality of information ("News ethics in borderland country"). In her article, **Sara Ortells** claims there is a direct relationship between the spread of infotainment, the commodification of news and television competence ("Commodification and infotainment: the basis of new news").

The monograph also includes three case studies. As head of the area of new formats for Televisió de Catalunya, **Miquel Garcia Horcajo** argues that hybridisation must be considered as a basic premise for today's television to develop and innovate ("Hybridisation strategies in reality TV in mass television programmes"). **Estefania Jiménez** and **Petxo Idoyaga** empirically analyse the hybridisation between spectacle and information in four kinds of programme on the Basque public television channel ETB ("Hybridisation between informative genres and spectacle in the Basque public television service (ETB)"). And **Llúcia Oliva** and **Xavier Sitjà** apply the barometers of quality TV journalism established by The Project for Excellence in Journalism to samples of news from the channels Telecinco, TVE and TV3, comparing their level of quality ("The dumbing-down of television news").

In the open "Articles" section of *Quaderns del CAC*, with contributions subjected to a double blind review, this edition includes six collaborations. **Arantxa Capdevila**, **Iolanda Tortajada** and **Núria Araña** study the models used to represent sexual and romantic relations between genders proposed by certain fictional series ("Gender roles, romantic and sexual relationships in fictional series. The case of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*"). **Cristina Cullell** analyses the consequences in Spain and the United Kingdom of the digital dividend or the frequencies allocated for the European Union in DTT planning ("Harmonisation of the digital dividend in the European Union and its impact on national DTT planning in the United Kingdom and Spain"). **María Dolores Montero** is interested in studying and evaluating how interest groups and social movements have access to news on the Catalan public television station TV3 ("Interest groups and social movements on TV3 news"). **Lorena Gómez** presents a study of the main narrative strategies used to introduce and propose social issues in the longest-running daily Catalan serial ("What *El cor de la ciutat* (2000-2009) talks about. A study of the social agenda of Catalan television's longest serial"). In her article, **Charo Lacalle** tackles an ethnographic study of the procedures used to produce fiction and, more specifically, to design young characters through the opinions of a large and representative group of scriptwriters ("Constructing the identity of youth in fiction: interviews with professionals"). Finally, **Sue Aran**, **Pilar Medina**, **Rosa-Àuria Munté** and **Miquel Rodrigo** offer the findings from an investigation using discussion groups made up of young university students concerning the capacity of young people to critically decode love relationship stereotypes in serialised fiction ("Young people, love and television series. The incidence of media literacy on the (re)interpretation of TV love relationships").

Josep Gifreu
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The biographical genre in an antiheroic society and the happy anomaly of Italian fiction

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Abstract

The article opens with a critical discussion from a sociological standpoint of the concept of the post-heroic era and anti-heroic spirit which appear to characterise modern western society. It focuses on the role of the media, particularly television, in promoting and giving rise to new concepts of heroism and fame (of which media celebrities are the emblem), more in tune with the current entertainment era. The historical development of the biographical genre both in cinema and television provides empirical evidence for this theoretical discussion. However, a kind of "heroic television" in the traditional sense can still be found in the unexpected case of Italian fiction.

Key words

Antiheroic society, media celebrities, fame, biopic, Italian fiction.

Resum

Partint d'una discussió crítica, en clau sociològica, del concepte de l'era postheroica i de l'esperit antiheroic que semblen caracteritzar la societat occidental moderna, l'article se centra en el paper dels mitjans de comunicació i, en particular, de la televisió, en promoure i donar cabuda a nous conceptes d'heroisme i de fama –dels quals són emblema les celebritats dels mitjans (media celebrities)– en sintonia amb l'era de l'entreteniment actual. L'evolució històrica del gènere biogràfic, ja sigui al cinema o a la televisió, aporta evidències empíriques a favor de la discussió teòrica, mentre que, d'altra banda, encara existeix avui dia un tipus de "televisió heroica" en el sentit tradicional, que es manifesta en el cas inusual de la ficció italiana.

Paraules clau

Societat antiheroica, celebritats dels mitjans (media celebrities), fama, biopic, ficció italiana.

"Unhappy the land that has no heroes"

Andrea Sarti

The life of Galileo, by Bertolt Brecht

1. A post-heroic society

In many western countries the word "hero" is being heard again in public discourse, both among media writers and in the words of ordinary people. But this is almost solely confined to certain tragic and heartrending events, as when someone loses their life on a difficult mission.

There must be a fatal event to act as an emotional draw for public opinion for words which had stopped being used to fleetingly surface in journalistic language and common sentiment. *Heroes* (like *sacrifice*, *courage* and other words which focus on the same semantic area as heroism) is a term in disuse which can still be dusted off if required. But given that this possible need often involves inconvenient or rejected realities like war, death and the pain of loss, emergence quickly gives way to removal. In just a few days, these heroes are destined to depart the media scene, taking their place in the vague backdrop of popular memory.

It seems that we are in the midst of an age which, in line with a generalised intellectual inclination to define contemporaneity as "post-something", has been defined in a recent work as "post-heroic" (Sheenan 2009).

Whether or not we believe in this transition to a post-heroic age, it cannot be denied that the principal identification of the hero with the figure of a warrior or military leader handed down to us from myth and classical and mediaeval epic (among others) greatly contributes to making heroism at the very least suspect to our pacifist contemporary Zeitgeist. All the more so, and understandably, in countries like Italy, which have fairly recently emerged from authoritarian regimes, and others which have experienced the negative consequences of warmongering politics imbued more with rhetoric than heroic ethos.

But it seems that the supremacy of the armed hero had already begun to decline even before the "obsolescence of war", in an interesting and plausible hypothesis on the strict interrelationship between heroic types and the different periods of communication (Strate 1994). To resume the distinction between orality and literacy established by Walter Ong (Ong 1986), the figure of the hero-warrior is particularly prone to flourish in eras and cultures where orality is the dominant medium. The

prodigious actions of heroes who are armed and, most importantly, show courage and extraordinary physical strength, have a high degree of the “memorability” which is indispensable if oral cultures, which rely on the volatility of the spoken word, are able to pass them down through the generations.

Writing, and above all the crucial role of movable type system of printing in the education of a “literate” society, went on to create the conditions for a more diversified heroic type, still ruled by criteria of extraordinary and courageous action but also in the mental and intellectual and not only the physical sense. So since the advent, so many centuries ago, of the age of printing (Eisenstein 1997), the figure of the warrior has begun, if not to lose force then to at least share its heroic status with scientists, inventors, discoverers, creators, and artists. Military leaders themselves have risen to hero status more for their strategic abilities than their deeds on the fields of battle. Now in the age of electronic communication and with group attitudes shifting towards pacifism, the warrior has been edged out of the heroic world.

Heroes are not what they were –perhaps they are not even heroes, to put it bluntly. In tune with the idea of a post-heroic age, many scholars and observers have, in fairly recent times, argued that the West has become “a world without heroes”, to quote the title of an American essay from the 1980s (Roche 1987) which, in the absence of heroes, recognises the worrying symptoms of “a modern tragedy”. Of late, there is a “growing body of literature decrying the loss of ‘traditional’ heroes” (Drucker and Cathart 1994, 3), of which Joseph Campbell is probably the most valuable precursor. Campbell is the author of a famous and influential study on the mythical hero, *L'eroe dai mille volti* (Campbell 2008), a wise work of symbolic anthropology enriched and made more complex by the use of psychoanalytical approaches from the Jungian school. In the final pages of the book, first published in 1949 [under the title *The Hero with the Thousand Faces*], Campbell noted the distance from our age to the symbolic universe which had given life to the legendary heroes, fabulous figures and divine personalities of ancient myths. Human society has become a strange and inhospitable place for traditional heroes and they no longer live here.

Then, in the early 1960s, Daniel Boorstin wrote a prescient book (Boorstin 1961) which, in spite of the distance of almost half a century, can still enlighten our knowledge of the endemic cultural phenomena in today's media-dominated societies, claiming that the heroes of yesteryear were being toppled by media celebrities. We will return to the subject of media celebrities later. Here I am more interested in using some of the author's notes on the distrustful and sometimes debunking or even denigrating attitudes which inform our general feelings and opinions about heroes and heroism. “We see greatness [of heroes] as an illusion”, wrote Boorstin (Boorstin 1961, 51). Or as the burden of an imperfect and unhappy society, he might add, particularly in view of the disproportionate and persistent fortune which has merely confirmed the words of Galileo Galilei

in Bertolt Brecht's work: “Unhappy the land that has no heroes” (Brecht 1970).

It is surprising, but above all highly symptomatic of the trend to expel heroism from the horizon of contemporary sensitivity how this sentence, extrapolated from its theatrical context, has become a kind of mantra whose repetition is triggered at every opportunity, like a reflex. Particularly in the case of Italy, where what we might call a revised and corrected version of the sentence has been proposed –“Blessed (or happy) are the people that have no need of heroes”. Although this does not substantially affect the meaning of the original, it adds a sense of liberation and euphoric lightness by evoking blessedness and happiness. Conversely, in Bertolt Brecht's play, these are bitter, pained words. Galileo replied thus to his disciple Andrea Sarti who, in the opposing statement “Unhappy the land that has no heroes”, forcefully expressed his disillusion with and condemnation of the antiheroic behaviour of his master before the court of the Inquisition. But Galileo was also a profoundly disappointed and tormented man and remained so for the rest of his life. In agreeing under threat of torture to renounce his views, he had not only betrayed the faith of his disciples but the ethics of science (he himself admitted “I have betrayed my profession”) and the “heroic” concept of scientific practice itself. “I do not think that the practice of science can be separated from courage”, he said later, during a long, self-accusatory monologue. Galileo was therefore right when he said: “Unhappy the land that needs heroes”. This is not (or not only) the expression of a utopian longing for an idyllic society but the bitter discovery of someone who, familiar from his own experience with human fragility in the face of the rallying cry of heroism, knows that the need for heroes can, unfortunately, remain unattended and unsatisfied.

Brecht's Galileo is not an admirable or in any way an exemplary character. The author wished to create an antihero so as to leave no room for doubt of his condemnation of a science which allows itself to be dominated by power, renouncing its moral responsibilities to mankind. The words “Unhappy the land that needs heroes” express its complexities, and also meanings which are not univocal, only within the context of the drama of guilt (and the feeling of guilt) of Galileo: what Brecht considered to be the “original sin” of physics, the first step on a path destined to lead to atomic weapons. In spite of this, if these words have entered the common language and repertoires of quotations of so many who do not know their source, it is clearly because they sum up and translate in an effective, simple and popular way a concept of antiheroic life which had been gradually growing in western societies from the second half of the 20th century onwards.

2. Antiheroic criticism

We may or may not agree about the advent of a post-heroic era. Obviously, this does not mean we deny the existence of gaps

and discontinuities between present and past concerning the concepts and practices of heroism. Quite the opposite: it means witnessing how, by limiting itself to describing the present in terms of chronological succession and cultural progress from a preceding heroic era, the definition of post-heroic era totally eludes the real turning and breaking point for the change in era. What really characterises the world we live in is not so much the situation of having come afterwards and having left behind the heroic worlds of the past, as the prefix *post* indicates, but that conditions have arisen which favour and continue to nurture cultural movements against heroism, which will soon lead to the prefix *anti*. In other words, however far down the path of their eventual disappearance we may be, there are still heroes (real and imaginary) in the present. Even today it's not unusual to find authentically heroic lives, actions and personalities, on condition, of course, that we know how to recognise them. Therefore it's not quite true that we live in a world without heroes. On the contrary, what is true is that the small or large amount of heroism (traditional or modern) which continues to survive in our era is exposed to the tensions of a vibrant and pervasive antiheroic critique which had never been seen before. Intolerant or demystifying voices had also often been raised in the past (Voltaire said that he detested heroes because they were too "noisy" and Ralph Waldo Emerson found them unbearably "boring"). But what we see today is the apparently irresistible progress in public opinion and common sense of an antiheroic rejection of vast proportions. Rather than *post-heroic*, the present age could be better defined as *anti-heroic*.

In a fine essay appearing in the early 1990s, Mike Featherstone did not hesitate to state on this subject that "western modernity [...] has made an *assault* [our italics] on heroic life" (Featherstone 1992, 173). Among the main "*assailants*" he includes feminism with its critique of male and *macho* values which it accuses of constituting the framework of the heroic concept. But basically Featherstone believes that the fact that, in western societies, heroism has become contested ground is due above all to the growing value given to ordinary life, in tune with the modern culture of consumption and leisure time. In fact, everyday life and heroic life seem like the opposite poles of an irreconcilable antinomy. It should come as no surprise that the journey of a mythical hero ritually starts with his or her abandonment of the everyday world. Everydayness is the territory of ordinary existence, of common sense and routine practices but, at the same time (and increasingly), the immanent horizon within which the search for well-being and individual self-realisation must take place. Conversely, heroic life is the realm of unique experiences, extraordinary gestures, in which great individual virtues that have become sensitised by calls for transcendence place themselves at the service of objectives directed at the common good. Furthermore, heroism requires courage, involves suffering, exposes its possessors to danger and demands the supreme test of confronting and overcoming the fear of death. Everyday life, on the other hand,

aspires to a happy existence, leavened by activities involving entertainment or consumption, gratified by the satisfaction of affective relationships and sociability. But, above all, protected as far as possible from situations of risk which remind humans of their intolerable condition as mortals. In the modern conception and experience of everyday life resides a potential for criticism of the heroic life, appropriately pointed out by Gouldner more than thirty years ago: "I have often suggested that daily life is a *counter* concept, which represents a criticism of a certain type of life, ... the heroic one in particular" (Gouldner 1975, quoted in Featherstone 1992, 164).

In spite of this, heroic life still exists and persists. This is the prerogative of all who, in the most diverse fields of functionality and expressions of science, art, teaching, defence of law and order, sport, religion, among others, organise their existence according to the demanding principles of an ethic, specifically a heroic ethic, which encourages and values sacrifice, self-discipline, dedication to a cause or purpose and the ability to face difficult (although not necessarily fatal) tests, including the disapproval and hostility of a predominantly antiheroic culture.

In fact, "it is possible for anyone to become a hero and perform a heroic deed without being a member of a heroic society or being committed to a heroic life" (Featherstone 1992, 167). The oft-quoted statement of Nathaniel Hawthorne, that "a hero cannot be a hero unless in a heroic world" is disproved every time that, for example, forced by the urgency of unexpected circumstances, some people unexpectedly (perhaps even surprising themselves) and without a second thought cross the border between everyday life and heroism by making an extraordinary gesture, mostly to save a life and often at the cost of their own.

The many "accidental heroes" (in the superficial cliché repeated by the media) who live in our world teach us, among other things, about the ambivalence of everyday life to heroism. An alternative and critical polarity of heroic life, but also potential creator of new kinds of heroes who mingle with and are mistaken for ordinary people. These are "the everyday heroes of everyday life", as they are usually defined. They are the only heroes who today's anti-heroic culture seems to recognise and accept. Except when such recognition is cancelled out by heroic merit being granted indiscriminately and is therefore substantially trivialised. Obviously, when everyone or nearly everyone is a hero, even if they are ordinary people, the concept loses its meaning.

To take two cases: defining individuals as "accidental heroes" whose actions (often selfless and always highly courageous or altruistic) are unmistakably inspired by conscious choice and, conversely, trivialising the sense of "everyday heroism", totally and conventionally attributing it to highly admirable and praiseworthy but not necessarily heroic behaviour (for example, honest and scrupulous attention to their job): in both cases, what we discover is the disinterest in or refusal to identify the distinctive trait, whether in values, objectives or motivations, which really marks heroic action and life.

A similar disinterest in the criteria and factors of distinction exists in a field of phenomena which is directly related to the presence in and influence of the media in contemporary societies. I refer to so-called media celebrities, in other words figures whose fame is created and nurtured by the modern media, with television at the head. The reference is totally apt within the context of this discourse, if we accept the consideration, widely accredited in the literature, that media celebrities are the heroes of our time and have replaced traditional heroes as role models for individuals, particularly for today's youth.

As Mark Rowlands very convincingly claims (Rowlands 2008), media celebrities are witnessing and benefiting from a radical cultural mutation. While, in another era, fame was a relatively scarce resource comprising recognition and award for special talent, or an exceptional event, or a proof of excellence, nowadays it has become an almost universally available good and, above all, is "associated with any success or excellence in any recognisable form" (Rowlands 2008, 25). With the creation of an expression of great effectiveness, destined to be long remembered, Daniel Boorstin in his day had already diagnosed the tautological nature of this contemporary variant of fame, the possessors of which, in most cases, are purely and simply "famous for being famous".

It's clear that only in an antiheroic era and culture can the "famous for being famous" ascend to the tanks of hero and enjoy the benefits of fame. But if media celebrities seem difficult to accept due to their very weak conception of the heroic life and personality, the same cannot be said of the "ordinary heroes of everyday life", provided we keep strictly to the expectation and demand for transcendence "in any recognisable form" from the average anti-heroism cultivated in the shadow of everyday life.

The great popular narrators know better than anyone the hidden and little-known heroic potential of ordinary people, and how to activate this with the explosive force of the imagination. John R. R. Tolkien, in "The Lord of the Rings", converted the humble Frodo into an unexpected hero. Not a valiant and indomitable warrior like Aragorn, nor a magician with extraordinary powers like Gandalf, but just a little fellow (or hobbit), with no resources and, in spite of it all, able to deploy a stupefying dedication to accomplish, at all costs, a terrible heroic mission.

3. Narrating heroes. The biographical genre

With this reference to a great popular narrator we have entered the territory of fiction. Popular narrative is traditionally full of heroes, and although not totally exempt from the antiheroic influences of the present, continues to feed our imaginations with stories of truly heroic lives and figures, both invented and drawn from real life. Life stories, bibliographies: we should now take a look at the biographical genre.

The narrative genre of biography is currently undergoing a kind of "status imbalance" concerning not so much its presence in

literary or historiographic fields, but in the area of the great popular media: press, cinema and, of particular interest to us here, television. The imbalance resides in the contradictions between the relative pre-eminence which the genre has acquired in film and television production and, at the same time, in public preferences for consumption and conversely, the apparently widespread disinterest of scholars and critics. In this respect, two qualified witnesses can be quoted who are in complete agreement, in spite of a distance of more than half a century between them. In the opening of his famous essay on biography in the American popular press of the first half of the 20th century, Leo Lowenthal observes how "rather surprisingly, hardly any attention has been paid to this phenomenon" (Lowenthal 1944, 109). And Steve Neale places biography (in common terms *biopic* or biographical film) among the great genres of the Hollywood cinema. He emphasises the "lack of critical consideration" (Neale 2000, 60) which with very few exceptions (among them the important work of Georgian Custen, discussed further below) has historically accompanied the genre.

This absence of critical and academic attention is surprising due to its incongruence with respect to two facts: the consistent presence of the *biopic* in current and past cinematographic and television production, making it a component of popular storytelling which is not to be underestimated; and, in general, the good and often excellent reception given by the public to biographical stories.

Apart from brief phases of decline, biographies have constantly helped Hollywood films gain conspicuous box-office triumphs and prestigious acknowledgements. These include Oscar nominations and awards: we need only mention *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Gandhi* (1982), *Schindler's List* (1993), *A Wonderful Mind* (2001), *Capote* (2004), *Walk the Line* (2005), *The Queen* (2006) and *Milk* (2008). Similarly, the biographical film has been and continues to be, within and through the transformations of television systems, a resource of creativity and popularity for TV networks, and even more so for narrowcasting. In the US, for example, there has been an operation aimed at the recovery and use of telefilm and miniseries formats as instruments of channel branding (Lotz 2009). Basic and premium cable networks have started to invest regularly in the serial production of biographical fiction. In Great Britain, the new networks created by the BBC for the digital terrestrial system, BBC3 and BBC4, are also choosing biographies to bulk up the small audience niche of selective broadcasting. Nor are the larger networks turning their backs on a genre to which they have contributed many classics, as well as contemporary masterpieces of English television, from *I, Claudius* (BBC 1976) to *Miss Austen Regrets* (BBC 2008).

4. The definition of fame

Within the context of a discourse originating in the antiheroic orientations of contemporary culture, my interest mainly focus-

es on the *type* of characters who are biographied. Who are they? Not in the sense of recording each individual detail but rather the sphere of action in which the figures the popular media have considered worthy of being narrated have exercised their excellence and obtained their fame, if that is what it is.

In effect, to go back to my earlier point, this is exactly what we are dealing with: *fame*, of figures in whose biography we find the proof and consecration of a fame already acquired because of special talents, heroic deeds, whole lives, all in some way exceptional. Every narrative genre –detective, hospital, family- creates its own heroes and, if they gain great and prolonged success, leads them to a popularity sometimes very similar to fame. Or perhaps rather a form of “glorious recognition”, according to dictionaries traditionally “associated with respect, and not simply respect, but deserved respect” (Rowlands 2008, 9). In spite of this, the biographical genre is the only one whose very existence and *raison d'être* is sustained on the exemplary value, cultural recognition and social consideration of the fame acquired by men and women, architects of great things and heroic achievements in the most diverse fields of human action.

Custen was right when he said that “publicly defining fame” (Custen 1992, 215) is the “cultural role” of the biographical genre. In any event, as well as offering many spectators an accessible version of history, the biographical genre offers cultural observers and analysts privileged access to the interactive concepts of heroism and fame which find expression at any particular time in the texts and the discourses of the media. Leo Lowenthal, as we saw above, was the first to analyse biographies by taking this line. And although his pioneering work is on the press rather than cinema or television, it also constitutes an essential reference because it illustrates and sometimes anticipates trends that are destined to be seen in the cinema too and subsequently on television. Lowenthal's study, carried out on a vast corpus of biographical articles published over forty years (1901-1941) in two popular newspapers in the USA, is too well-known to require more than a brief mention. It is sufficient to recall how the results of his research clearly show a progressive and decisive reconfiguration of the typical composition of biographed figures. In the first twenty years of the century, these came mostly from the political and military elites, professionals and businesses people, but were soon replaced in subsequent decades by popular figures from the world of art and entertainment. On this point, Lowenthal distinguishes between the “serious arts” (painting, music, dance, etc.) and the popular arts, and emphasises the gradual disappearance of the former from the spheres of activity which provide the heroes of the press. In the definitions of Lowenthal, “heroes of production” (an aristocracy of individuals with outstanding qualities and virtues, taking their inspiration from high ideals) finally gave way to “heroes of consumption” (emblematic figures of a society which places leisure time and entertainment at the centre of its interests).

You do not have to share the disdain of Frankfurt de

Lowenthal for “the idols of the masses” (or, conversely, a certain idealisation of the “heroes of production”) to recognise the merit of his having diagnosed, accurately and for the first time, a cultural shift which has not taken long to leave its mark on the evolution of the biographical genre and also on the creative and productive context of other media.

In the cinema of Hollywood, we have learned this through Custen's study. Biographical films made up to the early 1940s dealt above all with the sector of the traditional elites; sovereigns, famous men of politics and economics, illustrious personalities from art and science. There were also quite a few biographies of entertainment stars themselves (Hollywood celebrating itself) but these formed a relative minority. It was in the next two decades when the change of direction was observed by Lowenthal in popular newspapers. During the 1940s and 1950s, the constant advance of “heroes of consumption” re-wrote the “agenda of fame” of cinema *biopics*. Entertainers, who originally contributed less than 10%, rose to 28% of the total biographies produced in the 1950s, as did sporting champions, while representations of the decision-making elites and artists decline, albeit not disappearing completely. A new elite was emerging, whose fame is based on the entertainment professions.

In spite of this, the advent of the new paradigmatic figure of contemporary fame did not in itself change the basic requirements, the necessary (though not sufficient) condition that makes a life worth narrating. The *biopic* effectively continues “demanding” from its subjects themselves, whether political leaders or entertainment personalities, a (certain) dimension of greatness: a heroic inclination, admirable behaviour or, in short, evidence of a personality and an existence that is at least to some extent extraordinary, and who have already found public recognition in the tribute of fame.

This condition diminishes, says Custen, when, with the changes of the 1960s, the biographical genre like many others switched to television. Fairly soon, in fact, television (and we must remember that the author is analysing the American scene) re-wrote the code of biographical films, fundamentally altering the primary component by destroying the agenda of fame. Now there were to be no figures hailed or respected for accomplishing great achievements in a specific field of action. Ordinary people become protagonists of television biographical films (*biopics*), plucked fleetingly from the anonymity of everyday life by any unexpected and disruptive event. It was understood that normal people could not completely take up the whole of centre stage. Entertainment celebrities continued to occupy a great deal of space, and not all biographies of famous figures disappeared. But undoubtedly through this form of the apparent democratisation of fame, increasingly measured less in terms of excellence and heroism, the biographical genre has transformed the cultural role itself to make it comply with the purpose embraced by most contemporary television, namely giving everyone their moment of glory.

Custen wrote in the early 1990s. His data, as well as his

comments on the television *biopic*, were influenced (although the author does not make this explicit) by the heavy presence in the American networks of *tefefilms* (The Movie of the Week: Rapping 1992). Often with the hectic timescale of the instant movie, these brought to the screen events and characters from stories featured in newspapers, preferably sourcing narrative material from the sensationalist press.

We do not have systematic data for recent years, but information from a great variety of sources –specialist journals, the television networks, other resources accessible online– confirms the “demotic turn” (Turner 2010), as Graeme Turner defines the growing visibility of ordinary people on television of the biographical genre. But it seems that there can be no doubt about the abundant presence in contemporary television of *biopics* of celebrities from the worlds of entertainment and show business. Stars of cinema and television, singers, dancers, authors and actors from any musical genre. These figures, as well-known exponents of artistic careers, require a minimum of talent and commitment to earn the gratifying benefits of notoriety. But recently they have been joined by new celebrity figures who, although still not numerous and probably representing the beginnings of a very small corpus of *biopics*, indicate by their presence a significant change in the *modus operandi* of contemporary television. This is effectively, in the real sense, that of television celebrities who belong to the category of “famous for being famous”, to quote Boorstin. Or more precisely, famous for having taken part in any of the many reality shows through which today’s television produces its own ephemeral celebrities or *celetoids*, to use Chris Rojek’s definition (Rojek 2001). Like *factoids*, which are unauthentic facts manufactured by the media, *celetoids* are false celebrities, manufactured by television in the absence of the requirements of authentic fame. Individuals “with no particular talents that might encourage expectations of work in the entertainment industry, no special career except beyond the achievement of media visibility” (Turner 2010, 14) achieve a notoriety which raises some of them to the rank of figures to be biographed.

Taken as a whole, entertainment content now occupies very large spaces in the networks of the current multi-channel environment. Its omnipresence and influence on the models of consumption often make it the dominant television genre. Although it only produces a fraction of the immense corpus of programmes on contemporary television, the biographical genre is both re-writing its agenda and helping to confirm that we have entered the “age of entertainment”.

5. A heroic enclave in Italian fiction

I have reserved the last part of this article for a short exploration of biography in contemporary Italian fiction, using the cognitive elements accumulated during the earlier part of the text to put this case within a comparative context.

As regards the important profiles which the biographical genre

claims to address in the international television (and cinematographic) scene, the first and most striking aspect of the Italian case is its sheer quantity. In the last twenty years (nineteen-nineties and early decades of the 21st century), the production and offer of *biopics* in the field of Italian fiction has reached conspicuous levels. This is witnessed by the high total number of biographies, almost a hundred titles (97) and still more eloquently, their weight within programming at peak audience time, an impressive 10%. In other words, one fiction out of every ten at peak audience time is a *biopic*. That this is a substantial proportion and probably not easy to emulate in the present or in the past, is proved by the fact that a much smaller proportion was enough to make *biopics* one of the great cinematographic genres. In the thirty-three year period (1927-1960) covered by Cuscut’s study, for example, less than 3% of the remaining 10,000 films produced by the major Hollywood studios were biographical but, in spite of this, this is considered the period of greatest expansion of the biographical genre. By producing a fine gallery of portraits of heroic personalities, Italian fiction gained a prerogative as peculiar as it is praiseworthy: this genre of biographical stories has won great popularity, and throughout the television seasons of the early 21st century has been the greatest success of the year (Bechelloni 2010).

The strong presence of the biographical genre in Italian fiction of the last twenty years poses an interesting question about the specific mode in which domestic storytelling has gained ground, so to speak, with respect to questions of heroism and fame involved in the definition of the genre and its cultural functions. We have followed the evolution of the *biopic* on the international horizon, in its move from cinema to television and its adoption of the “demotic turn”, and in the growing importance of television entertainment. Now we will turn to the similarities and differences between the Italian *biopic* and international trends as regards the type of personalities biographed, by the area of activity in which they have won public recognition.

Anyone with even a superficial knowledge of Italian fiction may not be surprised by the pre-eminence in the corpus of *biopics* of the last twenty years of religious figures (saints, popes, the blessed, priests of the Catholic church) and figures from the Old Testament (Abraham, Moses, Solomon etc.) and the New Testament (Christ, Mary, the Apostles). From the start, the religious trend which began to take off in the early 1990s (Buonanno 2009) has effectively found almost exclusive expression in the biographical genre. In total, religious and biblical or evangelic figures make up 43% of the corpus. In other words, more than 2 out of every 5 biographies are dedicated to what could be defined as “heroes of the faith”.

The second largest group of biographed figures (13) is made up of men and women who have shown exceptional courage in the service of great ethical and civil ideals. Who have combated the political evil of the 20th century in the form of Fascist and Nazi totalitarianism and the social evil of Italy identifiable in its Mafia culture and criminality. These “heroes of freedom and justice” are very often hero-martyrs, in a tradition of heroism, going

Table 1. Type of biographied figures (1989-2009)

Biographied figures	Rai	Mediaset	Total
Religious figures (saints, popes, priests)	14	10	24
Biblical-evangelical figures	13	5	18
Hero-martyrs (Nazism, Mafia etc.)	9	4	13
Governors and politicians	8	3	11
Artists (creative)	7	2	9
Artists and sports persons	5	3	8
Figure close to the political elites*	5	1	6
Scientists, inventors	2	1	3
Business persons	1	1	2
Criminals		2	2
Other		1	1
Total	64	33	97

* These are female figures whose biographies are closely linked to the private domain, as lovers, wives, daughters etc. of governors and politicians. Equivalent, in part, to what Custen defines as *paramours*.

Source: Own creation.

from Christian martyrdom to the martyrs of the Renaissance and others, deeply rooted in Italian history and culture.

We go back to Lowenthal's definition of "heroes of production" to describe the category of the political and business elites, as numerous as the preceding category (13 biographies, with the political and few business figures grouped together). In this group we find great historical figures like governors, legislators, conquerors (Caesar, Augustus, Charlemagne), political and trade union leaders of Republican Italy (De Gasperi, Moro, Di Vittorio) and ground-breaking businessmen (Ferrari, Mattei). Often controversial, but with the aura of a hunger for power, surrounded by a fame drawn from respect and admiration for the influence they had on the history of the world or the country.

Not much smaller (12 biographies) is the group formed by creative artists (Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Puccini etc. and quite rightly including revolutionary stylists like Coco Chanel) and scientists and inventors (Maria Montessori, Einstein, Meucci). Individuals linked by the gift of talent, ingenuity and rare intellect which has allowed these "heroes of art and science" to shine in their fields.

Greatness, certainly, is also the prerogative of sporting champions (Coppi, Bartali, Carnes). Along with some popular figures from the field of light music, these make up the category of "heroes of entertainment". Creators of only 8 biographies, entertainment figures are in fifth place in the agenda of fame of Italian *biopics*, very distant, therefore, from the influence that they seem to have assumed in other places, as a "pole of attraction" of celebrities narrated by the biographical genre.

The biographies of female personalities close to the elite in power are worthy of separate evaluation, given the present failure to classify them in a more relevant way. But this would not

change the overall findings, shown in Table 2.

The mission and testimony of religious faith, the ideals of freedom and justice, the responsibilities and triumphs of power, the expression of creativity and ingenuity: over 80% of the biographies produced by Italian fiction over the last twenty years fall into these demanding categories in which, throughout the distant and more recent historical past, the fame of characters who could legitimately be seen as examples and models to inspire human greatness was created. In these biographies we therefore find few coincidences with the advent of an age of entertainment, a position radically different from a considerable part of the content of Italian television itself.

The corpus of biographies from the last twenty years is quantitatively insignificant, a tiny boat in the vast sea of television content which is exponentially amplified by the multichannel environment. In spite of this, Italian fiction should be recognised for having harvested a "happy anomaly" of a small but valuable enclave of "heroic" television within the context of this prime time for entertainment and an antiheroic society.

Table 2. Heroic types

Types	
Heroes of the faith	43.30%
Heroes of freedom and justice	13.40%
Heroes of production	13.40%
Heroes of art and science	12.40%
Heroes of entertainment	8.20%
Other	9.30%

Source: Own creation.

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From hybridisation to liquefaction of categories and identities in post-television

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Abstract

With the current vogue for reality TV, television is breaking new ground, where outlines are increasingly blurred and hybrid formats and unstable forms tend towards hybridisation. This phenomenon reflects a destabilising of narrative and aesthetic but also symbolic forms, affecting the very categories which frame our representation of the world and the 'other' and exercising an albeit ludic influence on the construction of identity. The cause of this is the liquefaction of the inherited categories of modernity and, at a deeper level, a crisis in dichotomous thinking.

Key words

Television, imaginaries, representation, identity, alterity.

Resum

Amb l'auge de la telerealtat, la televisió s'endinsa en territoris nous, amb contorns cada cop menys definits, amb formats híbrids i formes inestables que tendeixen a la hibridació. Aquest fenomen reflecteix una desestabilització de les formes que pot ser de tipus narratiu i estètic, però també d'ordre simbòlic, ja que afecta les categories que regeixen la nostra representació del món i de l'altre, i reverteix –encara que sigui de manera lúdica– en la construcció de les identitats. Sorgeix de la líquüefacció de les categories heretades de la modernitat i, més profundament, d'una crisi del pensament dicotòmic.

Paraules clau

Televisió, imaginaris, representació, identitat, alteritat..

Introduction

With the rise of reality TV, television is breaking new ground, with increasingly blurred limits, hybrid formats and unstable forms tending towards hybridisation. This phenomenon is not only affecting television; it reflects the destabilising of narrative and aesthetic forms in general, with a tendency towards excess, parody and playing with forms which, in the 1980s, authors like Omar Calabrese (1986) described in aesthetic terms as “neo-baroque”.

Phenomena like distortion, caricature and “transformism”, as I have termed it (Imbert 2008), illustrate quite literally this capacity of television as a medium to alter, transform and play with reality, thereby crossing over the boundaries of format and genre. But it is more than that: this instability in human identity and relations is a response to the instability of the world and how it is represented, as many students of post-modernity have noted when referring to relationships and loves as “liquid”, using the term of Zygmunt Bauman (2005).

This instability is evident in the representation of the world and the “other” offered by television, with the creation of hybrid narrative universes in which it is hard to distinguish reality from fiction, in a versatile universe dominated by the idea of play. It is no coincidence that many of the new reality

TV formats are game shows. As Borges said, it is a matter of “testing” the limits of reality and seeing how far the medium can go in its exploration of new television universes.

Putting to one side the triviality of the medium and the quality of its programmes, this is a deeply significant phenomenon in that it affects our relationship with reality and involves a mutation of our representation and perception of identity and alterity. The thesis I wish to develop here is that hybridisation does not only affect narrative categories (television formats) but also alters the main symbolic categories which govern our relationship with the world and the “other” and which, in the final instance and albeit in a ludic way, affect the construction of identity.

Through the instability of its forms, the medium facilitates this game-playing with the referent. For the reality it builds is *sui generis*, an improvised reality which inaugurates a new narrative model based on a performative relationship, not just with reality but also with identity. This relationship is essentially ambivalent, a way of reconciling reality (the real world) and imaginaries (other possible worlds). Or in more generic terms, it is a way of being in two categories at once. This is what defines post-television: the move from game-playing with reality to game-playing with identity itself.

1. Hybridisation of formats

If there's one thing which characterises reality TV, it is its ability to syncretically absorb several formats, going beyond the borders of genres and categories alike. This is how *Big Brother* and its series of sub-formats came about: as a hybrid macro-format which combines sociological experiment with game-playing, mixing documentary and fiction and, in so doing, disrupting perceptive categories and making us unsure whether a show is "reality" or a simulation.¹

It consecrates a televisual *entre-deux*, as I have termed it, a credible but unlikely and essentially ambivalent universe: which is one thing and is another at the same time but neither of them separately. As in role play, I create my own "character", I identify with it and from this "fiction" I interrelate with other real characters in the *ex nihilo* conditions of a co-existence created for the purpose. And I do so within a spatial context and within a social convention which has no basis in reality: the *Big Brother* house and the community created there do not correspond to any existing model of sociality.

As I concluded in another work,² some factors which contribute to this dilution of frontiers and subsequent phenomena of genre hybridisation are common to several characteristic formats of this modality (particularly reality shows, game shows, talk shows and sitcom-type series):

- Increasingly, the reality which the medium constructs belongs less to the representative order, with a referential function and which aims to reflect objective reality; and more to simulation, a model of transformation/distortion of a reality created through/by the medium, tending towards a reflectivity which fulfils a speculative function.

- This evolution of the model of a manufactured / transformed reality tends to offer a self-referential reality, with characters who are constructed within the medium and whose profiles evolve in accordance with the interrelational dynamic. Seen from this perspective, television acts as a *destinator* of the narrative (Greimas), within a certain *autopiesis* which sits better with fiction than information.

- Of course, some elements of informative discourse remain, through the creation of an actuality which runs parallel to the socio-political actuality, with the indefinite/unlimited space-time (pure transitivity) which is of everyday life itself, as occurs in reality shows and sitcoms. This is based on:

- A deictic here-and-now, linked to the actors' own experiences, which gives a degree of *presentism* to the discourse and reveals the "tyranny of time".

- The permanent *performance* of the actors, *performative* in nature, giving substance to the narrative and reality to what it enunciates-shows.

- A stereotyped spatiality: the *Big Brother* house-studio, the microcosms associated with professions in sitcoms, which obey strong narrative conventions that border on caricature with their forced way and belong to the fiction narrative in spite of laying claim to reality.

- Finally, the creation of utopian living spaces (*u-topos*: nowhere), which are simultaneously no space in particular and all spaces at once. These created conventional spaces belong neither to a completely real space (they lack the intimacy of real domestic space) nor to a fictitious space as such. What occurs, then, is a theaterisation of intimacy as public exhibition, diluting the boundaries between public and private and creating what Serge Tisseron (2001) has called an "extimacy".

The dilution of the boundaries between the major genres arises precisely from the appearance of a kind of no-man's-land, a new narrative space in which separate genres are *con-fused* and exchange their functions.

At this point I will revisit the distinction established by François Jost (2001) in his analysis of enunciation of TV programmes. The author distinguishes three main modes of enunciation which define, in terms of veridiction, the attitude or intention of the producer of the message and the viewer's expectations:

- the authenticating mode (authentifiant), referring to programmes based on information, proven facts, which aim to reinforce what we know about the world along a true/false axis and help to consolidate our impression of authenticity through live scenes, for example;

- the fictive mode, based on likelihood, which involves TV viewers accepting the conventionality of what they are viewing, an "as if" (*faire semblance*) which conditions our reception of the message;

- the ludic mode, governed by an autonomous system of rules, sometimes far removed from everyday reality and based on a universe whose coherence depends on respect for the rules of the game, which have been conveyed to the viewers.

In the new TV formats, the borders between these three types have become quite blurred, and this has several consequences.

- First, the *dilution* of one of TV's main functions: information vs. entertainment.

- Next, the weakening of discursive instances, displaced by enunciative instances with the subsequent trivialisation of speech. The substitution of expert discourse (those with standing and authority) by a presumed *vox populi*, the opinion of anonymous persons, those with no name, who voice opinions without having the competence to do so but subsequently acquire authority as "celebrities".

- Finally, this converts television into a ludic space, a field for experimentation and manipulation (in the semiotic sense: a space for *doing-saying*).

2. Dilution of TV's main functions³

Today's television is undergoing a progressive blurring of the traditional differentiation between its functions: the informative (linked to its referential purpose), the recreational (entertainment, escapism) and the educational (didactic).

Nowadays, informative entertainment (infotainment) dominates not only informative discourse but other formats where serious and trivial content coexists, combined in what are known as “portmanteau programmes” (talk shows, for example). Let’s look at some examples of this fusion of functions:

- On some channels there is obvious contamination of the television news by resources more appropriate to fiction narrative. For example, the dramatisation of information by video-clip pacing, the use of striking images or music of the type usually found in action films; alternating serious information with celebrity news or, vice versa, using journalistic techniques for celebrity news as a way of legitimising trash input.

- In the para-informative discourse too (docudrama, or the reconstruction of real facts using simulation), there is a mix of journalistic techniques (hand-held camera to give the effect of live recording, filming at the scene of the events) and fiction-type resources (the use of actors and dramatisation techniques taken from action narrative).

- And conversely, entertainment is taking in current affairs and debates: the talk show is a hold-all, and current affairs have a place even in gossip talk shows.

- In the 1990s we also saw how debate programmes were completely contaminated by spectacularity with the debating of ideas replaced by personal confrontation. More recently, depth of thought has been giving way to “clip” thinking, with limits on speaking time and reflection replaced by eye-catching formulas, or the current fashion for variety shows with politicians.

- Turning this around, fiction can take on a didactic function, as in series for young people which provide models of behaviour. These can have an educational function in making up for the deficiencies or obsolescence of traditional means of mediation (family and school). Television is taking on the mediating function without ever being asked to do so.

- To sum up, there are scores of hybridisation phenomena in the new television macro-formats, headed by the Big Brother-type reality shows which combine a whole range of formats and functions.

But the main mutation is the one affecting the very concept of actuality (which fills the informative agenda) linked to the change in status of the public sphere, its broadening to take in aspects of private life (intimacy, marital secrets, etc.) and the extension of actuality to aspects which, until recently, had no place on the informative agenda.

3. Reality TV as *entre-deux*: between reality and fiction

The change in the narrative regime of second-generation reality shows (*Big Brother* and its spin-offs) is very striking:

- The presence of a strong narrative sense in genres which are traditionally characterised by a basic narrative pattern based on the *quête mythique* model: contests whose structure involves holding successive heats until the goal is reached (the prize for the most valiant).

- The change from the univocal narrative model inherited from literary fiction and cinema, based on predictability and with a planned structure, to an improvised model with some unpredictability which incorporates multi-vocality, in which the privileged and omnipresent narrator gives way to a plurality of anonymous narrators.

- Contamination from the authenticating, referential-documentary type genres with a didactic function: see the “sociological” pretensions of the first version of *Big Brother*.

- Blurring of the borders between authenticity and manipulation, between what is real and what refers to a simulation of reality.

- The medium’s generation of a *sui generis* reality, an *entre-deux* which fascinates precisely because of its ambivalence, a utopian space set apart from places where there is social representation.

- A tendency to favour contestants for their pragmatic competencies, in particular their ability to adapt to the medium, rather than their cognitive competency. The new examples of *homo televisioni* acquire their competency within and from the performance itself, from their involvement as an actor in and accomplished user of the medium, from their ability to turn the game rules of television to their advantage, or from looking inwards and exhibiting their intimacies.

Contestants therefore become their own narrators by doing (in dramatic action and its subsequent dramatisation by the medium) and by saying (through the use of the confessional), setting up a self-referential reality.

The common man is therefore favoured before the expert: a subject produced by the medium who does not achieve fulfilment through historical action (as part of a social project) but in trivial, everyday acts (the ephemeral-occasional *par excellence*), with a strong experimental element. Hence the particularly fragmented aspect of these narrations.

Récits éclatés, as these fragmented narratives have been called (Margrit Tröhler 2002). Multi-focused, with multiple protagonists and narrations like films and docu-series which lie half-way between fiction and non-fiction, these narrations offer a “dramaturgy of the everyday” (Goffman) which springs from the very interaction of the actors in front of the camera: “autopersonalities”, as Tröhler calls them, due to the sensitive self-presentation of their social role, “entered in the here-and-now of the pro-filmic representation”.

The ultimate expression of this dramatisation is the sitcom, which ably combines euphoria with dysphoria, inclining towards the latter in hospital or police series. It lies at the crossroads between public and private, constantly playing with the private aspects of figures in social settings. It also explores this *entre-deux* category but within a particular space-time structure: the chronicle, the day-to-day existence, time without unity only sustained by its serial and diffuse transitivity.

“Today”, writes Tröhler, “there is an important *iconography of the everyday* which has its own tradition and is developing its own conventions for representing proximity, experience and

authentic testimony. The effect of proximity is as strong or stronger than the filmic universe, and in most narrations the stories described have multiple protagonists, contemporary with our era. Narration is simultaneous and takes place in the present, but it juxtaposes and superposes many social, axiological and emotional spaces in its content and expression. These films therefore create sociocultural pictures with multiple facets, which coexist and stand out within a complex relational dynamic, pictures which somewhat blur the pragmatic differences between documentary and fiction, and appear to favour mixed genres (or vice versa)."

4. Blurring of the frontiers between identity-based categories

Ambivalence arises when frontiers are diluted, when we are in two categories at once or between the two. This occurs at various levels: in the blurring of the frontiers between reality vs. fiction, information vs. entertainment, public vs. private, as we have already seen, but also between identity and alterity, and it turns into a game played with the limits of identity. What I have termed *post-television* (Imbert 2008) plainly belongs here.

Post-television breaks with identity-based logic and becomes a *game played with identities* or, in other terms and revisiting the distinction of Michel Maffesoli, *identifications*. We can see this in survival reality shows (*Survivors*, *The Farm* and the new series *Préstame tu vida* (Lend me your life) in Spain; *Le château de mes rêves* (The castle of my dreams) in France, where roles are exchanged; *The Bachelor*, *Black/White*, where whites put themselves in the skin of blacks and vice versa, or *Extreme makeover* in the US, where a person can change their face by plastic surgery.

Here the purpose is not to be oneself but to be *someone else*: to better oneself, to achieve goals which at first seem impossible, to identify with an unusual role, to exchange roles, while disregarding any sense of the ridiculous, shame or integrity – in a word, disregarding one's public image, sometimes even renouncing one's dignity, as in *The weakest link*.

This is a game, then, which does not compromise the subject's deepest identity, undoubtedly because it is not reality. As in role play, the framework is real but the role is borrowed. In reality shows, what is at stake is the identity of the subject, testing his or her ability to resist others and to rise to the occasion. But this is a game of identification, using borrowed identities. It consists of a narrative device, with its own specific goals, defined tests and framework for action, where everything is orientated towards achieving all that television demands, the objectives it assigns and the goals it defines. "Do what television tells you", is how we could define these programmes.

Whereas programmes like *Big Brother* made an effort to recreate an *illusion of reality*, here we are within a convention that is closer to fiction, and the creation of an *illusion of*

identity. We are *another* within a real framework (which complies with all the conditions of reality, without actually being so), although this means pretending, "acting". Obviously, the symbolic and moral categories of the real world do not rule here. What is important is not to be authentic or conform to the truth, but to adapt to the role assigned or conform to the role. To appear as this *other* with whom someone identifies during the exercise, a game of forms rather than fundamentals, when *one* merges with *the other*.

From here on, all situations are predictable, all identifications possible in a game with what is prohibited (temptation) but also the imaginary, with what I have called the incredible (everything that breaks with representational conventions, the verisimilitude on which all modern narrative is based).

Even this pact of verisimilitude can be based on deception, when contestants do not know the identity of one of their number. Some programmes like *Blind trust* tested people's loyalty to their partners, with actors in the role of lovers who were presumed to have seduced one of the couple without the other being aware of the subterfuge, etc. Or more recently in France, programmes like *Greg le Millionnaire* (Greg the Millionaire, a spin-off of *The Bachelor*), in which a man chooses his partner from a "harem" provided by the programme, receives her in his luxurious mansion and invites her to fantastic places, while she does not know that, in real life, the "millionaire" is only a humble plumber. This does not stop women having to pass some very unedifying tests on the way, like sweeping out stables.

This resource reaches its climax in "candid camera" programmes, when this "consensual deception" is taken even further.

In all these examples, there is a subject built in/by television who moves within a universe of values and spheres of action that have little to do with real values, within ludic-fictitious processes of the construction/deconstruction of identity: *borrowed identities*, as we will call them, in this typical post-modern game of identification.

Post-television is therefore no longer a place to affirm identity: a stable inherited identity, the result of historical process and social acquisition, but instead is a ludic space, a game of identifications:

- Momentary identifications, for as long as the programme, series, game show or reality show lasts.
- Ephemeral identifications (with neither historic nor symbolic commitment), unstable, exchangeable, in constant renewal as formats revolve, at the intersection between the real and the ludic.

Our hypothesis is that, in its own type of entertainment, particularly in game shows with a goal (artistic, survival) and trials (physical or psychological), post-television occurs within a logic of identification rather than of identity. Closer to the game than to the real world, it may take place within a real framework (*Survivor*), or claim to recreate credible situations for coexistence (*The Farm*). However, it dramatises actions which are unthinkable in real life and so draws us increasingly closer

to fiction. It therefore contributes to blurring the frontiers between categories.

5. Post-television as a place of the unformed

Post-television is therefore the place *par excellence* for the projection of imaginaries, reflecting an *unformed* subject,⁴ projected both in a “character” and in reality shows (playing him or herself or transformed into someone else, so this is obviously an idealised, distorted, exaggerated character), who identifies with someone else, sometimes his or her opposite, as in the game shows mentioned above.

But post-television also plays with the representation of the social “other”:

- The marginal subject, removed from the socialisation process, an outsider, like the social chronicles *21 días* (21 days) - Cuatro, *Comando actualidad* (Actualty commando) - La 1, *Vidas anónimas* (Anonymous lives) - laSexta, *Mi cámara y yo* (My camera and me) - Telemadrid.

- Or the exotic “other”, as in *Perdidos en la tribu* (Lost in the tribe) - Cuatro.

This produces substantial mutations in the symbolic categories which guide our representation of the world, in particular spatial and time categories. For example, distant vs. close (closely experiencing distant or alien occurrences) or inside vs. outside, through disseminating and exhibiting intimacy (“extimacy”), etc.

From this we can deduce an erosion of the frontiers between genres (social or anthropological chronicles and simulation games) but also, more generally, a diffusion of the main perceptive and symbolic categories of public vs. private, distant vs. close.

On this question, Olivier Mongin (1991) uses the concept of the erosion of mediation to refer to this oscillation of the subject between extremes. Between the omnipresence of the audience, which pokes its nose into all spheres of social life, and the return to the private, taking refuge in intimacy; between the distance of the spectacle of the world (*actuality writ large*) and the proximity of reality shows (“*actuality TV*”, writ small):

“Between the microcosm of individual or family and the macrocosm of the planet and all men, there are few intermediary stages. We live, for better or worse, at the pace of all or nothing. This makes it difficult to create a story, catches out politicians engaged in live communication and impoverishes the public space whose role is to display the events that pass through it and disappear.”

Undoubtedly this fracture between micro and macro is also due to the fact that media space is so all-enveloping that it not only acts as an intermediary but also creates its own referents, which stand between the subject and the world (the objective referents) and separate it still further from serious actuality and public affairs. But television, and other media like the internet, creates a self-referential, substitute world, an alternative to the

real world, feeding off its own references and keeping us at bay.

And to complete this mix, intimacy is made public, and the alien (Reality TV’s life stories, everyday life of the exote) is brought closer (lived as if it was one’s own, appropriated), confusing planes even more. Actuality can be both what is distant (international actuality) and close (celebrity actuality). The microscopic (small stories, anything from violence to black actuality, from love-interest to gossip, from events to the gutter press), competes with the macroscopic (history, large global events, the violence of war, etc.)

Public/private, distant/close, planes which mingle in the informative agenda and the citizen’s consciousness. Public passions (political) mingle with their private equivalents (media-based); the intimacy of public figures feels close (even the illness of leaders who are not celebrities can be aired in public).

Conversely, we make our intimacy public business. We need only look at the television exhibition of practices of “accompaniment” during mass catastrophes and the host of specialists who intervene in suffering or work with grief. These days even pain is in the public domain and television does not hesitate to show it, not only in news formats but even in some entertainment programmes, including game shows which impose repulsive or humiliating trials.

Conclusion: from hybridisation to playing with limits

If television is fascinating, it’s because it is informative, for the games it increasingly permits with reality and identity, for skipping from category to category (or confusing them), and for the imaginary projections it encourages. What I wanted to show here is that hybridisation, far from being an isolated phenomenon, is linked to others, the aesthetic (the neo-baroque: excess, a penchant for distortion), narrative (open narrations which allow multiple identifications, like role play) and the symbolic (an unstable relationship with reality and ambivalence towards the categories that structure our representation of the world).

All this arises from the unstable nature of the reality constructed by the medium, from its capacity to create “outer limit” situations (at the limits of verisimilitude) with the risk of endangering the authenticity of its content, and leaving the field open to all kinds of manipulation. It makes it easier to play with the limits found in other media (through fiction in the cinema, virtual identification on the internet), revealing current uncertainty and the implied need for escapism.

From narrative hybridisation to identity ambivalence is only a step, and one which television is continually taking, albeit playfully and under the guise of entertainment. Nonetheless, this reveals an evolution of form (expressive, narrative, aesthetic), a mutation of identity and relations (now more “liquid”, to use Bauman’s expression), and a propensity to play with limits. The latter has arisen due to the liquefaction of the inherited categories of modernity and, at a deeper level, a crisis in dichotomous thinking. Hybridisation forms part of this, arising from a

tendency to rewrite codes, from the formal (rewriting, uniting, mixing, parody) to the symbolic (frontiers, abysses, limits).

So much exploring of limits results in a blurring of identities and a diffusing of the frontiers between identity and alterity. For, in post-television, I can be someone else or multiple others, as in Jaco van Dormael's film, *Mr. Nobody*.

If I have insisted so much on this aspect it has been to explore the origin and ramifications of the phenomenon, going beyond the usual interpretations of hybridisation, as well as to advocate a widening of our methodological perspectives. Television studies must get away from purely formal and narrative fields and open up to a semiotic-symbolic approach to and socio-anthropological understanding of the TV phenomenon if they are to escape from the impasse of audience research, with its closed questions on the relationship between product and taste.

Notes

- 1 On the phenomena of hybridisation of formats in this programme, please see my book *El zoo visual. De la televisión espectacular a la televisión especular*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2003.
- 2 "De lo grotesco como contaminación de los géneros en los nuevos formatos televisivos. Formato y dimensiones discursivas". In: *DeSignis, journal of the Federación Latino-Americana de Semiótica*, no. 7-8. "Los formatos de la televisión", 2005. Issue coordinated by Charo Lacalle.
- 3 I will summarise here some points from the chapter on television in my latest book: *La sociedad informe. Posmodernidad, ambivalencia y juego con los límites*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2010.
- 4 For greater detail please see the above-mentioned book: *La sociedad informe*.

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News ethics in borderland country¹

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Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the hybridization of genres in the media from the perspective of the professional ethics of journalism. It first examines the moral basis of the various forms of social communication, the clearest and most robust of which is, precisely, the one that cements and safeguards the quality of information. It then looks at the ethical questions raised by the hybridisation between some of the genres that are considered fully journalism, and specifically the group of genres called "informative" and genre group of "opinion". It then explores the borderland between journalism in the audiovisual landscape (advertising and propaganda, fiction and entertainment) to conclude that the mystification of these areas may entail risks to the integrity of the information.

Key words

Audiovisual media, journalism, genres, hybridization, ethics, advertising, fiction, entertainment.

Resum

En aquest article s'aborda el tema de la hibridació de gèneres als mitjans audiovisuals des de la perspectiva de l'ètica professional del periodisme. En primer lloc, s'analitzen els fonaments morals de les diverses modalitats de la comunicació social, el més clar i sòlid dels quals és, precisament, el que cimenta i salvaguarda la informació de qualitat. A continuació es fa una incursió en els dubtes deontològics que suscita la hibridació entre alguns dels gèneres que són considerats com a plenament periodístics i, concretament, entre els grups de gèneres anomenats informatius i el grup de gèneres d'opinió. Després es fa una exploració dels terrenys fronterers amb el periodisme dins del panorama audiovisual -la publicitat i la propaganda, la ficció i l'entreteniment- per concloure que la mistificació d'aquests àmbits pot comportar perills per a la integritat de la informació.

Paraules clau

Mitjans audiovisuals, periodisme, gèneres, hibridació, deontologia, publicitat, ficció, entreteniment.

Introduction

From the perspective of ethics, the hybridisation of genres involves problems that must be tackled based on the moral foundations of the various types of social communication.

There is currently a very broad consensus between academics and professionals that, at the base of the ethics of journalism, we can find the right of citizens to complete and truthful information. This is a right contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in article 19, and specified in the constitutions of various countries.² The history of the ethics of journalism dates quite far back, with the popularisation of a mass press. As had to be the case, this being a moral question, highly diverse positions have been taken regarding the integrity of information, ranging from attitudes based on absolute imperative to ethics of a relativist nature or, as is usually said today, of variable geometry. But a contractual basis

has gradually gained ground. In other words, the ethics of information understood as a "contract" between the different agents in the information process (journalists, companies and the public) with a view to safeguarding the right to quality information. Along this line, journalistic information becomes a democratic value that must be especially protected.

Establishing the moral foundation of other types of social communication is quite an arduous task. With regard to the groups of messages of a persuasive nature, their very nature seems to oppose ethical conduct. If the sender's aim is to influence the receiver to initiate a certain behaviour or modify a previous one, won't that sender be distrustful of any rule that prevents it from having the greatest success possible in its intentions? This consideration is valid both within the sphere of advertising and political propaganda or any other type. The fact that we are sceptical regarding the possibility of channelling and coding a code of ethics for persuasive messages

does not mean that this code of ethics cannot exist. It is evident that, within such spheres, there can be moral values that must be taken into consideration and, especially, when they are disseminated within the framework of an aura of professionalism. And, in fact, in the advertising world there are highly estimable mechanisms of self-regulation that, for example, aim to exclude manifest deceit from advertising content. But in spite of all this, we must acknowledge that, when we work with the aim of convincing someone to do something in particular or to think in a certain way, many possible ethical proposals disappear.

The difficulty in establishing a solid ethical base for the world of fiction and of entertainment is even greater. There are audiovisual activities that are strongly regulated by positive law, in the first instance, and by a certain ethical doctrine, in the second instance. One of these, as we have seen, is information. Also, although to a lesser extent, advertising. But what happens with the rest? Generally speaking, the rest form part of what the Americans for many years have called *show business*: series, soaps, game shows, reality shows, etc. They all form an amalgam of offers from which viewers can make their choice. Here we can take the ethical value of truth as an emblem; fundamental in the sphere of journalism and (relatively) important in the field of advertising. The world of entertainment is precisely based on deception. We go to the cinema or theatre to allow ourselves to be taken in, ready to believe that that actor we see in magazines is a Roman emperor or ship's captain, or to accept as blood what is merely tomato sauce. We therefore find that one of the basic ethical values of social communication (that of truth) is called into question here, right from the very roots of the activity itself. But truth is not the only ethical value that falters in the world of entertainment. Because, if the aim is to entertain, those programmers and scriptwriters who wish to be minimally successful must give in to this aim with all their might. And it must be realised, for example, that TV programming filled with films and series in which the good guys always won would be very boring (assuming, of course, that we agree on who the good guys are). The transgression of commonly accepted values forms part of the world of entertainment and also of the world of artistic creation, and imposing on it certain ethical limitations would be a disaster for social progress and for culture, for which free speech is primordial.

We therefore find that the ethical bases of different spheres of communication are highly disparate. In this respect, it becomes very complicated to talk about the "ethics of social communication", unless we take this concept to a highly diffuse moral level. Naturally there is an ethics of communication and the great thinkers of our time have referred to this and have placed it at the forefront of philosophical reflection (Habermas 1987). But this is of little use to us when specifying the ethical doctrines of different sectors, if by this we understand not only the evocation of basic moral principles but also the definition of rules that serve professionals as boundaries for their everyday actions.

This leads us to conclude that, from an ethical perspective, any union is delicate between those formats that allow us to unequivocally identify the activity of informing and those formats that characterise advertising, propaganda, fiction and entertainment.

Mixing information and opinion

Before going on to review the borderline territories of information, we will take a look at strictly journalistic content to identify a kind of hybridisation that occurs there endogenously: namely the hybridisation between information and opinion.

Differentiated journalistic genres have been defined constantly since the press started to exist and, of course, since journalistic production started to be analysed systematically by academics (Kayser 1953). In the initial phase of genre studies, the aim was to distinguish journalistic genres from those considered to be of a literary nature (Gomis 1989). But an internal split immediately started to be made between genres recognised as journalistic. And, almost at the beginning, this gave way to a basic distinction between two broad types of genres: informative genres per se and argument- or opinion-based genres (Martínez Albertos 1974; Casasús and Ladeveze 1991).

The desire to single out strictly informative genres is a characteristic that, in one era, was particularly characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon press. For years the saying "comment is free but facts are sacred", attributed to C.P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, has served to summarise the desire of certain North American and British newspapers to protect their work, consisting of narrating clearly verifiable data and situations. In accordance with the terminology used in the journalistic style guides in the United States, one thing was *stories*, i.e. the pure narration of facts and situations, and another comments of an editorial nature, for which the editor was responsible, or those by a single person, such as columns and op-ed articles. Meanwhile, on the European continent the highly politicised press had made a stronger mark and all texts were clearly impregnated with subjective opinions. It was not until the inter-war period that the French press became imbued with guidelines befitting a journalism that was considered to be of better quality and that had, among its indicators of quality, precisely a distinction between information-based and opinion-based genres (Chalaby 1998; Fernández Parrat 2001).

This bipolar classification has led several authors to test the classifications of genres that are more or less consolidated. In principle, news, reporting, interviews and chronicles fall on the side of information-based genres while background articles, columns, editorials and critiques, among others, would form the galaxy of opinion-based genres (Gomis 1989). Evidently, the problems start when we have to define each of these specific genres. Starting, for example, with reporting. There are many kinds of reports and it is difficult to imagine a report so lacking in personal opinion that it can be considered exclusive-

ly informative. The same can be said of interviews (from selecting the people who deserve to be interviewed, continuing with the kind of questions asked and the tone they are asked with and ending with how the interview is transcribed or edited). Chronicles come under even more suspicion, a genre that has yet to be defined to everyone's satisfaction but, if there is anything that defines it, this is precisely the existence of a certain point of view.

It's worth noting that this distinction has never been completely transparent. There has always been an ambiguous border between the two poles of information and opinion. There is at least what has been called "the interpretation of facts". It is acknowledged that a large part of the public receiving the information, in order to understand the sense of the things occurring (even when these can be explained to them "objectively") requires there to be mediators that offer contextual elements, that measure out the data offered and that make predictions regarding the possible consequences of these narrated facts. According to the opinion of some experts, this accumulation of added elements that can sometimes be found in differentiated journalistic pieces or, on other occasions, added to those with a basically informative purpose can be grouped together into so-called "interpretative genres" which emerge as a third type, midway between the information and opinion-based genres.

But what should therefore be put in the box of genres called interpretative? Are we referring to the reasoned explanation of some "sacred" facts of those narrated in the news or rather of the genres that we cannot classify, such as personalised reporting or chronicling? And what about a genre that is increasingly more in vogue, such as the audiovisual documentary?

Far from solving the problems of classification, adding "interpretation" as a defining element of a genre group could make this task even worse. In this case, of note is a debate started at the Consell de la Informació de Catalunya (Council of Information of Catalonia) regarding the first article of the *Codi deontològic dels periodistes de Catalunya* (Code of Ethics of the journalists of Catalonia). This article, in the very first version of the Code and as it was approved in 1992, states the following:

"1. Always observe a clear distinction between facts and opinions or interpretations, avoiding all confusion or deliberate distortion of both things, as well as the spreading of conjectures and rumours as if they were facts."

As can be seen, the conjunctions "and" and "or" make interpretation fall on the side of opinion so that, in fact, it supports the bipolarity of the two large genre groups. For some time now, the proposal has been made to modify this recommendation of the Code and word it thus:

"1. Always observe a clear distinction between facts or interpretations and opinions, avoiding all confusion or deliberate distortion of both things, as well as the spreading of conjectures and rumours as if they were facts."

In other words, some experts in the area have claimed that interpretations should be packaged together with pure information. This proposal has been formulated based on the acknowledgement that information "objectivity" does not exist but, at the same time, based on the belief that the biggest gap must be placed between those journalistic pieces that contain data that have been more or less passed through the sieve of interpretation and anything that can be placed fully in the clearly evaluative or "subjective" field.

The weakness of the borders is evident enough for there to also be experts who completely reject the viability of any classification of genres. This is the case of Francesc Burguet i Ardiaca, who has dedicated a good part of his intellectual efforts to proving that information and opinion are two worlds between which there is an inevitable continuity. The separation between these two worlds, he states, is unstable, different from how it is described, much thinner and permeable and particularly highly deceptive: "As the media present it, almost as simple as a line, it can only be an illusion, a misunderstanding or a fallacy, or perhaps all three things at the same time, that merely feed a rhetoric of objectivity that is, at times, naive, always equivocal and often fraudulent". (Burguet i Ardiaca 2002).

This sceptical attitude has very solid theoretical bases. Since Plato proposed the myth of the cave, there have been numerous thinkers who have questioned the possibility that humans might objectively grasp a supposed reality that is exterior to them. Berger and Luckmann pursued the same idea in their book *The social construction of reality*, written in the middle of the last century (1967) and which became an essential reference for the sociology of knowledge. Our perception of things, of facts and of events is always conditioned by the cultural patterns we apply to them (beliefs, values and norms of conduct) so that it would be conceptually impossible for anyone to restrict themselves to narrating "facts" to anyone else. Based on this statement, informative genres would effectively be a chimerical construction.

However, although the establishment of borders between genres may be doubted due to powerful reasons of an epistemological nature, it is also true that this distinction is of practical use in many ways: it serves as a convention between senders and receivers and is also very useful for pedagogical purposes. Moreover, in the field of journalism, the problem of objectivity was already dealt with by Walter Lippmann in the 1920s, when he claimed that a certain objectivity is achievable if journalists adopt attitudes and ways of working comparable to those of scientists. Anticipating, in some way, objections such as those of Berger and Luckmann, he claimed that an objective individual adopts a critical reflexive attitude towards one's own opinions and is aware of one's own stereotypes and how one's perception operates (Lippmann 1992). In fact, this supposition forms the basis of the formal development of the Anglo-Saxon press we referred to earlier.

The usefulness of a distinction between genres can also be defended by taking the situation to its absurd extreme. Imagine

that, it being impossible to separate information from opinion, it was decided that everything, always, would be completely mixed up in the media. Imagine that it was never possible for the public consuming information to know if what they were reading or hearing was meant to be the narration of facts or merely the pure confabulation of someone attempting to mould the surrounding reality to his or her way of thinking. This is truly unimaginable. The perception of the world that, in spite of everything, has been offered by the media since the mass press started to expand would have been impossible and this would have also made it impossible to organise society and live democratically.

Whatever the case, the idea that information and opinion must be made at least broadly identifiable is very much present in the ethical doctrine expressed in corporate codes, in the style books of journalistic firms and in professional statutes. We have already seen that the first principle of the *Codi deontològic dels periodistes de Catalunya* is devoted to this idea.

Several points in the articles of Resolution 1003 of the European Council on the ethics of journalism (from 1993) have the same focus:

“3. The basic principle of any ethical consideration of journalism is that a clear distinction must be drawn between news and opinions, making it impossible to confuse them. News is information about facts and data, while opinions convey thoughts, ideas, beliefs or value judgments on the part of media companies, publishers or journalists.

5. Expression of opinions may entail thoughts or comments on general ideas or remarks on news relating to actual events. Although opinions are necessarily subjective and therefore cannot and should not be made subject to the criterion of truthfulness, we must ensure that opinions are expressed honestly and ethically.

6. Opinions taking the form of comments on events or actions relating to individuals or institutions should not attempt to deny or conceal the reality of the facts or data.”

In the international principles of professional ethics in journalism promoted by UNESCO in 1980, the necessary trend towards objectivity in narrating facts was already being related to the public's right to information, an essential element to understanding the world:

“2. The journalist's dedication to objective reality:

The foremost task of the journalist is to serve the people's right to true and authentic information through an honest dedication to objective reality whereby facts are reported conscientiously in their proper context, point out their essential connections and without causing distortions, with due deployment of the creative capacity of the journalist, so that the public is provided with adequate material to facilitate the formation of an accurate and comprehensive picture of the world in which the origin, nature and essence of events, processes and states of affairs are understood as objectively as possible.”

The idea that the reader, viewer or internet user must be able to clearly distinguish between information and opinion is clearly present in many media style books. With small variations in wording, this is referred to by the style books of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (article 1.3.1.1), *La Vanguardia* (6.1.4. i 6.1.5.), *El País* (article 1.3.), *ABC* (third paragraph), RTVE-Radio Nacional de España (in the introduction) and Antena 3 TV (article 1), among others.

Obviously, even the almost absolute unanimity when proclaiming this principle does not automatically mean that the precept of clearly separating information and opinion is always respected. We only need to listen to certain morning radio news programmes to realise this.

Newspapers have a visual organisation and graphic design through which, at least on paper (and there was never more apt an expression), a certain attempt can be made to ensure readers can distinguish between genres. Some of their pages tend to be expressly dedicated to containing opinions in the form of editorials, articles, readers' letters to the editor, graphic jokes, etc. If there is any text based on opinion in the pages that mainly contain information, this can usually be identified because it is highlighted with a typographic element to differentiate it, with a certain family of letters, with the name of the author and sometimes with his or her photograph, etc. In other words, although sometimes, in chronicles and interviews or even in conventional information, a considerable dose of subjectivity can get through, there is usually at least a formal effort to make the due distinctions.

In the audiovisual media, the resources used to point out to the public the distinctions between genres are more subtle. And, consequently, they are also easier to miss. Firstly, it should be noted that some genres among those clearly within the group of opinion-based genres do not usually have a place in television news programmes, especially on public broadcasters. On the TV3 news there are no editorials or articles. Neither can we find critiques of films or plays. With regard to other “intermediate” genres, some formulas tend to be used to alert viewers to a possible subjective bias. For example, also on the TV3 news, when presenters introduce a chronicle, they do so by expressly saying that this is the genre underlying the information we are about to see and the chronicler him or herself usually makes a personal appearance and often ends the piece by giving his or her own name, like a visual, aural signature.

Genres are not so clearly separated on the radio, where some “star” journalists cannot help but give their own editorial comments (without it being sufficiently clear whether they are giving us their own opinion, that of the Editorial Board behind them, that of the radio station's management or that of the Board of the company or public organisation governing them). On the other hand, radio does not have the graphic resources of the press or the visual resources of television to formally mark genres and the perceptive conditions for listeners per se make it difficult to identify differences between various types of content.

In any case, it should be noted that, as a whole, the system of journalistic communication tends to establish its own typification of genres. And, taken as a whole, this system of communication can usually be distinguished from others that have no relation to news. In front of a newspaper stand, it's relatively easy for the public to distinguish the press that claims to provide information of a certain quality from other press that aspires merely to catch the attention or to simply entertain. And news programmes on the radio or television can usually be clearly identified by the listener or viewer by means of a series of explicit or implicit codes: specific musical pieces, specific language registers and, in the case of television, characteristic sets, globes, maps, etc.

All this is journalism's way of saying: these products or these spaces are made according to specific rules of play; here principles are observed that are not necessarily the same for other products or spaces. These principles, specified in rules of conduct and style standards, are precisely the ones that aim to safeguard ethics in journalism. These are no better or worse than the ethics of advertising or the ethics of other communication systems. They are simply a little different.

Regions peripheral to information

We will now look at what we might call the "borderlands" of information. We are referring to activities related to social communication that are adjacent to the informative task and that, in some cases, even intersect with it. We will talk about these intersections and analyse them from the perspective adopted here, namely that of the ethics of journalism. These types of communication are advertising, fiction-based audiovisual products and audiovisual products aimed at entertainment.

Information and advertising

A long time before talk began in Catalonia and Spain of codes of ethics in journalism, the cards given by the old Press Association of Barcelona to its member journalists contained the following phrase, by way of a code with a single article: "You are reminded that the exercise of journalism is strictly incompatible with dedication to advertising activities". In other words, it has always been commonly understood and accepted that those whose job it is to inform others of what is happening cannot do so with the same integrity if they are conditioned by interests of a commercial nature.

Extending this maxim to social communication as a whole, it is safe to say that accepting the contamination of informative spaces with advertising or propaganda messages can call into question the credibility of any medium. In a reference work on the role played by the media in the socio-economic system, Ben Bagdikian (1986) wrote:

"Advertising is not a luxury to large corporations but an activity with profound economic and political consequences. The media are now dependent upon these corporations for

most of their revenues and increasingly they are owned by such corporations. The media have become partners in achieving the social and economic goals of their patrons and owners. Yet it is the newspapers, general magazines, and broadcasters who are citizens' primary source of information and analysis of precisely this kind of economic and political issue. This raises the question whether our mass media are free to exercise their traditional role of mediating among the forces of society at a time when they have become an integral part of one of these forces. (p. 165)"

It is very difficult to summarise in ten lines any better than Ben Bagdikian has done what has traditionally been one of the most serious problems for the freedom of the press: the dependence of the news media on those who, in short, finance them. The old saying "he who pays the piper calls the tune" is particularly applicable to the world of communication.

This reality has many, highly varied consequences for the internal workings of the media but what we wish to highlight here is the growing tendency to impregnate various content of the media with messages of a commercial nature. Genre hybridisation encourages, most particularly on television, an "invasion" of advertising outside its habitual limits. Thirty years ago it would have been unimaginable for the news to be interrupted by advertising slots or to have certain news sections, such as sport, with a sponsor. This happens now. And it does not necessarily have to endanger the integrity of the information if this practice does not go any further. But the fact is that it is also becoming acceptable for journalists who enjoy great credibility to provide their faces for advertisements. Now, also in some so-called magazine programmes, more or less serious news items end up side by side with all kinds of advertising. And the technique of product placement is therefore becoming popular; in other words, the apparently casual appearance of commercial products in these spaces. This practice has not reached TV news yet but is becoming quite habitual in programmes where, next to chats about gossip, political or economic information is also provided.

The documents that contain the ruling ethics doctrine usually remind us of the importance of keeping information and advertising separate. Let us know take, as an example, the *Código deontológico de la profesión periodística* (Code of ethics of the journalistic profession) promulgated in 1994 by the Federation of Journalist Associations of Spain (FAPE), one of whose articles states the following:

"18. So as not to lead to error or confusion for users, journalists must make a strict, formal distinction between information and advertising.

To this end, the simultaneous exercising of journalistic and advertising professions is understood as ethically incompatible.

Similarly, this incompatibility shall apply to all those activities relative to social communication that suppose a conflict of interest in exercising the journalistic professional and its principles and ethical standards."

A style book that we have yet to mention is the one from Canal Sur. Andalusia's regional television broadcaster is one of the Spanish audiovisual media that has already defined, some years ago now, more specific rules of conduct. And regarding the area in question, it establishes, among other things, the following:

"2.5.10. Commercial interests.

The informative spaces of CSTV must not favour, recommend, insinuate or promote the acquisition or use of commercial products or services. Any reference must be fully justified in editorial terms and the commercial origin of any information must be cited no matter how deliberated or rigorous it may be. Any particular attitude in this respect is prohibited, especially if there is any compensation, be it economic or in kind.

9.10.1. Promotional videos. It is forbidden to edit and broadcast an informative video that has, in origin, any promotional connotation with the same audiovisual material of conventional advertising inserts, and even more strictly forbidden to do so with an identical order, structure and format or in such a similar way that it can lead to confusion. This may only be used as a resource and, even so, in a partial and limited way. If we are forced to differentiate data from opinions, we must also differentiate, before viewers, what is information from what is marketing.

Interest in or suggestion of promotions of an advertising campaign broadcast on Canal Sur TV or Canal 2 Andalucía will never be a reason for propaganda to become conventional information nor shall compensation be accepted in this respect.

A video may be broadcast whose nature is of artistic creation although the intent may be commercial. The most suitable procedure is to place this at the end of the news, as a final item and without any reference in the headlines."

At present, neither sports broadcasts nor fashion magazines nor cultural programmes about books or films can be above the suspicion of possible interests that go a long way beyond the noble desire to inform people about the winner of a bike race, about the length of skirts next season or the orientation given by Umberto Eco to his latest novel.

Companies are by no means without conflict due to the impositions of those who nurture them. Precisely because communication has become industrialised, companies (both private and public) are perfectly aware that they must safeguard the quality of the products they offer. And, among these products, the news is perhaps the most delicate, the one that is least able to withstand adulteration. Once more, credibility is at stake that, in addition to its ethical components, is also a commercial asset per se. The owners of private television channels and the managers of public channels know that they must strike a difficult balance between the need to keep the commercial department's clients happy and the need to preserve a minimum of quality in terms of the information they provide.

The tendency of information and advertising to mix together

is difficult to keep in check because there are many different forces in play that besiege the media to place their products or messages on them. And the agents dedicated to this need, making use of all their personal or professional abilities, find a highly fertile area precisely in those spaces on the radio, television or internet that are "no-man's land"; i.e. that are not subject to well-defined rules of play.

With regard to this point, of note is an article that forms part of the document "Els gabinets de comunicació. Criteris de bones pràctiques professionals" (Communication offices. Criteria of good professional practice), promoted by the Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya (College of Journalists of Catalonia), precisely by the professionals working in the industry.

"Advertisers analyse the commercial opportunities of their clients, turn them into advertising messages and buy space on the communication and other media to insert this kind of commercial message and information. Press officers and advertisers can live together in certain projects, fulfilling perhaps complementary functions but always differentiated in terms of their goals, methodology and the instruments used."

Information and fiction

"Anything seen or heard must be presented as it truly is". This idea is repeated numerous times in the codes of ethics of the large television networks in the United States, such as ABC, CBS and NBC. News journalism has always been biased against any system of expression that is not the narration of events as they have actually occurred. Literature, art or even other forms of journalism accomplish their communicative role but informers are proud of the fact that their mission is specific: telling the facts, stripped of any formal packaging that might demean them (Alsius 1999, 317).

But this does not mean, of course, that the methods used by journalists help us to better discover the truth than the methods used by a painter or novelist. Journalists must be aware that their informative work isn't a perfect mirror of reality either. No matter how much they strive to reflect things faithfully, the procedures of informers still contain a significant production process that conditions the message itself and its reception by the target. And, of course, it might be the case (and sometimes is) that the work of an artist or a novelist contributes better to grasping certain aspects of reality than the mere narration of facts.

But, as pointed out by Carl Hausman (1992, 115), the point is to see how the lines are drawn that distinguish the methods of one from those of the other. There are some communicative conventions that redress, to a certain extent, from epistemological problems involved. Each area of expression works with its own rules that have been culturally sanctioned. Polysemy and fantasy are the methods of the artist; unequivocal meaning and authenticity are the traits that characterise and identify the work of an informer. The public has different expectations regarding an informer than those of a novel or film. And, inso-

far as the public has the right to information, journalists are committed to not disappointing them.

Throughout the history of journalism there have been cases of deceit on the part of reporters, who have passed off as real stories that have only come out of their imagination. One of the classics is the story of the reporter published in *The Washington Post* on 28 September 1980. Entitled "Jimmy's World", the reporter Janet Cooke explained, in great detail, the story of an eight-year-old addicted to heroin. The report won the Pulitzer Prize but this was withdrawn when it was discovered that the author had invented the whole thing. Initially, in the investigation started by the newspaper itself, the reporter argued that the case of Jimmy was a combination of a number of real cases but finally she ended up confessing that it had all come out of her literary imagination. This case has been cited repeatedly as a clear example of violating the principle of truth. Other cases recorded in the world of the press are those involving Stephen Glass, who was found, in 1998, to have falsified a lot of his reports published in the magazine *The New Republic*, and that of Jayson Blair who, in 2003, published invented information in a newspaper considered to be one of the most credible and influential in the whole world, namely *The New York Times*.

On television the chance to totally "fabricate" a news item is practically zero but there have been cases of misleading descriptions of images. One that became sadly famous was the petrol-covered cormorant presented as the first victim of the first Gulf War. Also guilty of this kind of broadcast was France 2, in 2000, with images of a father protecting a Palestinian child, Muhammed Al-Durah, who had died in his arms while both were sheltering behind a barrel. The video, lasting three minutes, stated that the Israeli forces had been behind the child's death. He became an icon of the Palestinian resistance, although the images were immediately suspected. A few years later, the German journalist, Esther Schiapira, found out that, in the rough recordings of the event, there had been no clear way of determining who had fired the shots.⁴

In all these more or less flagrant cases of deception, the reactions both of the public at large and those with a certain moral authority to judge the facts were unanimously disapproving. From the perspective of the ethics of news, manifest deception is one of the most censured conducts, both by most professionals and the public.⁵

However, opinion has always been more divided regarding some experiments carried out on the audiovisual media where the truthfulness has been tested of invented stories explained using a large part of the codes characteristic of news programmes. The great historical reference along these lines is the famous radio programme *War of the worlds*, conceived and produced by Orson Welles in 1938, when a large number of the audience of the CBS network believed that Martians were actually invading the Earth. An emulator of this prowess of mass communication was, several years later, the programme *Camaleó*, a TVE programme in Catalan, which in January

1991 faked a coup d'état in the Soviet Union, and journalists from the Walloon public television station, RTBF, who, in December 2006, caused alarm in Belgium when they announced, in what seemed like a special news programme, that Flanders had unilaterally proclaimed independence.

When they are told that something is a news space, readers, listeners, viewers and internet users expect the materials used to be authentic documents of what is actually happening. But the dividing line between what is authentic and what is not is not always well drawn. Between strict information and fiction there are a number of literary and dramatic genres that straddle both spheres. The so-called "new journalism" has upset conventional divisions and has been claimed as an excellent way to explain the present world. Who would deny, for example, that novels such as those by Truman Capote or Tom Wolfe contain values from informative journalism insofar as they attempt to investigate certain aspects of a specific reality? However, formulas have multiplied on television such as *docudramas*, *reality shows* and *mockumentaries* that are attempting to do the same, in their own way. Those that have encouraged this kind of genre have brandished the argument that a certain amount of formal "deception" can be a means to convey a certain dose of "truth" (Alsus 1989, 321). Nevertheless, there is a difference in degree between the various hybrid genres that must be taken into account. Thomas Fleming is one of those authors who claim, for example, that truth can be found more in some fiction genres, such as *docudramas*, than in *reality shows*, as, in his opinion, the former use the unreal to approximate the real, while the latter always move within a pseudo-reality (Fleming 1989).

In order to unravel the ambiguities, what ethics in journalism has often done is not so much to proscribe any use of fiction at all but to require what we mentioned at the beginning of this section: that nothing should be anything other than what it is presented as being. In the case of television, it even accepts the inclusion of fictitious elements in news providing the viewer is clear at all times that what they are seeing is or isn't an authentic document.

In the new style book of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (they are currently drawing up "operational manuals" that will probably provide further details for some of the rules in this area), this subject has been dealt with as follows:

"2.2.6 Distortion of reality

We strive to ensure that the presence of our media does not substantially modify the reality we wish to reflect and we do not encourage non-spontaneous actions or behaviours. If, nevertheless, we do not achieve this, we shall make an effort to ensure this circumstance does not distort the information we are giving.

2.2.7. Dramatisations and re-enactments

In general, the information we produce does not include deliberately made fictional scenes. If, in exceptional cases, any are included, the head of the news for the medium must authorise this and we must indicate this clearly.

The staging of habitual actions is not considered to be fiction when used as an image or sound resource for the news item and these do not form the basis of it."

The style book of Telemadrid refers in this, so restrictive way to the need not to play with misunderstandings that can confuse the viewers:

"4.d Any kind of staging that tends to make a re-enactment appear real is also forbidden."

In different documents, the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) has also warned of the danger of ambiguities in this area. This it has done in its *Guidelines on the News Treatment of Personal Tragedies* as well as its *Guidelines on trials and their Coverage on Television* where we can read the following, respectively:

"[C] 9. The distinction between direct coverage of a tragic event, documentary reconstruction (using pre-recorded images and sounds) and dramatised fictional recreations must be clearly marked in such a way that the audience cannot possibly confuse them.

6. The resource that some television programmes use that involves reconstructing what happens in court does not meet the procedural guarantees needed for total credibility. If reconstructions are used, the Council recommends the media warn viewers that reconstructions follow script criteria and are not vouchsafed by judges or judicial guarantee."

However, it would hypocritical to state that any kind of "representation" must be proscribed from the news. In many television reports sources agree, at least to some extent, to pretend they are performing some action that has convinced journalists in order to make the narrative more effective: from suggesting that someone is talking on the telephone to repeating a handshake to film it from another perspective. Few would dare to condemn this kind of action. But where are the limits?

The ethical chiaroscuro posed by this issue of representation comes largely from the recognition that, in today's media society, a lot of events occur and develop in relation to their subsequent presence in the media. If such scruples were taken to the extreme, the news capacity of these events would be very limited. On the other hand, the tendency towards genre hybridisation has allowed some television channels to embark on a slippery slope. It's true that some simulations can be useful in specific cases to better explain the facts (Linn 1991). But it's also true that, through the prejudices that can be caused among third parties, all forms of simulation that can be conceived entail a price for the media: the loss of credibility that can result should the deception be found out. The public, which has proved through audience ratings that it fully accepts certain genres based on simulation, has, on the other hand, quite rigid expectations regarding conventional news programme. It feels let down if it's made to believe something that isn't true.

Information and entertainment

In many aspects, the act of informing is not an exception among communicative processes and is governed by most of its rules. Broadcasters must catch the attention of receivers if they want the action and effect of informing to be effective. In this respect, we should not be surprised that information is presented in an increasingly attractive way in all the media. It wasn't so long ago that some newspapers that wanted to give the impression of being very thorough in how they offered news, such as *Le Monde* and *El País*, still resisted publishing colour photographs. Now they do and practically no-one is left who thinks that they have lost credibility by doing so. However, the informative media, both the press and television and websites, make an effort to help readers and viewers to understand better the data they provide with increasingly eye-catching graphics. In short, the media are undergoing a transformation that affects not only the content but also how the information is presented (Vilamor 1997).

Nevertheless, the tendency to disseminate news in a striking way has serious risks for the integrity of the information and its social value as the life force of the democratic system. As highlighted on several occasions by Gilles Lipovetsky, certain actions of the media help to degrade civic life and, in this, a particular role is played by the fact that news is presented in a dramatised way. In order to entertain and stir the public's emotions, information is now "constructed" so that TV news and reports are conceived as "hyper-realistic animation", focusing on what is more personal, on emotion and empathy (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2009, 237).

This phenomenon is not new. Nearly twenty years ago now, Av Westin, a veteran news director on American television, explained quite plainly the criteria that actually govern the selection of news on the medium. He said that, with his experience, he ended up developing a series of three successive questions to determine what goes into a news programme and what shouldn't. These questions are: 1) Is my world safe? 2) Are my city and home safe? 3) If my wife, children and loved ones are safe, then what has happened in the past twenty-four hours to shock them, amuse them or make them better off than they were? (Westin 1982, 62-63). It's certainly quite an ironic way of defining a method that, a decade or two ago in Europe, was considered to be only fitting for "American" television, something to which, on the other hand, we have become increasingly accustomed, especially since the expansion of private television.

Spectacularisation. This is the term with which many experts in this area have summed up the tendency to convert information into yet another tool for entertainment. This is used by the aforementioned Lipovetsky but is also used, among many others, by Bourdieu (1997), Langer (1998), González Requena (1989), Grabe (2001), Darley (2002), Imbert (2003), Uribe and Gunter (2007). In fact, in many contexts the term spectacularisation is used as the equivalent to sensationalism but, over the last few years and especially when it refers to the audiovisual media, the former is the preferred term.

With regard to codes of ethics, the terms spectacularisation and sensationalism exist side by side. But, in any case, the term is used to express a tendency defined as an opposing value to exhaustive, high quality information. Hence the style book of Barcelona TV establishes the following:

“2.2.11 Spectacularisation.

Beyond the images of disasters, the informer must be scrupulous in not presenting habitual news as if it were strictly new phenomena. This tendency towards the spectacle in information in order to entertain can lead to false expectations, social alarm and initiate a spiral of informative exaggeration.”

The warning regarding the hazard of resorting to spectacularisation in news programmes is often mentioned specifically in certain areas in which the danger of going too far is more evident. One of these areas is news on tragedies where, moreover, there is also people's right to privacy at stake. In this case, we return as an example, among other possibilities, to the CAC document *Guidelines on the News Treatment of Personal Tragedies*:

“[C] 4 When covering tragedies, it is advisable to avoid any type of special effect or resource that has a primarily sensationalist function.

[C] 15 When presenting information on tragedies, journalists should be particularly careful with the language they use. It is important to avoid using adjectives, sayings or clichés that unnecessarily dramatise and sensationalise the telling of an event and which could frighten victims, their relatives or people who could potentially be affected.”

Warnings are also given in various documents regarding the excesses that should be avoided when covering situations involving violence. In this respect, however, sometimes the doubt is raised as to what point the images of some facts might contribute to raising society's awareness of certain phenomena, such as war (Alcalà 2010, 247). This call for reflection can be found, for example, in the following article from the style book for Canal Sur:

“9 [...] Images that show violence in different facets and places in the world are inevitably an everyday occurrence. Sometime they move people, on occasion they make them indignant but they also help social conscience to be generalised against such evils. Or perhaps they help insensitivity to grow in a society increasingly seized by a syndrome of spectacle. Few aspects raise a greater public outcry regarding what can be shown and what should be hidden, what citizens wish to see and have a right to see in order to interpret for themselves a correctly shown fact, or what a medium, especially television, must restrict.”

The call to avoid sensationalist treatment or spectacularisation of information can also be found in documents containing guidelines made by various social sectors to get the media to behave in a certain way. This is the case of some codes refer-

ring to the news treatment of so-called “gender-based” or domestic violence, such as the *Recomanacions sobre el tractament de la violència de gènere en els mitjans de comunicació* (Recommendations on the treatment of gender-based violence in the media) promoted jointly by the College of Journalists of Catalonia, Barcelona City Council and the Catalan Institute for Women, and also the *Recomendaciones para las buenas prácticas en la información sobre violencia de género* (Recommendations for good practices in information on gender-based violence) produced by FAPE). Or, in other areas, the *Decálogo deontológico para los profesionales de los medios de comunicación para el trato de las realidades de gays, lesbianas y hombres y mujeres transexuales* (Ethical decalogue for media professionals on the treatment of the realities of gays, lesbians and transsexual men and women), the booklet *El poble gitano. Manual per a periodistes* (The gypsy people. Manual for journalists), the manual *Salud mental y medios de comunicación* (Mental health and the media), and the *Guia sobre el tractament de la diversitat cultural als mitjans de comunicació* (Guide to the treatment of cultural diversity in the media), to name but a few of the many different possibilities.

Towards the beginning of the 1980s, the mystification of news content with pure entertainment was baptised by some authors with the term *infotainment*. It should be noted that there is some ambiguity regarding the scope given to this concept. Some authors use it to explain how conventional news spaces tend to make themselves more enjoyable in order to attract larger audiences (Winston 2002; Lozano 2004; Sorrentino 2006; García Avilés 2007). Others, however, apply this concept more to the emergence of new genres that are placed directly at the service of entertainment but that exhibit documents that channel “real” facts and that are therefore false (Buonanno 1999). In this package we find proposals that, in the last twenty years, have proliferated on television channels the world over: on the one hand, the so-called *talk shows*, where interviews or debates focus on minor issues that are treated with high emotional voltage; on the other, the *reality shows*, which grant generous protagonism to anonymous people looking for their minute (or their twenty-four hours) of fame, and then spaces that, formally and aesthetically, are similar to news programmes but limit their content to highly specific issues, such as events, the lives of celebrities or sports.

It's difficult to decide which of these two facets of infotainment is more worrying. If we look at this from the quantitative point of view, the occupation of television channels by all these capsules of pseudo-reality we have just mentioned is certainly astounding. This is a phenomenon of global dimensions that has a provable relation with the commodification of the media universe (Thussu 2007). But the public has possibly already generated the appropriate antibodies to be able to handle this invasion and, ultimately, in general they are taken for what they are, namely mere entertainment. However, the deviation undergone by many spaces dedicated to general information by including “soft” content could be more dangerous from the per-

spective of the ethics of news. It is increasingly frequent for ostensibly serious news to offer any insignificant issue as its first item. And, with the subterfuge of “hooking” the audience, news on trifles are replacing other items of greater importance for society.

In any of its manifestations, infotainment represents a danger to the integrity of the news product. For large segments of the public, especially among those social sectors with a lower cultural level or young people, the importance of having access to quality information is becoming diluted, if “quality information” is understood as information that channels issues affecting the common interest.

Conclusions

It is a fact that, in the last few years, new genres and sub-genres have proliferated on the audiovisual media that, in many cases, are the result of the hybridisation of pre-existing genres. These new products are sometimes designed to be disseminated by the conventional media and, in other cases, are adapted (or have been created for this purpose) to new communication platforms, such as iPad, mobile phones, etc.

From the perspective of the ethics of journalism, ethical doubts appear when, in some of these new products, informative elements are significantly involved. Information has moral foundations that make it a social good of the first order and it can be dangerous to democratic health to contaminate or damage it. And, in this respect, there can be evident hazards when information is mixed with other activities within social communication, such as advertising, fiction or entertainment.

It would be too stern to state that, for reasons of an ethical nature, we must completely reject any hybridisation of genres that affect the activity of informing. The doors to innovation cannot be slammed shut. It is evident that the different ways of communicating facts and data, and also the way of communicating the interpretation made of these, has been changing over time, and some transformations really look like they cannot be stopped.

But it would also be dangerous to be content with “anything goes”. And, certainly, this is not done by what we might call the written “ethical doctrine”. In many ethical documents (codes of ethics of professional corporations, style books of public and private companies, recommendations by institutions, etc.), serious precautions are voiced regarding the mixing of genres, especially when one of the elements that may be affected is quality information.

These considerations can be transferred to the field of teaching. At this time of great transformations in communication systems, it is more important than ever to improve the training of future professionals. For the sake of the multi-skilled workers apparently required by the job market, the tendency is to increasingly accept the “hybridisation” of teaching, both at a graduate and postgraduate level, with courses and qualifica-

tions that are, in themselves, a mystification of content. We should probably remind ourselves that, while there is no evidence to the contrary, each facet of social communication (journalism, advertising, the production of fiction, etc.) has its own professional culture and values that should remain its own.

Notes

- 1 Some of this article contains findings from the research study “Ètica i excel·lència informativa. La deontologia periodística davant de les expectatives dels ciutadans” (2006-2010), which forms part of the R&D+i plan 2004-2007 of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (SEJ 2006-05631-C05).
- 2 Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.
<<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a19>>
- 3 The advertising code of ethics most widely recognised in Spain is by the Association for the Self-Regulation of Commercial Communication (Autocontrol). It was passed in 1996 and has subsequently been modified. The same association runs a very active reference website <<http://www.autocontrol.es>>.
- 4 This revelation is narrated in the documentary “The Child, the Death, and the Truth”, 53 min., Germany, 2009.
- 5 This is established in the conclusions to the research entitled “Ètica i excel·lència informativa. La deontologia periodística davant de les expectatives dels ciutadans” (Alsius [et al.] 2010; Alsius and Salgado, ed. 2010).

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Commodification and infotainment: the basis of new news

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Abstract

The commodification of information is a direct consequence of the television media battle for audiences. Audiovisual media have to renew their content and have no qualms about mixing journalistic genres in order to improve their audience share to ensure advertising investment. It seems that infotainment, with its particular technique and style, achieves this dual aim and news programme directors happily use certain features of the new hybrid genre in order to change the way in which information is treated. This change is needed to meet the needs of the new commercial model.

Key words

Information, infotainment, commodification, audience, news-worthy criteria.

Resum

La mercantilització de la informació és una conseqüència directa derivada de la competència televisiva. Els mitjans audiovisuals han de renovar els seus continguts i no dubten a hibridar gèneres periodístics per trobar nous productes que aconseguixin atreure l'audiència i d'aquesta manera assegurar les inversions publicitàries. L'infoentreteniment, amb la seva tècnica i els seu estil particulars, assoleix aquest doble objectiu; i els directors dels programes informatius no dubten a incloure trets del nou gènere híbrid per introduir canvis en el tractament de la informació. Una transformació necessària per satisfer les necessitats del nou model comercial.

Paraules clau

Informació, infoentreteniment, mercantilització, audiència, criteris de noticiabilitat.

Introduction

The digital switchover and emergence of thematic channels due to the offer provided by DTT modules lead to greater audience segmentation and make the battle for television supremacy almost unsustainable. The battle unleashed by competition is becoming increasingly aggressive and new content and techniques are being sought to offer information in a new and refreshing way in order to attract viewers who now, more than ever, enjoy a wealth of free options to use during their leisure time in front of the television. Thematic channels enable them to personalise and profile their schedule according to specific audience tastes, be it for children, young people, women, men, etc., and they ensure the inclusion of certain programmes that will interest their audience more and help define the range of investors according to the product being advertised.

In an attempt to recover their market position, TV channels have had to find new ways of attracting viewers. Content is renewed, reinvented and even transformed with a move towards hybrid genres. Information and television news which, in their early days, were considered neutral spaces, are becoming just another element in the market logic underlying

the media: they are becoming a commodity. The viewing public is becoming a consumer viewer (Mozoncillo 1997), i.e. viewers are no longer individuals who have to be informed, educated and entertained but are content consumers of incalculable value who provide the necessary investment to continue developing TV. This article examines the changes affecting how information is treated which, influenced by market logic and hybrid genres, are revolutionising the presentation of reality as we know it.

The commodification of information: news as product

The commodification of cultural goods, and by extension information, creates an imbalance between the ultimate goal of informative programmes and the economic aim sought by TV channels through these programmes. Since the beginnings of TV, schedulers have always considered news programmes to be untouchable within the scheduling, as they help define certain audience routines and habits (Cebrián Herreros 1998). In fact, they are the only TV space whose survival each season is assured, considered as necessary spaces since they perform a public service, keeping the audience informed through suppos-

edly "objective" content. For viewers, these spaces are sacred due to market logic. However, they are mistaken because these programmes are actually about to undergo changes due to commodification. They are established programmes recognised by all viewers. When we switch on, we know what we will find at this particular time. We do not expect to be surprised because what we want from the news is that it tells us about reality, to connect with that window on the world which provides us with significant knowledge as to what is happening. It is the most direct way of finding out about events and feeling that we have an overall knowledge of these in the rest of the world, giving us a general overview of the issues that the media has decided are current affairs. It is precisely this selection that is increasingly influenced by advertisers who demand high audience ratings in exchange for their investment. Television channels are at the mercy of commercial models in which audience ratings prevail over audience quality, who end up becoming numbers, seen as trading figures that are worth their weight in gold.

Everything revolves around the commodification model, this social phenomenon that has an overall effect on society and how it's organised. In today's world, everything operates according to market logic, to the value of products. Everything is reflected in a continuous commodification process in which tangible and intangible assets are valued according to the profit they make, because financial profit prevails over any purpose they may have. Studies in recent years have focused on defining the concept and analysing its consequences. Marxist theory states that commodification is the process by which the value of things is renewed, now starting to be measured by the extent it can promote change, i.e. by the general benefits it may bring to the market, instead of how it may be used, its ultimate purpose.

Defining the accepted meaning of the term a little further in order to bring it closer to the object of study, the commodification of cultural goods involves a sea change in how we conceive the work and the artist. Original ideas are no longer viewed as unique, since the new market logic encourages the creation of replicas. The original continues to be the genuine article but, for a modest price, anyone can have an exact copy of the original and enjoy it in their own individual way. Not only the music industry makes money through sales and the release of copies. The same is also true for the art world in general, with painting and sculpture, for example: creativity is ultimately at the service of the logic of commerce. Everything is designed to be devoured by the mass heterogeneous public (Bustamante 1999) which is our globalised society today.

Information is undergoing a similar change. It has to absorb certain changes to adapt to the new reality, a new model where the reason for presenting a newsworthy event is not just to broadcast knowledge but to succeed in terms of TV viewing figures. The contest began in the 1990s as a direct result of television deregulation, which led to the creation of other public and private TV channels, putting an end to the monopoly of Televisión Española. The aim of this fierce competition was not

to cultivate a loyal audience in exchange for quality content but rather to ensure high ratings shares at any cost to conquer investors, advertisers, the only source of income for Spanish TV channels (Mozoncillo 1997; Bustamante 1999; García Avilés 2007; Uribe and Gunter 2007). The commercial TV model was imposed, with all channels cutting back on their search, introducing easily digested content returning huge profits. This commercialised trend migrated to all areas of TV scheduling and, obviously, TV news also came under its spell, leading to a new type of more commercial news, which to a certain extent tends towards *tabloidisation* (Uribe and Gunter 2007). The aim is to inform the audience, as this is the basic *raison d'être* for this kind of programme, but this is achieved using a range of techniques that transform the content and the way in which information is treated.

Since this is a heterogeneous, mass audience, the news has become a commodity, viewed as just another product to be offered to this segmented audience that sees nothing wrong with changing channel if it does not like the type of information brought to it by a specific medium. This is why the news is no longer a public service and why it has become a product designed specifically to attract TV viewers and therefore obtain the advertising investment needed to ensure the survival of the medium.

Consequently, commodification has altered the value concept of audiovisual products, which are no longer valued according to their creative quality but their financial profit (Mosco 2006; Casero 2008). All TV scheduling is conceived and designed to achieve high ratings, the aim being to create mass audiences without worrying about demographic differences in order to attract advertisers. Moreover, communication on the media has become a special commodity because, apart from bringing financial profit, it also contains an informative message that affects the creation of society's awareness (Mosco 2009).

The media help the public to create a general idea of what's happening around the world; they dictate which current affairs stories we need to know and ones we don't, and this information is selected on the basis of a series of commodification they have to satisfy advertiser expectations that the media are forced to make changes to the way they handle information in order to surprise an audience that is used to new formats and quickly tires of seeing the same thing. News needs a new focus to adapt it to the needs of an audience that has unlimited resources at its fingertips, thanks to the internet and new technologies in general that keep it informed. TV media know this and are aware that they have to come up with and introduce changes that will capture audiences' attention and prove they are on top of events, that they too form part of the dynamic offered by new technologies that keep audiences informed 24 hours a day with updated information. They design their own websites and use social networks to capture another type of audience. All this helps to maintain the classic TV news format, which involves public participation through surveys that make users feel part of the news, that they can give their opinion in

real time and share it with other viewers. This participation encourages the public and cultivates its loyalty and that creates the desired ratings needed to secure advertising investment which ensures the medium's survival, thanks to a change in content that has been adapted to new audience needs, which may simply be due to a pressing need to gain investors rather than to satisfy their followers. There are exceptions, such as Televisión Española, which on 1 January 2010 gave up advertising investment to avoid this type of commercial television logic, where all content is designed to attract audiences, which are offered to advertisers who want to get their message across to the largest number of people possible.

In short, the commodification of cultural goods and, by extension, information transforms a newsworthy event into a product ready for consumption. The idea of news as a right to receive information and be informed is lost, exchanged for a more lax acceptance whereby lighter topics take up a large part of television news.

Infotainment, the new information focus

Information now plays an important role away from news programmes but it does so with other aims in mind and with its own particular style, which places it more alongside the entertainment genre rather than in the informative style of television news. The aim is to arouse any kind of emotion in the receiver (Uribe and Gunter 2007) because, according to research, this type of more dramatic and human-interest focused news boosts ratings (Lang 1998). Information, conceived as news on television, is changing, creating a new genre; infotainment. It's a formula that sells and is therefore extrapolated and used in different programmes broadcast by the same channel. We are witnessing a new approach to information (Thussu 2007) and authors such as Carlo Sorrentino attribute the emergence of this new hybrid genre to commodification, which forces us to rethink classic TV formats and redefine the current treatment given to information.

The appearance of television competition in the 1980s and even more so in the 1990s forced the audiovisual media to redesign the television model. They need a change, their content needs bringing up to date and, starting from the premise that television's basic functions were to inform, educate and entertain (Bustamante 1999), why not do all this in one single programme? An infallible formula for attracting audiences; one programme that keeps people informed about the events taking place in their more immediate surroundings while they enjoy watching it and learn new things. This is the successful formula of infotainment programmes that merge information and entertainment in the same space.

In these types of television programmes the viewer becomes the protagonist and the entire programme revolves around them. These spaces provide TV viewers with readily available information handled from a more intimate, more human-inter-

est point of view, with numerous personal accounts that lend support to a single idea; they all back a report which concerns the inhabitants of a village, they know that they have to work together for the message to be effective and achieve the desired value. These spaces have room for the type of news such as extremely local or personal subjects which, for reasons of space and time, cannot be included in traditional information programmes. All types of news can be broadcast from here, television at the service of the public without realising that, as always, it is actually the public that is controlled by television and, by extension, by advertisers. Viewers feel the overwhelming need to share their everyday lives; they want to be heard and share their fifteen minutes of fame with everyone they know, and they offer their stories for free. Advertisers get rich from this and achieve a much wider audience to target with their messages.

Having analysed these types of programmes that are broadcast each afternoon nationally and internationally, we can state that information is transformed within infotainment programmes. It changes and becomes something different: information-based entertainment. This new genre requires changes to newsworthy criteria. The public wants to know what is happening in its more immediate surroundings and, since the aim is to satisfy this curiosity in order to secure followers and thereby investors, the process changes. Trivial topics, anecdotes, as well as social reports and events are becoming the key to these types of programmes, a trend that is increasingly seen in television news programmes.

The newsworthy criteria for these types of television spaces are different from those used in conventional news programmes. The dynamics and production routines are essentially the same but the interest and aims change and, therefore, so does the selection process. As with television news, on these types of programmes the newness, quality of the material and story's potential are inexorable conditions for transforming any event into a newsworthy one. One of the most outstanding differences might be the fact that fame has no place here; the protagonists of the news stories are anonymous people who have been made into heroes or victims who share their stories. Famous names are relegated to second place because this is undoubtedly the space for anonymous people, the man in the street, not the star system, about which we always hear the same news stories. The aim is to find the human interest aspect of the information, to personalise stories to the extreme. The crux of each of these news stories is, in short, the person.

Not only do the criteria used to select the information change, but so does the way in which the reality is presented in images, as they have their own style, both in terms of how the information and the images are treated. The recording techniques for these types of programmes find, or rather, invent a new iconic style which shows reality as it is, warts and all, and resorts to recording with a hand-held camera, moving away from the perfectionist aesthetics of shots taken with a tripod, which present the stability and perfect framing of a limited part of the space

where the action takes place, thereby bringing dynamism and realism to what is being explained. A moving camera is now the preferred style, as the lens becomes the eyes of the TV viewer who is the direct witness of what is happening.

Live link-ups are one of the key elements to the success of infotainment programmes as they are a symbol of unequivocal proximity. They are used to prove to TV viewers that the events that are relevant to their own lives also awaken their interest and, by extension, that of other TV viewers. This ensures success when there is a live link-up to the popular fiesta of a village, however small it may be. Even the towns themselves adjust the times of their celebrations to fit in with the needs of the programme and they even delay these events or bring them forward to ensure that the cameras broadcast them live. This is an unprecedented tourist attraction for the modest price of zero euros, as the rate paid is indirect and it provides TV viewers who satisfy the needs of advertisers. In fact, live link-ups, together with moving cameras, have created a following and have become key factors in a new way of watching television, a new concept in presenting reality that rejects perfect framings, that shows things warts and all and enhances the force of the iconic message because things are presented how they are, good or bad, with the sole purpose of awakening some sort of emotion among the audience (Uribe and Gunter 2007). Having realised the effectiveness of all these techniques, news programme directors have taken them on board and now use them to achieve a profit. On television news programmes, it's no longer unusual to see continuously moving images or political topics turned into rather lightweight stories.

In the case of Spain, the first programme based wholly on infotainment was *Madrid directo*, first broadcast in 1993. Little could we imagine that the success of this programme, created entirely using the narrative and expressive techniques of the new hybrid genre, would be so overwhelming that it was subsequently imitated on almost all television channels.

This change in the presentation of current affairs in the media fosters a dual aim; on the one hand an economic one, as these types of programmes, given their simplicity in explaining events, attract high daily ratings, which give programmes such as *España directo*, *Madrid directo*, *Andalucía directo* and *En connexió* an average share of between 12% and 20%. On the other, these types of programmes provide a space where TV viewers can make their complaints public, where they can report things like unfair treatment; it's the perfect place to share their concerns or reveal the unique nature of their town's festivals. This is the "everyman" space which, free of charge, shows some of their routines and invites other TV viewers to become part of this for a few minutes so that they feel less lonely, seek understanding or display their abilities and skills. The audience participates actively in these programmes, not just as protagonists altruistically giving their opinions but also awakening an unprecedented desire to participate and, on a daily basis, suggesting a whole host of themes to programme editors by phone, email and, more recently, social networks. On

programmes such as *En connexió*, broadcast by Canal 9, 20% of the subjects have been suggested by the audience via social networks or email. A trend that can be seen on other programmes, including *España directo* and *Madrid directo*, whose email is completely overloaded almost every day. The public wants to make their small contribution to current affairs in the media and these types of programmes provide them with the ideal space in which to file their reports and ensure they grab the headlines; it's a way of giving themselves a voice, of opening a window on the media to make themselves heard.

New changes in traditional news programmes

Infotainment has started a process of irreversible change regarding the treatment of information, offering a new vision of reality which hooks the audience, and news programmes cannot ignore the success of this new technique. News programmes continue to be the star product; they are the brand image of the channels (García Avilés 2007), the only space that truly reveals the editorial line and outlines the subjects and values to which the medium is committed. But this doesn't mean they can escape the commercial logic and the need to make changes to their content to ensure the loyalty of their audiences while at the same time attracting new TV viewers to relaunch the programme's success.

The changes that news programmes have undergone in recent years can be divided into two main blocks: the redefinition of newsworthy criteria and the renewal of production techniques for news items.

First, as a consequence of the commodification of information at all levels, the classic newsworthy criteria (Sorrentino 2007a: 79-91, Peralta, 2005: 46-58, Saperas, 2000: 22-23, Casero, 2008: 194-197, Papuzzi 1998 and Díaz Arias 2006) have developed and new parameters have emerged that redefine the old ones. In this new view of news, where the man in the street plays an important role, the strength of a testimony will prove sufficient for the subject to be considered newsworthy and the quality of the information will prevail over the quality of the image, unthinkable in television where, until now, the image prevailed over everything; in fact, images recorded by the public are becoming much more valuable (Cebrián Herreros 2004). It does not matter whether the material is of low quality or even out of focus or a bit pixelated and neither does it matter if the images have been downloaded from YouTube; all that matters is that the information supplied is sufficiently relevant. Not only in instances where information only reaches the media via the internet, such as the uprising in Tunisia or the eviction from the Al-A'yun camp in the Sahara, because there is a news blackout against journalists, but also in those instances where YouTube videos are used to illustrate issues such as illegal racing. In both cases, social networks, and the internet in general, have become an inexhaustible source of stories and audiovisual resources for the media that, on these

pages, find fresh newsworthy events almost every day, as the public, in their never-ending and unconscious desire to share all their achievements, post their own videos on the net without considering the possible consequences of their actions.

And now that newsworthy criteria are being redefined, the topics included in news programmes are also changing. Topics as trivial as the death of Paul the octopus may even open news programmes, as was the case on Antena 3 TV, where it was the leading headline that opened the midday news. News programmes are beginning to establish a new news code dominated by soft news, which is news based on events or subjects that are capable of arousing all kinds of emotions among the audience; now, not only do we talk about sensationalised news (Cebrián Herreros 2004) but also emotion-based news, which manages to involve the audience and move it. This technique works and advertisers know this and are forcing the expansion of this emotional news system. In fact, even stories considered to be hard news are being tinged by these new techniques. In many instances, the serious approach in news stories about politics is being replaced by anecdotes and audiences seem to remember this kind of information the most. Politicians' press offices use this new method to present the media reality in their favour, encouraging these types of anecdotes to ensure they appear as many times as possible on TV channels. The important thing is to appear on screen, without the message being of any real importance, to simply show your face and become familiar; this appears to be a sure way of guaranteeing victory.

Newsworthy criteria change as a result of commodification and, if we compare the content of infotainment and news programmes, we can see that they have much in common in several areas, because topics are used that are of interest to both editors of news programme and directors of infotainment programmes when choosing events and social reporting that are newsworthy. However, there are programmes, such as *En conexión*, which in recent seasons have refused to present stories on events because they are looking for other, more social types of news with a single protagonist, namely the man in the street, and they try not to repeat the stories that appear in the news bulletins in order to ensure that the audience does not become bored. In those cases where a cultural item or human-interest story coincides on both infotainment and news programme schedules, the former will automatically be removed and kept in cold storage so that it can be served up a few days later, in greater depth and more detail.

Not only are there changes to the parameters used for selecting information in terms of the presentation, recording and editing techniques for news on information programmes. Changes are also beginning to be introduced in terms of presentation techniques, many from the new hybrid genre of infotainment. News programmes increasingly use live link-ups, mainly ones that involve movement, to demonstrate proximity and offer up-to-the-minute information to show the audience they are committed to keeping them informed. Link-ups are on the rise, they imitate the style of infotainment programmes,

which have been proven to attract audience attention. Infotainment recording techniques have also crossed over; there is movement in many news items because this kind of camera movement no longer distracts TV viewers, since their eyes have become used to it after seeing programmes such as *España directo*, *Callejeros* or *21 días*, where movement is the overriding factor and the journalists themselves record their material. Cultural videos are now introducing these recording techniques, such as editing techniques which use effects and insert music to add a sense of dynamism, techniques that can also be seen in videos dealing with serious issues, such as politics, broadcast by the latest channels to enter the Spanish television industry, including Cuatro and laSexta, which have a slightly different approach to the way in which they present information.

Conclusions

The commodification of information means we have to reassess the entire news production system and requires us to redefine newsworthy criteria and the aims of news programmes. Information conceived as a commodity within the new commercial logic is subject to change; in fact, it needs to be updated continuously in order to achieve a dual objective: to be attractive to the audience and achieve the necessary funding to continue developing. Television content is being restructured and in some cases reinvented, originality is rewarded with high ratings, an ephemeral victory that will disappear when the model has been imitated by all the other channels and when new changes will have to be introduced to set it apart from the competition.

Information is essential to today's society. The public need, or believe they need, to be kept informed and know what is happening in the world around them and this is why the new formats, the hybrid infotainment genre, take information as their basis and accessorise it with entertainment. This new genre is redesigning the way information is treated and the success of its style is spreading to such well-established programmes as the news, which is being forced to change its formats and content to meet the requirements of advertisers. Infotainment was initially included in news programmes at the beginning of the 1990s in the United States. Initial research (Kees 1998 and Blumer 1999) concentrated exclusively on analysing the changes made to political news, whose tone began to gradually change until becoming human interest stories, where politicians ceased to be unapproachable figures and became citizens whose private lives were more important than their political actions. It was at this time when infotainment began to establish itself as an independent genre, which for years now has had its own space on the TV schedules. Today its presence can be seen on every news programme. Its recording techniques, the use (sometimes abusive) of live link-ups, the selection of topics and the focus given to the information are undoubtedly influ-

Table 1. Changes to news programme information

Infotainment programme	Information programme
- Continual camera movement - Hand-held recordings	- Hand-held recording is on the increase. The technique is widely used in cultural news items and is now spreading to other news items in all areas.
- Live link-ups with movement - These last between one and three and a half minutes	- There are more and more live link-ups with movement, which offer a more comprehensive view of the <i>here and now</i>. These are combined with static links topped by backup videos. Live link-ups maintain their length, which can vary between forty seconds and about a minute. This is why there may be different link-ups from different places on a single programme.
- Editing techniques with effects, using pacing with short shots and inserting music.	- Cultural videos use the same techniques as infotainment, but these creative licences are spreading to and can be seen in other types of news. News items are shorter, lasting between 50 seconds and 1 minute 20 seconds; consequently, with brief and high-angle shots.
- Personalisation of subjects	- Personalised cases of news stories are being increasingly used to illustrate collective concern regarding a specific event.
- Programmes seek the human interest in the news	- Programmes seek the human interest in any event to hook the audience.
- Stories about events, social concerns and society form the basis of these programmes	-The gatekeeper selects stories according to renewed newsworthy criteria; stories about events, social concerns and society cram today's news programmes. However, despite this, politics and the economy continue to occupy a large slice of news schedules, even though the treatment given to this type of information is changing, tending more towards the humanisation of politics and the personalisation of economic concerns.

Source: Own creation.

enced by the success of infotainment, which has proved to be a format the audience likes, where the commodification of information is clear to see but appears not to bother TV viewers, because the way in which events are presented makes up for this. The table below shows the main changes introduced into news programmes as a result of the emergence of infotainment.

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Hybridisation strategies in reality TV in mass television programmes

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Abstract

The reality of a multi-platform setting, the fragmentation of the TV on offer and the recession are forcing channels to compete with low-cost products and to surprise viewers with novelties. Hybridisation is a basic premise for evolution and for innovation, hence the proliferation in recent years of genres that combine ingredients from a range of formats and provenances. Such neologisms as infotainment, docutainment, docufiction, docureality, mockumentary, etc. have entered TV schedules, increasingly established in an entertainment role.

Key words

Television, genres, formats, hybridisation, multi-platform, multi-format, multi-genre, factual, docutainment, infotainment, docureality, docufiction, coaching, mockumentary

Resum

La realitat d'un context multiplataforma, la fragmentació de l'oferta televisiva i la situació de crisi econòmica obliguen les cadenes a haver de competir amb productes de baix cost i a sorprendre les persones espectadores amb novetats. La hibridació és una premissa bàsica per a l'evolució i per a la innovació. D'aquí la proliferació, en els darrers anys, de gèneres que barregen ingredients de diversos formats i procedències. Neologismes com ara infotainment, docutainment, docufiction, docureality, mockumentary, etc., s'han incorporat de nou a les graelles de les televisions, cada cop més establertes en un rol d'entreteniment.

Paraules clau

Televisió, gèneres, formats, hibridació, multiplataforma, multi-format, multigènere, factual, docutainment, infotainment, docureality, docufiction, coaching, mockumentary

Factual, infotainment, docutainment, docureality... these are just some of the numerous terms in the TV slang used among media professionals and researchers. Some of them have even transcended the professional sphere to enter the vocabulary of some consumers. They are words of English origin, many of them recently-created, which show the level of evolution of TV genres in recent years and the need to define new concepts. They are all in response to two factors: on the one hand, the pressing realisation that television is basically entertainment and, on the other, that hybridisation is a basic premise for innovation.

Traditionally it was said that the basic functions of television were to educate, inform and entertain. Today, access to all sorts of sources of knowledge is at least reducing the role of education that television may have had in the past, perhaps even making it completely obsolete. However, this should not mean that television channels must give up their responsibilities in creating social or cultural values or yardsticks. Information is still an important asset in public television channels, but it is increasingly less exclusive to television as it is within reach of many global media, especially over the internet, and it is increasingly less of a priority for private channels, which do not want to spend the money that a good newsroom structure costs. Therefore, when the other objectives are in cri-

sis, entertainment becomes the principal aim. This milestone has already been widely taken on board as the most important feature of the medium: on television everything has to be "entertaining", even the news. This does not mean that information is at the service of the show or of entertainment (a phenomenon sadly on the rise) but that it has to generate maximum interest both in terms of content and form to be able to reach as many people as possible.

Understood as a blend, as a mix, as an intersection between ingredients, ideas or formats, hybridisation has traditionally been one of the tools for creation and innovation in all spheres, be it art, literature, business, design, music or communication. The need to surprise the viewer in such a sphere as the audiovisual, where one can sometimes think that everything has been invented, calls for the need to search for combinations that, at least in their form, appear to be innovative.

The early days of reality-based entertainment

A large part of the successful hybrid formats on television channels worldwide have their roots in the documentary or in reality-based programmes. The Anglo Saxons christened this *factual entertainment*, entertainment based on real facts. This

concept covers the non-fictionalised TV formats about human stories that became the first TV reality programmes. One of the pioneering programmes was the series entitled *The Family*, produced by the BBC in 1974, which showed the everyday life of a middle-class family. To modern eyes, it seems surprising that part of the British public criticised the protagonists of *The Family* for airing topics on television regarded at the time to belong to the private sphere. Another fact that shocks us now is that in Spain, prior to the 1990s, only celebrities (at that time, bullfighters and popular singers), politicians or experts in a field appeared on television. It was felt that the man in the street had nothing to say and that their experiences, being everyday and monotonous, would bore viewers. In that environment, by contrast, TV3 made programmes where people in the street and unknown people were one of its differentiating features. For a channel whose main value is closeness, the strategy was to conclude that, if you devote time to anonymous members of the public, treat them with respect and get "up close and personal", the viewer will also feel they are being treated with dignity. And more importantly: viewers discover that, behind other people's stories, there are universal values with which they can identify. Eye witness accounts are not used for a transitory show but have a social intention. The starting point for what would become the New Formats Department at TV3 were series with anonymous characters, such as *Ciutadans*, *Vides privades*, *Generació D* and *Explica'ns la teva vida*, produced between 1992 and 2000. In all of them, the narrative tone was that of a documentary, but with the intention of designing formats with elements of entertainment. This is attempted via the form, the challenges or the mix of ingredients that surprises viewers by its original approach, yet at the same time it does not lose any credibility or closeness. Hybrid formats already had their forerunners at TV3, such as the *La vida en un xip* talk show, directed and presented by Joaquim Maria Puyal between 1989 and 1992. Every week, the programme tackled a social issue that was first introduced with a short fictional piece called *La granja*.

Docusoaps: observing and sequencing reality

In 1996, the BBC also pioneered another hybrid product. In this case, with *Airport*, it was a documentary-based series on London's Heathrow airport. It was the first docusoap in the history of television. The word comes from the mix between documentary and soap opera (so-called because the first American serials were aimed at housewives and were sponsored by soap manufacturers). *Airport*, and the docusoaps that followed it, such as *Driving School*, *Animal Hospital* and almost 50 more titles, used observational techniques and only took from soaps the way of editing scenes as though the viewer were watching simultaneous events taking place in different places in real time and from the front row. In Spain, TV3 led the way in introducing this genre, with such emblematic titles as *Bellvitge*

Hospital, *Veterinària*, *Jutjats*, *Aeroport*, *Mares*, *Barri*, *Estrena't* and *Un lloc per viure*. The advantages of these series are that, with a mix of information and entertainment, they allow channels to compete in prime time with low budgets, they fulfil a role of closeness and encourage audience loyalty. Of all these series, the most popular was *Veterinària*, of which five seasons have been produced and whose values included being a format with a large and very much family-based target. The register of docusoaps is easy to decode as the viewer is used to similar narratives from both news reports and fiction.

The spectacle of information

Docusoaps are formats that should be included in infotainment and they have had a natural successor with subsequent products such as *Afers exteriors*, *Espanoles por el mundo*, *Callejeros*, *Comando actualidad* and many others. Infotainment mixes information and entertainment with the aim of achieving more competitive products in terms of audience. Many of them are based on presenters who "live" certain events first-hand and show them to the viewers. The interaction of the presenter with other people is a relatively cheap production system as it allows useful, long scenes with less effort than if they had to be produced without their intervention. Besides this, TV channels try to create a star system with the most charismatic presenters, enabling them to generate new products based on the attraction of the most well-known faces. In recent years, infotainment has increased its presence on all channels. First there were report-type programmes with live reporters, such as *Mi cámara y yo* and *Madrid directo*, both by Telemadrid, and all the subsequent nationwide or regional versions. Then came the ones with political irony, such as *Caiga quien caiga* on Telecinco and, more recently, *Salvados* on laSexta. There are no channels today that do not have a range of presenters with the ability to interact with celebrities, politicians or anonymous characters, and this supposedly no-holds-barred fever of the private channels in the infotainment sphere seems to be entering a spiral in which each new proposal has to go further than the previous one. The *21 días* format by Cuatro, presented by Adela Úcar, began in 2009 with reporter Samantha Villar living for three weeks with the poor, but very soon topics with a social focus gave way to others such as the world of porn movies, drugs and alcohol, where the reporter is the protagonist. The programme's website defines it as a space of "life challenges, shocking worlds, extreme situations...". The channel catalogues it as a reportage programme in the same way it does the successful *Callejeros*, a benchmark in the genre.

Callejeros seeks dynamism through the hand-held camera, a soundtrack created from the statements with the most impact, from which all the "chaff" has been removed, and a fragmented montage more in keeping with the video clip than the documentary. According to the programme, the topics are treated "in their true dimension and depth" but, behind this supposed

work of journalistic investigation there probably hides merely the intention to emphasise stereotypes, to shock, to sell sensationalism and highlight the unusual and startling. The marginal, freakish depiction provided by *Callejeros* has damaged television journalism since it trivialises information and annuls the ability to explain the reasons behind things and put them in context. However, it has, without a doubt, had this repercussion because it has achieved great ratings success.

Within this context of "anything for ratings", the trend for making a show out of information has also reached the news programmes on the private channels. The summaries of the news programmes on Telecinco, Antena 3 TV and laSexta prioritise impacting pictures, curious events and sensationalism over more important news items. Superficiality, anecdotes and immediate impact take priority over rigour and analysis. The time devoted to events, sports or the weather exceeds that spent on culture, the economy and international news. In this way, news programmes appear to be adopting the general tone of the rest of the schedules, where it seems that everything has to be in your face and trivial.

Coaching: the answer is on TV

Coaching programmes are new exponents of factual type hybrid programmes that have appeared in the last decade. They represent television as therapy, television for improving our lives. Having a rebellious child, not eating healthily, wanting to lose weight, having financial problems, suffering from phobias, wanting to renovate a house or having an aggressive dog: it does not matter what the problem is, television provides an answer with an expert willing to enter fleetingly into our lives and make us change. *Supernanny* was the pioneering programme of this type of format in Spain. In each episode, nanny Jo Frost helps a family with the behavioural problems of one of their children. TV3 broadcast the original British and American versions from Channel 4 and ABC, and Cuatro adapted the format with a Spanish psychologist, Rocío Ramos. Other European channels, such as M6 in France and RTL in the Netherlands, also have their "supernannies". Soon, coaching programmes in Spain multiplied: *Soy lo que como*, *Ajuste de cuentas*, *Terapia de pareja*, *Malas pulgas*, *SOS Adolescentes*, *iQué desperdicio!*, *Hermano mayor...* are just some of the titles made. Coaching shows mix ingredients from various formats, such as the documentary, insofar as the characters are real and they are recorded as reportage or using hidden cameras, talk show or entertainment magazine techniques, as the expert in question will adopt the role of star presenter, and fiction, due to the high level of staging of the situations.

The narrative structure is usually always the same: posing of a conflict, superficial intervention of the expert, emergence of certain difficulties, momentary overcoming of the difficulties and happy ending. The viewers witness the miraculous transformation of protagonists who are almost always middle class

in order to seek a high level of emotional identification with the audience. The intervention of the filming teams in supposedly intimate situations is very high and, therefore, so is the way in which reality is conditioned or altered, decontextualising it. The editing aids manipulation so that the viewer has the sensation of witnessing a real scene from a scene recorded as though it were reportage or an observational documentary, when in reality the genre has more elements of fiction or of reality TV than would appear.

Realities and docurealities: the spectacle of privacy

On the eve of 23 April 2000, Catalonia's Saint's Day, Mercedes Milá appeared on Telecinco presenting the first Gran Hermano (*Big Brother*). She did so with rather a lot of pretension: "It will be a sociological experiment that will change the history of television." After twelve seasons, no one expects Endemol's revolutionary format to have sociological intentions anymore, but what we must admit is that it has become a television benchmark and has changed the way in which television tackles privacy. Viewers have a generally very low level of identification with the contestants on reality competitions, who are selected not because they represent any social class but for their ability to create a spectacle, to offer a circus. It's more a case of the contestants being perceived as freaks or as actors in a drama or a depiction of reality. Neither are these programmes perceived as *teletrash*, a concept more invented by the media and academic circles to show scorn for the genre as a cultural sub-product rather than accepted as such by consumers. No one wants to admit to watching trash. For the majority, this type of programme is simply pure entertainment. Its followers know that the content is trivial and frivolous, some even admit a low level of dignity, but they see it as having no pretensions, as helping to pass the time and have a topic of conversation for the next day.

Reality shows are closer to drama than any other reality genre, especially to soaps, where story lines are also often based on feelings, emotions, conflicts of coexistence, tensions between characters, etc. In reality shows, reality is told as a drama, ambiguously, conveniently manipulated by the selection of participants, selecting excerpts via editing and with a defined script.

Reality shows also respond to a cost need: they are much cheaper than any drama production. They are also more profitable as they allow for other, even cheaper programmes to be scattered about the schedule to comment on, discuss or argue about their content. They have also proved to be more attractive than drama products for the 25 to 44 age range, the one most sought-after by advertisers.

The need to offer new formulas in the field of reality shows has led to TV creatives hybridising this genre with the historical documentary in the form of *docurealities* (*La masia* on TV3 and *A casa de 1907* on TVG, *Perdidos en la tribu*, on Cuatro,

and many products made by British TV channels in which the protagonists live under the conditions of the past). It has also been mixed with contests along the lines of *docugames* (*El conquistador del fin del mundo* on ETB, and *Pekín express* on Cuatro) and with coaching or overcoming personal challenges (*El aprendiz* on laSexta, and *El cim* or *Casal rock* on TV3).

Hybridisation in social reality TV formats

The eye witness programmes broadcast by most channels are strongly decontextualised from the problems they are tackling. This means that the treatment, intimate confessions and feelings become gratuitous and are exclusively at the service of exhibitionism and spectacle. This implies an instrumentalisation or abuse of privacy. Most of the “eye witness” programmes such as *El Diario*, on Antena 3 TV, the *voyeur realities* and the pseudo-news genres such as *Callejeros*, are in response to objectives that are exclusively at the service of spectacle or exhibitionism. This has led to two reactions among the people taking part in them: those who would be willing to do almost anything for a few minutes of fleeting TV fame and those who are increasingly distrustful of the media in order to protect their privacy. With the former, motivated by new post-modern media heroes, such as Conde Lecquio and Belén Esteban, some channels have found new possibilities, which lie halfway between fiction and reality. The series *Princesas de barrio*, on laSexta, a spin-off from *Mujeres ricas*, is a clear exponent of this and of TV performativity, in other words, of the staging induced either by the roles to be imitated or by scripts proposed directly by the very people in charge of the programme.

Generally speaking, TV3 has preferred to avoid reality shows and eye witness programmes throughout its history. In their place, it has leaned towards reality TV products with more social intentionality. The strategy of this type of programme on TV3, now with over forty series made by the New Formats, Documentaries and Entertainment departments, focuses on a perspective of respect and mutuality towards unknown people and their stories. This has allowed a sort of implicit pact between the channel and the audience. Viewers can consume products that are less respectful towards the participants in some programmes on other channels, but they would not like it if TV3 were to do it, which they see as more theirs and with greater values of safety and of service.

After the first series with unknown protagonists mentioned above, such as *Ciudadans*, *Vides privades*, *Les coses com són*, *Explica'ns la teva vida*, *Amors* and *Generació D*, or all the docusoap titles, there were others, such as *Efecte mirall*, *Sense embuts* and *L'endemà*. All of them have been scheduled at peak times, they have all led to very good ratings and they have contributed to part of the channel's differential. The stories of unknown people in these programmes are an attempt to attain a process of identification via the emotions of others but beyond stereotypes or the fleeting instrumentalisation of sentiments.

Docutainment: reality as entertainment

Even in social reality TV programmes, which were initially more documentary in their approach, the context of competition in mass television forces us to be competitive in prime time. This means we have had to look for new formulas that, without betraying the style and perception of utility, enable us to compete with drama, reality shows and big-budget formats. These are *docutainment* programmes, i.e. they mix documentary and entertainment. One of the pioneers was the popular *Caçadors de bolets*, which combined following an excursion with unknown people in search of wild mushrooms with other ingredients such as sketches by Toni Albà, Teatre de Guerrilla and Bruno Oro, the ironic voice-overs of Òscar Dalmau, the acerbic performances of the elderly people from Viladrau, cookery recipes, etc. The programme has various successful ingredients: closeness, humour, education, cookery, region, the passion felt by Catalans for wild mushrooms... It is also a cheap product as it has fairly simple production values.

Caçadors de paraules bears little resemblance to its wild mushroom counterpart other than its name and could also be classed as *docutainment*. In this case, the challenge was to make a programme about language that would work in prime time. It also had to mix various ingredients to achieve a flowing and effective product. With his simple register, the presenter, Roger de Gràcia, enabled interaction with various characters throughout the Catalan-speaking regions in his search for words. At its heart, beyond the language focus, *Caçadors de paraules* was an excuse for anthropology and to bring the region together. The most important value was to achieve a very broad target audience, especially to overcome the challenge of getting young people interested, and for the public to see it as, essentially, an entertaining programme. The level of hybridisation in each case is different, but the technique has continued to be used in other products, such as *Un lloc estrany*, on how immigrants see us, *Sexes en guerra*, on the biological and behavioural differences between men and women, *El paisatge favorit de Catalunya*, which combined scenery, the region and celebrities, *Disculpin les molèsties*, which took a look at the role of television in our lives, and *No me la puc treure del cap*, which dissected popular Catalan songs to discover why they were successful.

Docufiction: fiction at the service of reality discourse

Docufiction formats mix elements of fiction amidst a documentary item. They may be historical representations, with classic fictional scenes that contain dialogues between actors, the creation of characters and continuity sections, or simple re-enactments to illustrate history. The main difficulty is in attaining a fluid language in the transitions between genres and for the changes of register not to disconnect viewers from the story. The representations have to be highly believable and that is not

always easy, as documentaries do not often have the budgets demanded by historical drama productions, with costumes, action scenes, a large cast and extras, etc. Audiences are used to seeing big-budget historical films that are high on realism at the cinema, and if they see a docufiction with less rounded sequences, the story being told immediately loses credibility. There are very good examples of TV docufiction, especially among British and North American productions. These are pieces that have been able to move fluidly from historical fictional scenes to interviews with experts or archive footage. Documentary makers usually adopt these hybridisation techniques due to the difficulty of competing with classic or newly created documentaries at peak audience times on mass channels. On TV3, series such as *Històries de Catalunya* and *Pecats capitals*, or documentaries such as *Anatomia d'un rei*, among others, have achieved good results with moderate budgets. On 33, programmes such as *Zona roja*, *El tresor del setè camió*, *Boira negra* and *Camp d'Argelers* have also experimented with the mix of historical documentary and fiction.

The ambiguity between reality and fiction

Peter Weir's 1998 film *The Truman Show* continued the theme of the novel 1984. The *Big Brother* format was also inspired by the idea and name from George Orwell's book. In the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, reality shows proliferated to such an extent that, on TV channels worldwide and after just a few years, it is fiction that appears to be inspired by the reality shows. *Lost*, the legendary series by ABC, centred on the story of survivors of an air crash on an island. Many have seen a parallel here with the *Survivor* format, by CBS, which had its adaptation into *Supervivientes* on Telecinco. Even the flashbacks in *Lost* show the dual life of the characters, the one from the past and the one on the island, just like the contestants in a reality show.

The situation of a group of people in an enclosed space has often provided fiction with good dramatic possibilities. Antena 3 TV recently, and very successfully, broadcast the drama *El barco*, a series that combined the fantasy and romance genres and which shows, just like a reality show, the lives of the crew members of a training ship that is on the sea when a worldwide disaster has caused the land to disappear.

The use of TV documentary resources is also present in many other drama titles, both in the cinema and in television series. *The Office* (BBC and ABC), for example, is a documentary fiction or a fake documentary (*mockumentary*) about the employees of a company in the paper industry. The genre uses traditional documentary narrative resources, such as the roving hand-held camera, applied to fiction. However, the hybridisation of mockumentaries is no guarantee of success. Most of the experiences have not had much impact. Without a doubt, in the case of *The Office*, the acting and the surreal scripts are the keys to its having become a great comedy. More recently,

in another American series by ABC, *Modern Family*, the similarity between documentary and reality show is more evident: the protagonists look to camera to make statements, they explain how they feel and what they think of others and, when they interact with each other, a camera appears to be spying on them to show their conflicts.

Other productions have been halfway between docufiction and mockumentary. This could be the case of *Walking with Dinosaurs* by the BBC, which showed computer-generated animals from the Mesozoic age with narrative techniques taken from wildlife documentaries. A resounding hit in Belgium was the 2006 broadcast by French-language Belgian TV channel RTBF of the fake news *Bye, Bye Belgium*, in which the presenter of the news programme with the biggest ratings announced the end of Belgium after the Flemish Parliament supposedly declared independence. In 1991, on TVE in Catalunya, Josep Abril interrupted the *Camaleó* programme to present a fake piece of news on the assassination of Mikhail Gorbachev. In 2010 in France, state channel France2 broadcast *Le jeu de la mort*, a fake competition in which contestants were unwitting participants in an experiment to study the impact of authority – in this case, television itself – on public obedience.

In Spain, few television channels have dared experiment in the mockumentary genre with home-grown productions. Some of the few initiatives that have been produced are in the field of parody or satire. This was the case of *Herois quotidians*, broadcast by TV3 in 2008, with scripts by Empar Moliner and Juan Carlos Ortega, which took an acerbic look at things considered socially to be politically correct. Recently, Manuel Hueriga also directed *14 d'abril, Macià contra Companys* for TV3, a mockumentary that recalled the historical events after the proclamation of the Second Republic and which included anachronous interviews with the protagonists.

Conclusions

Not so long ago, many were predicting the end of television in light of fragmentation and of new screens. By contrast, these two new phenomena have not as yet reduced television consumption but have actually increased it. The multi-platform context and the ability of the public to generate information and content through social networks pose new challenges for TV channels, where perhaps the concept of prime time has to change very soon to give way to asynchronous consumption from multiple sources. This is why new formulas are needed now more than before.

The mix of narrative codes in the audiovisual enriches conventional forms. Nowadays, the boundaries between TV genres are ever more blurred. In fact, this is also the case in any other creative field. Hybridisation is effective for innovating, but the gratuitous mixing of ingredients does not guarantee success every time. The key will always be whether there's a good story to tell and it is well structured.

Hybridisation between informative genres and spectacle in the Basque public television service (ETB)

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Abstract

Any discourse genre is bound to evolve. Hybridisation between information and spectacle goes back a long way but, in recent years, a new factor has been the spectacularisation of classic TV information genres and the creation of information-based programmes that incorporate spectacle. This article analyses the hybridisation between spectacle and information in four types of programme broadcast by the Basque public television company (ETB): the news, informative magazines, entertainment programmes based on humour and current affairs, and finally TV reality shows. As we can see, stylistic hybridisation can give rise to highly diverse formats which are difficult to categorise and disparate as regards the quality of information.

Key words

Television, hybridisation, spectacularisation, information, Euskal Telebista.

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Resum

L'evolució de qualsevol gènere discursiu és inevitable. La hibridació entre informació i espectacle ve de lluny i, la novetat, des de fa uns anys, és l'espectacularització dels gèneres informatius clàssics de la televisió i la creació de programes d'espectacle que tenen com a base la informació. En aquest article s'analitza la hibridació entre espectacle i informació en quatre tipus de programes emesos per la televisió pública basca (ETB): els informatius de notícies, els magazins informatius, els programes d'entreteniment basats en l'humor i l'actualitat i, finalment, la telereialitat. Com podem veure, la hibridació estilística dona lloc a formats molt diversos de categorització complexa, que també resulten dispars pel que fa a la qualitat informativa.

Paraules clau

Televisió, hibridació, espectacularització, informació, Euskal Telebista.

El hecho es que me acosté una noche autor de folletos y de comedias ajenas y amanecí periodista
(In fact I went to bed one night as the author of pamphlets and unrelated comedies and woke up a journalist)
("Ya soy redactor", in *La Revista Española* no. 39, 19 March 1833) Mariano José de Larra (signed Fígaro)

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1999, 248) wrote that discourse genres of all kinds must constantly evolve "because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible, and because every sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex".

Spectacularising the informative genre on television

There is no consensus on the use of the expression "genre" when referring to television. But, in the formulation of this medium from the public service perspective adopted by Western Europe, three "macro-genres" were referred to, name-

ly information, culture and entertainment, each divided into specific genres. It is clear that, in practice, these genre classifications have been coexisting with hybridisation for some time. But in the European tradition, it was information which marked the direction and personality of broadcasters. In parallel, academic and institutional circles sustained that the genre we call *information* should have special features that would facilitate the formation of responsible public opinion and even the control of dysfunctions created by the economic or political authorities.

It should certainly be borne in mind that, behind this centrality granted to information, the use of television for manipulation has a long history. In fact, the European model included *de facto* government control of the medium, although *de iure* declared its independence. And, in spite of everything, and even from the criticism of the subordination of information to spurious political interests, critical academic thinking (Thompson 1998, 303-340; Wolton 1999, 143-190; Castells 1998) continued to defend the public information space as an inseparable dimension of political democracy in the face of the commercial criteria which began to take hold in European television after its "deregulation" and the development of private tel-

evision companies in the 1980s (Costa 1986, Bustamante 1999).

However, the commercial space has continued to consolidate, with hybridisation between information and spectacle as one of the consequences. It is true that this is not only happening with television and that, for some time now (Esser 1999), we have been witnessing the “tabloidisation” of the news in the so-called quality press. Nor is this a totally new phenomenon. It is years since academic research reported that television was ceasing to be a tool for reproducing reality and becoming an artefact for its production, evolving from *paleo-television* into *neo-television* (Eco 1986; Casetti and Odin 1990). As far back as the mid-1990s the *infoshow* could be characterised as a hybrid genre whose “formulas subsume elements of the news, fiction and entertainment genres [...], a new kind of presence for information which is adopting spectacularised forms” (Prado 1999, 9). Nowadays, the most significant aspect is that this hybridisation has become a dominant phenomenon in television programming and we are already starting to see a third stage (Scolari 2008; Gordillo 2009), *hyper-television*, an extreme development of earlier stages.

Whatever its name, it is clear that the current model of television is determined by strategies of profitability in attracting viewers. The public channels are no exception to this operational model, in which television programming is subordinated to audience ratings. Over the last few years, television companies have developed a great variety of techniques and strategies to reduce the risk of launching television products: falling back on established formulas, including genre features which have proved their effectiveness and, obviously, borrowing formats that have been designed, approved and perfected in other countries. Channels with different broadcasting ranges (from international to local) are trying to adapt pragmatic formulas and stylistic features with proven effectiveness in other areas to their broadcasting context. The immediate result of these practices is programme uniformity practically throughout the world, with hybridisation between information and spectacle as an accepted fact (Prado 2002, 369-394).

But there is a further paradox. In Spain, rather than the cultural or communication bodies establishing a regulatory definition of television information as a genre, this has been imposed by the Ministry of Industry. On 25 November last year, the Ministry presented the Telecommunications and Information Society Advisory Board (CATSI) with a draft set of instructions concerning TV sponsorship. This specified that sponsorship was not acceptable in programmes with current news content and, along with news, the Ministry includes “other programmes on research, development or debates on political or economic news”. “However”, it added, “this prohibition need not be extended to other programmes on social or popular issues which, although they can broadcast current or recent information in the widest sense, the risk of sponsorship conditioning their content is much lower”.¹

Beyond the Ministry's debatable criteria on sponsorship's

ability to condition the content of these programmes, we believe the very effectiveness of the instruction can be called into question. “The prevalence of novelty as the driving force of the audiovisual industry prevents any classification arising at a specific time from being effective in the mid-term: attempting to identify genre types and definitions becomes an impossible task” (Jiménez 2011, 21). The constant renewal of programmes, their heterogeneity and the fact that pragmatic proposals usually consist of variations, mixtures or developments of earlier spaces adds to the difficulty of defining taxonomies built to last.

The combination of information and spectacle is a constant feature when launching programme proposals and has given rise to a range of genres and sub-genres. In this respect we can impose some order on the question by identifying the four major areas of genre present in most of today's television services, in which both spheres, information and spectacle, are present.

1. News spaces. Programmes which historically and for obvious reasons have been the most genuinely informative are increasingly favouring soft, spectacular, exotic, amusing and gossipy news, often featuring ordinary people and socialites. No channel is exempt from this rule, which goes hand in hand with a substantial presence of information on events, which some authors had already identified as a trend in Spanish television in the late 1980s.² At the same time, events of great historical significance are being presented as pure visual spectacle, even if this prevents an understanding of what is going on, as seen in coverage of the wars in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan. As Ramonet indicates (2002), it is undeniable that the phenomenal growth of the internet and its ability to provide real-time connection with news and images of events is accentuating the tendency of televised information towards spectacularisation, possibly due to a need to offer eye-catching content since viewers have other ways of finding the latest news. This trend is starting to place reality in a specific narrative framework which often helps to simplify it.

Following the methodological approach of Norman Fairclough (1995), one of the key authorities in critical discourse analysis, the combination of content analysis of TV texts, an analysis of their discourse practices (production, distribution and consumption) and an analysis of the discourse events as instances of sociocultural practice leads to the conclusion that hard news is gradually being replaced by soft news “to prevent information being used for reflection on key issues” (Ramonet 1998, 90). However, it is also clear that traditional news programmes are maintaining their presence and weight on generalist television channels, which would otherwise risk losing credibility and audience, and in the case of the public channels, one of their main *raison d'être* (Telediario, Teleberri, Telenotícies and so on).

2. News magazines. News formats based on every-day events, anecdotes and stereotypes sometimes evolve into separate programmes which normally precede the news. Shows

like *España Directo* (Spain direct) following on from other similar programmes like *Andalucía Directo* and *Madrid Directo*, are defined as magazines covering human interest and social issues, gastronomy, folklore, events and novelty items, broadcast through connection to reporters on the spot. The concept of these programmes is clearly news-based since topicality sets the running order. However the way this information is handled verges on spectacularisation, and is usually characterised by a de-contextualising or scripted format, the participation of ordinary people or by homing in on eccentricities. These programmes must obviously be considered informative, but they clearly limit news to a very specific area.

3. Entertainment formats based on humour and current affairs. Hybridisation between information and spectacle can also result in programmes where mere trivia does not prevail and which make room for social criticism or at least humorous commentary based on the information. These aims can be structured in many ways: using sketches, monologues, interview-based formats, etc. A glance at the programming of almost all Spanish channels in recent decades reveals the presence of heterogeneous programmes based on the humorous and spectacular recreation of the news: *Caiga quien caiga*, *Buenafuente*, *El intermedio* and *Noche Hache* are just some of the more important recent examples of multi-format programmes of this type, virtually essential components of today's television as accessories of strictly news programmes. Their often editorialised intervention helps guide audiences in their interpretation of current affairs, and they also contribute to either playing down or highlighting important issues, putting them into context.

4. TV reality shows. Josep Maria Baget (2003, 88) defined the term *Reality TV* as the group of formats and sub-genres which makes reality the main reference for its images and narrations. Under this definition, the term becomes a large semantic umbrella that not only covers games shows with contestants sharing a house but also content based on current affairs, basic news and the spectacularisation of everyday life, always bearing in mind the importance of narrative structure used to entertain audiences. According to García Martínez (2009, 240), "Contemporary reality TV involves a unique, singular universe governed by its own aesthetic standards and benchmarks. In this hybrid terrain, there are two main strategies which shape the genre: simulation and performativity". Some time ago, Baudrillard (1978, 14) coined the post-modernist saying, according to which we are living in the final phase of the informative image which "bears no relation to any reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulacrum". But behind this simulacrum of the truth is a reality adapted to the needs of televised spectacle.

In fact, the objective of reality TV is none other than to arouse viewers' interest by interpreting fragments of reality according to the parameters of dramatic narration: exposition, climax and resolution. This involves simplifying content and giving internal consistency to the transformation of a public or private hap-

pening into spectacle. Many communication researchers consider that this phenomenon is transferred to the audience and that, as a consequence, the undeniable socialising function of television does not stem "from rational discourse or knowledge but from seduction and emotion, from narration rather than discourse, from its own reality and from the imaginary reality that awakens in the viewer [...]. These resources make the entertainment model the most effective system for socialisation, but also a complex instrument for selective manipulation" (Imbert 2003, 45).

These are undoubtedly the dominant trends in television programming. And Basque public television is no exception, although it has some other very interesting features.

Information programmes, the different facets of information on Basque public television

When ETB1 was inaugurated on 31 December 1982, authorised by the Statute of Autonomy which allows for the creation of a public communication body under the authority of Basque institutions, it became the first television channel to break the hegemony of the Spanish national television service, TVE. Since then, the corporation has extended its broadcasting supports, technical resources and social presence.³ From the start, ETB1 (the Basque-language channel) and ETB2 (the Spanish-language channel) decided to offer generalist programming which, as time available for broadcasting increased, included news, cultural, entertainment and fiction content, initially imported but later own productions or content commissioned from local producers.

ETB1's main flagships have been children's, sport and cultural programming, but news programmes have also had an important role to play. In the case of ETB2, its flagship has been information which, as we have already seen, has become a field where information and spectacle go hand in hand.

Interestingly, ETB2's daily news programmes used to compete with and even beat audiences in other channels, and for years they were an important reference in socialisation, as Rosa Díez Urrestarazu stated in her work documenting EITB's first twenty years:

"From the start, ETB2's daily news programme, *Teleberri*, tried to provide an alternative and point of reference for Basque citizens. It was launched with the handicap of having to battle the giants broadcasting news from Madrid, with many more technical resources and more experienced staff, apparently unbeatable in terms of audience" (Díez Urrestarazu 2003, 134).

The gradual growth of its daily news programmes can be quantified: between 1994 and 1997, the midday news rose from an average share of 17.2% to 22.7%, while prime-time evening news rose from 14.8% to 23.3%. Díez Urrestarazu calls it "quite an achievement for the history of the channel"

(*op. cit.*, 135) that, by the late 1990s, on some evenings *Teleberri* achieved a 32% audience share. The qualitative value of this success is reinforced by the fact that, during that time, news had tremendous social importance, underpinning the national identity and referents of the Basque people.

This modelling of national consciousness was certainly in sympathy with the line taken by the governing nationalist party, the PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco – Basque Nationalist Party). Particularly in its information services, EITB had always been subject to partisan control, which was to grow over the years in clear detriment to the professional independence of its news staff. These existing trends have only intensified with the change in the Basque government (now in the hands of the PSE-PSOE, the national and Basque socialist parties, sustained by an alliance with the centre-right PP). In this respect, moreover, overzealous efforts have been made to root out nationalist symbolism from the news which, although not the only culprit, has contributed to some degree of audience disaffection. Alberto Surio was appointed Director General of EITB on 18 June 2009 at the proposal of the PSOE and, in his first year of management, ETB2 changed from being one of the strongest of FORTA's channels in audience terms (around 15%, even up to 18% on occasion) to losing half its audience, with an average share in January of 8.6%.⁴

News magazines, trivia and talk shows, a clear interest in issues close to home

By changing its frame of reference and with an uncharted editorial line, EITB news has lost not only audience but also social legitimacy. This phenomenon has coincided with a period when, in general, emphasis on soft news and its handling as visual spectacle instead of through contextualisation have also had an effect. But information has not suffered anything like the trivialisation experienced by some other channels, and both the selection of news and its treatment have retained a fairly classic feel.

In spite of this, news magazines based on everyday life and novelty items have increased in presence. Today, ETB2 broadcasts two intensive editions of *Euskadi Directo* a day, one at midday and one in the afternoon. According to the programme's website, a team of reporters offers an on-the-spot overview of the latest events of the day. In practice this takes the form of items which exploit the appeal of street-level information and the spectacularisation of trivia. However, ETB already had some experience with long magazine-type portmanteau spaces which were excellent examples of genre hybridisation, combining information and talk pieces with varied sections ranging from fashion to do-it-yourself. In the early 1990s, *Egonean gir* (Enjoy doing nothing) had been aired as an afternoon magazine with current affairs and sections on health, decoration and beauty. Half-way through the decade, *Bertatik Bertara* (Very close), then a classic of ETB1, had been

launched as a daily local information programme in which various news items in the strict sense were given a local twist. The latter was described by *Revista Telebista*, the promotional tool which tells viewers about new features planned by EITB, as a “refreshing, fun and entertaining space, taking in current affairs and focussing news from a different viewpoint” (*Revista Telebista*, no. 9, 1999, 19).

Within this category but in Spanish is the 1996 programme *Arde la tarde* (The afternoon burns), although the best-known space in ETB2's programming was undoubtedly *Lo que faltava* (Just what I needed), by the producer K2000. Although the programme started off in the prime-time access slot, in 1999 it became a daily magazine focussing on the social scene and was broadcast following the midday news. After several seasons and still very popular, *Lo que faltava* disappeared, to be replaced in the same slot and with the same production team by *Pásalo* (Pass it on), broadcast from May 2004 to February 2010.

Interviewed for this article, Arri Granados, in charge of these two programmes and current director of content for K2000 and of a similar programme in ETB1, *Arratsaldero* (Every afternoon), emphasised the importance of the ‘spectacle’ factor when presenting a magazine programme that lasted several hours. She feels there must be a panel of commentators and talk guests because otherwise it would be impossible to cover so many topics for so long and with so much content. She also feels that the panel gives the audience someone to identify with, draws out and makes sense of the topics covered, and helps to boost the programme and the channel. In this respect, having a panel of commentators facilitates the use of a “flow format”, in which collaborators enter and leave, with topics taken up in a natural and fluent way and playing with the running order, always based on comments on current issues:

“In *Pásalo* we knew that our best chance would be in current affairs, because this would allow us to go on exploiting a resource which had already served us well both for celebrity issues and Basque current affairs: audience proximity. And that is what we thought we had to put on: an afternoon *infoshow* which could incorporate all existing and new genres, would give us flexibility to change the order depending on what was happening. In fact, we've managed to change the guest list up to an hour before the programme was broadcast”.

This hybrid, flexible structure has sometimes led to the ETB2 evening magazine's being adapted to cover particularly weighty news. *Lo que faltava* covered 11-S (the 2001 twin towers bombing), and *Pásalo* 11-M (the 2004 Madrid bombing) and 7-J (the 2005 London bombing), using agency images and ETB's global correspondent network. But even in these cases the main focus was not to tell the facts or analyse the context, but the experience of ordinary people:

“Trying to produce much more accessible information, we take the viewers' side, leaving other programmes to do the political analysis, offering the human side of information. If

anything similar happened anywhere else in the world, we would try to focus on how the Basques living there were affected by getting in touch with them. We have the resources to do that”.

With the change in management at EITB, *Pásalo* disappeared from the ETB2 schedule in February 2010, giving way to another magazine, *Aspaldiko* (So long since I've seen you!), with a similar structure but more frivolous content and more spectacular elements - dancing, singing, pop vox, etc. which has not been as popular as its predecessor.

In general, we could say that the magazines broadcast by ETB in recent years have gone for proximity and the use of the current affairs chat format and, as spin-offs from these, shows involving the heated discussion of political, social and economic issues, in a setting that encourages spectacularisation.

Formats based on humour and current affairs: the word at the service of entertainment

Entertainment is one of the bastions of Basque public television and this has conditioned information itself. In spite of this, it is true to say that ETB is proud of adhering to a concept of Basque public television in which the broadcast of programmes which could be considered aesthetically or morally objectionable is minimised. This can be illustrated by one example. Although the programme *Tómbola* was broadcast by Canal 9, Telemadrid and Canal Sur, other autonomous public corporations with which ETB holds commercial agreements, the Basque channel refused to air it. When it started *Tómbola* was a relatively new format, seen by some as the precursor of the present *Sálvame Deluxe* and *Dónde estás corazón* broadcast on Telecinco and Antena 3 TV respectively. The then Director General of the EITB corporation has stated that, although he knew it would attract good audience ratings, he refused to broadcast a space which, in his opinion, was out of place on Basque public television..

“The DGs of the other channels tried to convince me to put on this programme here. Because, of course, the more of us who got involved, the cheaper it became. But I saw from the start that it was absolutely not what we should be offering our public. [...] it is true that public television services have to include some of this kind of more commercial programming, but without turning their back on decent television. And there are also certain ethical red lines” (Díez Urrestarazu 2003, 131).

However, this does not mean that ETB has not offered formats based on oral confrontation. One example is *Rifi rafe*, 1994 precursor of *Moros y Cristianos* which was broadcast by Telecinco from 1997, discussing topics related to current affairs and whose staging favoured light-weight discussion and face-to-face confrontation.

As regards entertainment formats based on humour and current affairs, one programme stands out. *Vaya semana* (What a week), which has become one of the figureheads of Basque public television in recent years. *Vaya semana* is produced by Pausoka, is filmed in ETB's Miramon Studios and has been broadcast on ETB2 since September 2003. The programme's popularity goes beyond ETB's borders and some fragments can be seen in portmanteau programmes on other channels and on YouTube.

During the first of its 8 seasons on Thursday prime time, *Vaya semana* became a communicative phenomenon which transcended its category to become the subject of conversation and comment, creating and confirming stereotypes of the Basque character and the country's political and social idiosyncrasies. The programme began as a relatively modest affair, described here for the first time in the *Revista Telebista* magazine:

“Every Thursday offers a no-holds-barred evening. A daring and uninhibited look at current affairs. This programme, presented by Óscar Terol, has a repertoire of well-known actors who interpret a series of sketches based on the week's news. It also includes the opinions of ordinary people”. (*Revista Telebista*, no.17, 2003, 19)

From its graphic treatment and the place assigned to it in this publication, it can readily be deduced that this was not yet a star programme. It was not until well into 2003/2004, and above all the following season, that the programme defined its structure and the tone of its content, becoming a reference point in the humorous treatment of current affairs and sociological portraits. *Vaya semana* received awards from the Academy of Television in 2004 and 2007 as the best autonomous entertainment programme, and in 2006 an Ondas award for the best television programme.

Right from the start, the programme dealt with universal issues like amorous relationships, and ties of family and friendship, always seen from a local perspective. Real estate speculation, problems in finding a suitable job, current political issues, gender roles and caricatures of some sectors of society serve as the basis of its script, which alternate stories by the same team of actors in many different roles, with comments and settings based on contemporary events, and an interview with a public figure, ranging from the centre-right Partido Popular (PP) to Basque nationalist Arnaldo Otegi. In recent seasons, however, it has been more closely linked to television themes, the entertainment world or to promoting a programme, film or theatrical tour. Many of the sketches, grouped into series, have some continuity from one programme to another, and the personalities and their dramatic roles are repeated.

All these information-based issues are covered in what could be called a nonchalant or even insolent tone. This is particularly remarkable since the topics they are dealing with are difficult to handle even in conventional formats. *Vaya semana* presents clichés and stereotypes and items of ongoing political and social interest, many of which were firmly entrenched not only

in the public arena but in many social and even interpersonal relationships. The programme has caricatured such topical aspects in Basque society as socio-demographic plurality: one of the series in the early seasons was entitled "Los Santxez", portraying a family made up of two immigrants to the Basque Country from Salamanca, with one son an *ertzaina* (member of the Basque police) and the other an independence activist. Some of the more radical positions of the *abertzale* (nationalists) were represented by the adventures of a pair of puppets, "Los Batasunnis", inspired by the children's favourites *Los Lunnis*, who went to demonstrations, dressed recognisably as independence activists and even took part in street violence. The exorbitant price of housing in the Basque Autonomous Community and abuses related to government-subsidised housing and rent were covered in "Los Buscapisos" (The house-hunters), a couple desperately seeking somewhere to live. The multi-faceted importance of Basque was exaggerated in a classroom used exclusively for teaching Basque and promote *euskaldun* culture (*Euskaltegi*) through a varied group of characters who attended the class to learn the language motivated by a range of reasons: admiration for the language, the need for linguistic accreditation to get a job, or due to presumed links between knowledge of Basque and promotion in a political party. Other series of interest have been "Los cuentos del aitite Arzalluz" featuring the former leader of the PNB nationalist party, caricatured as a teller of folk tales applied to the Basque life of the day. Also "Antxonix y Boronix" who, in a parody of Asterix and Obelix, defended the only *baskongalo* village from Roman (or here Madrid) aggression.

Vaya semanita has therefore contributed to highlighting many stereotypes related to the Basque way of life. It has aroused audience interest by taking an uninhibited look at a complex, heterogeneous and in many respects excessively polarised society. The use from the start of plots based on current affairs and caricatured figures with easily recognisable features reflecting Basque reality helped win it acceptance. It has sometimes risen above the level of mere entertainment to attract criticism and praise from the media and even political leaders, who have been largely satisfied with their doubles in this parody.

The audience ratings can also be considered very satisfactory for ETB itself, which has continued to renew the programme every season. As we have seen, *Vaya semanita* has brought fame to Basque television beyond its boundaries, although in recent seasons, due to natural wear and tear and influenced by the dramatic fall in the audience ratings, the phenomenon has lost some of its impetus.

At ETB1, *Kale Gorrian* (In the street) was presented in 1996 as an audacious programme partly based on comments on the most striking, spectacular or original images from the news during the week and open to comment in chat programmes (*Revista Telebista*, no. 3, 1996). *Sorginen Laratza* (The appeal of the hearth, or witch's bonfire), the first late show in Basque, was shown between 1999 and 2005. It consisted of interviews, current affairs features, humorous sketches and music,

combining news content with other more typical television entertainment.

Basque style reality TV

This account would not be complete without referring to the programmes known as reality TV shows. Most reality TV shows broadcast on ETB are produced by Globomedia and are typically rather harsher in their approach than the formats of other channels. At the Basque channel, *Basetxe* (More) had nine editions between 2002 and 2008, all based on variations of a contest involving strangers living together and having to do typical rural tasks in competition amongst themselves. On the Spanish channel from 2005 onwards, *El conquistador del fin del mundo* (Conqueror of the world's end) and its variant *El conquistador del Aconcagua* have offered extreme physical trials for contestants set in rugged landscapes in Argentina, as well as confrontations between contestants some of them induced by deliberate *agents provocateurs*.

There is another genre of reality TV which clearly involves the spectacularisation of the narrative: the talk show, where ETB has also had varied experience. The most important of these was *Esta es mi gente* (This is my people), which between 1999 and 2006 presented an evolved version of the classic interview format. It was based on the narration of the personal experiences of ordinary people, presented in a de-contextualised setting and guided by questions from a TV host. *Esta es mi gente*, a co-production between 3Koma93 and Boomerang and produced at ETB's Miramon studios, rejuvenated the genre by featuring young, uninhibited guests who were more prepared than in earlier programmes to forsake the dramatic approach and embrace the genre of spectacle.

The channel considers the space had a "clear vocation to bring human stories onto the set, rejecting sensationalism but accepting the dictates of our times" (*Revista Telebista*, no. 9, 1999, 20). It announced that the programme's intention was to feature colourful, human and heroic acts by ordinary people who had done extraordinary things or experienced exceptional situations. But in fact its real essence, as in other similar programmes, lay in the spectacularisation of the stories of anonymous ordinary people, and for seven years it was one of ETB2's figurehead programmes. In fact, for years it was one of its major draws in terms of audience, also becoming a flagship for the whole EITB group, for which it became a strategic programme.

By way of conclusion

For functionalist positivism, even the functional positivism adopted by many professors at international universities, the spectacularisation of televised information is nothing more than the adaptation of the public television service to the will of the majority. However, this only represents the traditional submis-

sion and service by part of the intellectual community to the powers that be, be they economic, political or communicative.

Among the huge amount of content currently circulating the internet today is a list of ten points concerning the manipulation of information based on the thinking of Noam Chomsky. Its first point, entitled "Strategy of distraction"⁵ is described as diverting public's attention from real social problems, from important issues and changes determined by the elites, keeping them captivated by issues of no real importance.

We think it is beyond all argument that hybridisation between information and spectacle in television programming performs this function. However, we do not think that the perspective of television as a public service entails rejecting the idea that information and entertainment or spectacle can be mixed in certain programmes. But we are certainly concerned about the overwhelming weight of these talk shows, in private and to an increasing extent public television, where aggression becomes the norm of human relationships. These and certain reality TV shows dedicated to relating ghoulish personal stories, the systematic spectacularisation of current affairs in supposedly serious debates and documentaries, and the trivialisation of news programmes, are all trends that bear out Chomsky's criticisms.

In Basque public television as in some others, information is a territory where current trends meet tensions between public service criteria, political manipulation and pure commercialisation. It is clear that the last of these criteria is acquiring increasing weight. In reality, the fact that *Basetxe* is broadcast in Basque and is based on carrying out rural tasks is only a variation in form. Essentially, its values are not very different from those of other programmes in which groups of isolated people compete among themselves. Competition between people as an absolute value, and the introduction of *agents provocateurs* to stir things up, as in *El conquistador del fin del mundo*, also matches the well-known schemes of reality TV. Specifically, the declared intention to ensure that the local talk show *Esta es mi me gente* should avoid sensationalism but without renouncing the dictates of current affairs, is just a long way of saying the same thing. The fact is that many aspects of Basque reality TV coincide with the same model of programming on other channels. It is not a question of denying space to problems of this kind. But one has to wonder about the problems of a public channel like ETB2 when, in identity terms, *El conquistador del fin del mundo* replaces the news. Similarly, it would not be amiss to meditate on the status acquired by magazines like *Euskadi Directo* or the increasingly Manichaeian and superficial treatment of programmes which are still being presented as chat shows of political, social and cultural interest.

In spite of the above, the reference of INFORMATION (writ large) is still important to Basque public television, even if it sometimes bulks it out with unnecessary trivia or shows a recurrent tendency to spectacularise its telling of the news. Nevertheless, the most significant risks in this field for the Basque public service come from political manipulation and

the subordination of information to partisan interests. Some time ago, ETB made a formal commitment to set up an Editorial Board for news staff to guarantee their autonomy in the face of political or economic pressures. Unfortunately, this has not been put into practice.

Finally, it should also be recognised that television has some margin for creativity in all fields and almost all formulas. And within these, some real options for hybridisation between entertainment and information, giving magnificent results for what must ultimately be the main function of public information: to help us learn about and understand the world we live in. In many senses, *Vaya semana* is an example of these options, in spite of alternating between the fine use of irony to give a lively (and acidic) viewpoint on our society, and trivial witticisms. In its defence, it should be said that, during its years of existence, there has been more irony than witticism. A good use of the hybridisation of information and entertainment would undoubtedly link up to the work of the great Mariano José Larra, author of the introductory quotation to this article.

Notes

- 1 Press release by the Spanish Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade (25.11.10).
- 2 Manuel Palacio puts forward the example of the news treatment for the Puerto Hurraco massacre in 1990 in a report broadcast on the current affairs programme *Informe semanal* (TVE) on 1 September that year. According to the author, this item, although forming part of a space considered to be serious, describes the pain of the victims by using dramatisations, lighting and editing to generate "the horror at night-time", aiming to show the reality in a spectacularly dramatic way (Palacio 2001, 176).
- 3 The Basque broadcasting body EITB owns several radio stations, a website and five television channels: ETB1 and ETB2, general channels which broadcast respectively in Euskera and Spanish from 1982 the first and from 1986 the second; ETB3, channel devoted exclusively to cultural, kids and teenagers programming, and it owns also two secondary channels, Canal Vasco, which broadcasts via satellite for America, and ETB Sat, which broadcasts to Europe.
- 4 During the same period of time, ETB1 has gone from 3.9% to 1.8% (<<http://www.deia.com/2011/02/02/ocio-y-cultura/comunicacion/etb-2-recupera-cuatro-decimas-en-enero>> and <<http://www.deia.com/2010/07/18/politica/euskadi/etb-1-un-futuro-incierto>> [Consulted: 2 February 2011].
- 5 "Chomsky y las 10 estrategias de manipulación mediática" (<<http://www.attacmadrid.org/?p=2738>>), [Consulted: 2 February 2011].

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The dumbing-down of television news

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Abstract

Over the last ten years, television news has changed unimaginably, both worldwide and in Spain. There are two distinct types of news product: one that seeks its audience through spectacle and the other by maintaining journalistic thoroughness and the ethical principles of the profession. Studies carried out in the United States show that the prospects of having an audience are better for news programmes that are loyal to good journalism. This article explains how Telecinco, La 1 and TV3 news programmes were analysed to assess their quality and how this quality relates to the audience or share.

Key words

Television news, television, infotainment, soft news, news quality.

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Resum

Els informatius de televisió han canviat en els darrers deu anys d'una manera imprevisible a tot el món, però també a l'Estat espanyol. Es poden distingir dos tipus de producte informatiu: el que busca l'audiència a través de l'espectacle i el que la busca mantenint el rigor periodístic i els principis ètics de la professió. Estudis als Estats Units demostren que les perspectives de tenir audiència són millors per als informatius fidels al bon periodisme. Aquest article explica com s'han analitzat informatius de Telecinco, La 1 i TV3 per avaluar-ne la qualitat i com es relaciona aquesta qualitat amb l'audiència o share.

Paraules clau

Informatius, televisió, infoentreteniment, notícies toves, qualitat informativa.

One of America's leading TV journalists, Christiane Amanpour,¹ caused a huge furore when about ten years ago she publicly announced the demise of journalism as she had always known it and would like to have seen it continue. According to Amanpour, audiences had stopped watching news programmes because they did not like the content; in other words, irrelevant sensationalism, with low-quality material, the gutter press and gossip, boring and badly written, instead of news that helps them understand the world and participate in democracy. Amanpour accused television companies of causing the fall in public interest in the news due to their desire to produce news programmes geared more towards business – and, therefore, ratings – than towards the public's right to information.

Ten years on, this reality has reached us. Television news has also changed a lot in Spain and, over the last decade, we have seen two trends emerge: news programmes that try to maintain the traditional journalistic tone and content and those that have opted for a new television news model, a sensationalist model that tries to pass off infotainment, scandal and the most irrelevant stories as news. Throughout most of the private media, information has become just another product. There is a greater interest in selling rather than in providing a quality public service, which was the still prevailing idea in public and private television in 2000, as we will show in this article.

Returning to the United States, it could be said that it was

during the last decade of the twentieth century when the change in television news set in. Information took the infotainment route in terms of structure and content.² Competition between communications companies, new technologies, the formation of large companies with multiple media and multiple businesses, journalists losing their grip on information in these new companies and the transformation of news into just another product for sale led to the many-named phenomenon: new news, market-centred journalism, infotainment and soft news. Critics said that news programmes were concentrating on issues that interested audiences, rather than on what the public needed to know.³

Changes to the content and tone of television news also coincided with the arrival of advisers presented as television news experts who advised journalists as to what they should do to increase audiences. Generally speaking, these advisers are marketing experts and not journalists, and their advice does not deal with how to achieve quality, honest, thorough news aimed at serving the public in their right to know. It's no longer a question of reporting corruption and injustice, of being concerned for the well-being of the country and the planet and for the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of the population, as Amanpour said (2000).

At the end of the twentieth century, with new technologies showing when audience numbers rose or dropped, certain ele-

ments were introduced into television news which it was felt would keep the public hooked emotionally on a certain channel and forget the competition and keep them watching what most attracted them. These advisers concluded that what attracted the public is news that relates to them, news that arouses all kinds of emotions among the viewing public, news about famous and popular people and the things that happen to them, as well as programmes that explain interesting but unimportant news. The problem is that at the same time as television news became more irrelevant, it also began to become more critical of political institutions (Patterson 2000), with the consequent erosion of the credibility of politicians and democracy.

In 1996, changes in local television news, as well as the so-called networks in the United States, was all too apparent. The quality and attention paid to international news had reduced considerably, which explains, for example, why on 11 September 2001, American society could not understand who could have cultivated such a hatred of their country and why. Communications experts and numerous journalists began to be concerned about news quality and tone of it. The more apocalyptic among them said that the 1990s marked the demise of news and journalism as we had known it to date (Amanpour 2000). Parallel to this, the number of television viewers watching the news dropped.

This moment saw a series of research projects (Patterson 2000, Project for Excellence in Journalism 1997, NewsLab 2000), the aim of which was to find out whether this new type of more entertaining and irrelevant news is truly capable of stopping the slump in television audiences. In general terms, they questioned whether greater sensationalism meant greater audiences, or whether it requires good journalism to maintain and increase audiences. They wanted to ascertain whether quality television news can also earn money for communications companies. At the same time, these researchers were also studying the impact this so-called new news or infotainment may have on the public and democracy (Patterson 2000).

Patterson's work⁴ shows that the sensationalist and irrelevant news items that constitute the usual content of much television news do not increase audiences, but that soft news, together with a systematic critique of politicians and institutions, distort the public's perception of reality. This new news (Patterson 2000) presents a less attractive world that is less worth inhabiting. "There is less interest in public matters and also less interest in the news" and Patterson concludes by saying that it weakens the foundations of democracy by reducing the amount of information that reaches the public regarding politics and undermines interest in it.

The final years of the last century can be seen as a key moment in the United States. Journalists, experts and communications companies agree that this is a worrying situation for local news programmes.⁵ Audiences are plummeting in the major cities and news editors are searching for a way to change the trend. This was the context for the creation of the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ)⁶, the aim of which was to

study television news programmes and see how, according to their quality, they position themselves among audience rankings. In 1999, the television news programmes from 59 television channels in 10 cities were studied to assess their quality.⁷ The result is disappointing: there is increasingly less substance to local television news. It concludes that graphics and music do not manage to hide the fact that serious journalism and investigation in newsrooms is plummeting. Ironically, the study noted that in-house news, the news that TV channel journalists pursued and investigated themselves, was what people liked most and is more likely to create loyalty among viewers and so increase the audience.

However, 1999 brought some good news: the Project for Excellence in Journalism⁸ shows that quality also attracts audiences. New programmes at the top of the quality rankings are twice as likely to achieve commercial success and, in fact, most of the quality news programmes were increasing their audience (PEJ 1999). However, inferior quality news programmes, full of crimes, scandals and celebrities, are twice as likely to fail.

One of the most interesting features of this project is that it commissioned a number of television journalists, university lecturers and non-profit organisations, specialists in television news programmes, to establish an indicator to define the quality of a television news programme; i.e. to create a scale to measure the quality of these news programmes and analyse them.

According to this scale,⁹ a quality news programme reflects the whole community that is its target: it provides a context and depth to the news; it searches out news stories and investigates them; it includes the necessary sources to achieve balanced, credible, honest and accurate news; it seeks all points of view involved in a story and disregards violence and sleaze. Lastly, they agree that the best news programmes are those that include ideas, more in-depth topics, that discuss politics and relevant and more important events.

In 2000, the NewsLab non-profit organisation, run by Deborah Potter,¹⁰ used these concepts to draw up a model news programme to be used to train newsrooms. Two years later, the model, as well as the concepts of quality, were also in place¹¹ in the TVE central Madrid newsroom in the shape of courses run by the Official Radio and Television Institute. At TVE at that time, it was the experts from the Marketing Department who advised news editors as to the content of TVE's *Telediarios*, based on audience studies. Their conclusion was that news that connected with the audience was needed, with less politics and fewer politicians, with more topics that touched on the interests of the public and more emotions.

Content analysis of Telecinco, TV3 and TVE

The involvement of Marketing Departments in television newsrooms and the ratings imposed as the ideal work standard is a common feature of public and private television channels. It is

one of the consequences of the changes to television newsrooms that we set out to analyse between 1996 and 2011.

Using the television journalism quality scale established by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ 1999), we first analysed the evolution of newsrooms on the private channel Telecinco,¹² - focusing on 1996, 2000, 2010 and 2011. We also analysed news programme content on the public channels TVE (in 2000 and 2010-2011) and TV3 (2010-2011 only), to measure their quality and compare them. We also wanted to compare the results from measuring the quality of these channels with each of their results to see whether we too had the same findings as the PEJ (1999).

To analyse these news programmes, we concentrated on the following points, in accordance with the work by NewsLab (2000):

1. The range of topics covered: the best news programmes cover a wider range.
2. The type of topics covered, bearing in mind that the best news programmes include news about ideas, important social trends, politics, institutions and relevant events.
3. The length of the news: the best news programmes do not really include any news stories of less than 20 seconds. The average length of the news should be more than a minute and some news stories should be longer than two minutes.
4. Information sources: the best news uses a wide variety of sources. Reflecting different points of view and displaying their credibility, including experts and the right sources for each topic.

Analysis of Telecinco news programmes

In 1996, Telecinco was six years old. Even though it was a private channel, its news programmes were clearly designed to serve the public, as can be seen from their content. Analysing the programmes reveals a desire to explain to viewers events that are happening and why they are happening, a great effort is made to inform and educate them. Here is a television news programme format hugely inspired by newspapers, with commentators who pick over and debate current affairs and experts who analyse topics, such as health, the environment and consumerism. It also includes the typical daily anecdote, but enlivened in the way that television does.

1. The range of topics covered by these news programmes on Telecinco in 1996 is relatively wide, 9 groups of different topics, not counting the election block, sport and weather.
2. The most important feature is that politics plays an important role in this news (around 20% of the stories reflect this, with the remaining topics also part of the concept of quality news programmes, as they include information about ideas, politics, social trends, with national institutions enjoying a 15% presence in the news). The inclusion of events and violence is minimal. In addition, the presentation of politics is highly explanatory and educational.

3. The average length of a news story is little over a minute, but each news programme includes about 10 stories of over 1 minute 40 seconds, the scale for quality news programmes.

4. If quality news programmes are considered to have many and varied sources, this was the format of Telecinco news programmes in 1996. Many different people would appear, giving their opinions and explanations about events. Those who appeared on the news were mainly members of the government and civil servants from different administrations and people who were in some way connected to the events being explained (23%), as well as politicians and the public (around 5%). Also appearing were representatives of civil organisations, all types of professionals, trade unionists, etc.

In 2000, changes were being detected in Telecinco news programmes, even though written press routines were still in place, such as comments and lively witticisms, and still continue to exceed the quality threshold. There is a constant desire to explain and to analyse, helping the audience understand what is happening and what the consequences might be. News programmes continue to last about 45 minutes.

1. There continues to be a wide range of topics.
2. There has been a slight drop in the number of political topics (this type of political news story now accounts for 15% of news programmes), news about different events and facts appear to a small extent (4%), the category in which we have included accidents and crime, bearing in mind that we have put natural disasters (rain, floods and droughts) under the heading of *the environment* (21% of all news stories). This year, 2000, has seen increased competition between television channels with the appearance of society news (18%), which it is felt will attract audiences as it moves away from politics and focuses on issues that affect people and, in theory, is more interesting to audiences. However in 2000 at Telecinco topics about society covered social advancement and trends, specific community concerns, international cooperation and acts of solidarity. For example, specific events were used (such as International Women's Day) to cover the position of women in the workplace. National institutions appeared in around 17% of news stories.

3. At that time, over 50% of news stories were more than a minute and a half long, which gave time to explain the news and include different points of view.

4. In terms of information sources, these continue to be suitable and authorised to speak about the topic: government representatives and civil servants constitute the largest number of sources. However, we should not forget the trend towards fewer institutional sources (the number of government representatives and representatives from the different administrations, politicians and trades unionists). For example, fewer than half the number of politicians and trades unionists now appear than in 1996. These experts on different topics have been replaced by more journalists and correspondents, who are now in charge of interpreting events. The voices of civil society also made their presence known in these news programmes from 2000,

as did professionals from all types of fields. The appearance of the man on the street giving his opinion has increased and will continue to grow in the future.

The year 2000 could be considered as one of transition at Telecinco. Although there is a range of topics, of sources - what is important is that they are suitable and authorised to discuss the topic - sufficient time is spent on explaining the news, with time also devoted to international information and not just about Spain. These news programmes would still make the grade of quality television news.

When Telecinco's news programmes for 2010-2011 were analysed, the fundamental change had already occurred (see graph 1). News programmes from this season lasted 45 minutes and were sensationalist, seeking to arouse the audience's emotions at any cost, both in terms of content and tone. They have lost their desire to serve the public.

1. The range of topics has not been reduced, but stories about society, occurrences and different events take up a large slice of the news: they occupy 44% of all news stories on Telecinco. These are news stories about accidents, violence, different types of crime and corruption.

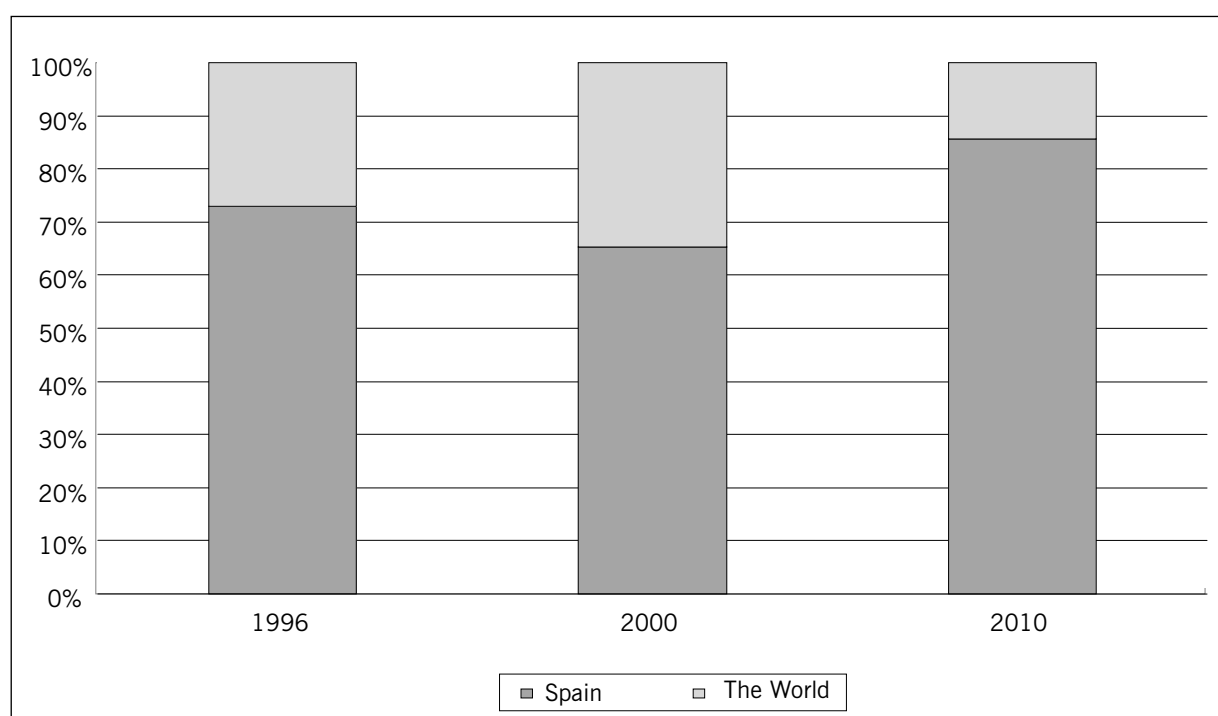
2. Less time is given to political topics, the news programmes during which ideas, relevant events and institutions are discussed. Culture, the environment, health and the unions are discussed less (see graph 2). In terms of political information, more emphasis is given to the more unsavoury, amusing and anecdotal aspects, such as Hillary Clinton falling over while boarding a plane.¹³ In fact, for any topic, there is a desire to

find the entertainment side, the more sensationalist and shocking aspect to it. For example, the news focused on a political event by former minister Francisco Álvarez Cascos banned in the press only because Telecinco had obtained images of the event.¹⁴ The fact they got images was highly emphasised at the news programme.

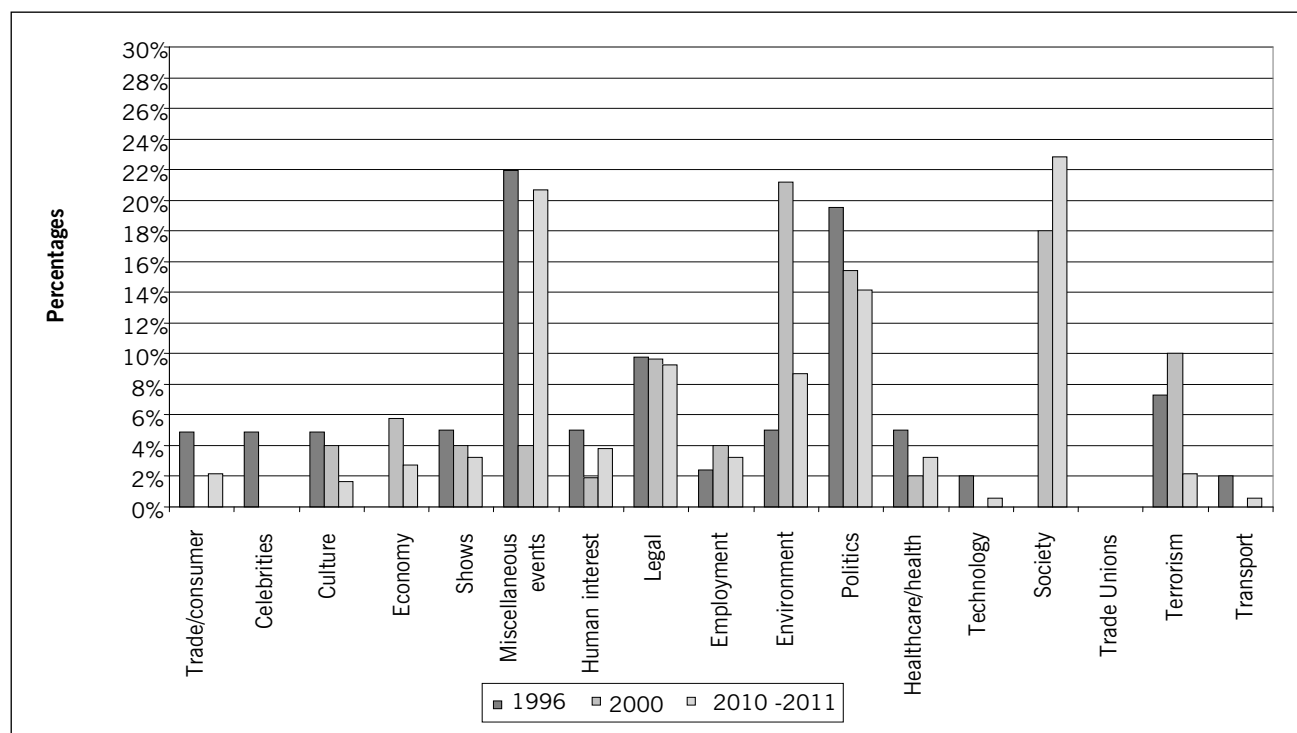
3. In terms of the length of news programmes, they still contain long stories (about 30% of news stories are over one and a half minutes), but the remainder include a great number of 20- and 30-second stories.

4. We stated that quality news programmes stand out as they contain an extensive range of sources which reflect different points of view. However, instead of using the more authorised and suitable sources to explain a news story, news programmes on Telecinco in 2010 turned to the public, who, together with the people affected by the events or neighbours, accounted for over half the opinions heard on these news programmes. These are instant opinions, ones that are little or hardly ever debated, and generally formulated by people who are not experts in the matter under discussion, broadcast in short sharp bursts designed to create a flexible and tight news programme (see graph 3). Another feature of quality news programmes is the production of investigative stories born from the creativity and professionalism of news editors, be they linked to current affairs or not. Over the years, Telecinco has always strived to offer in-house news but, although its clear desire was to explain the context, origin and consequences of the news up to 2000, all that had changed in 2010. It habitually offers in-house

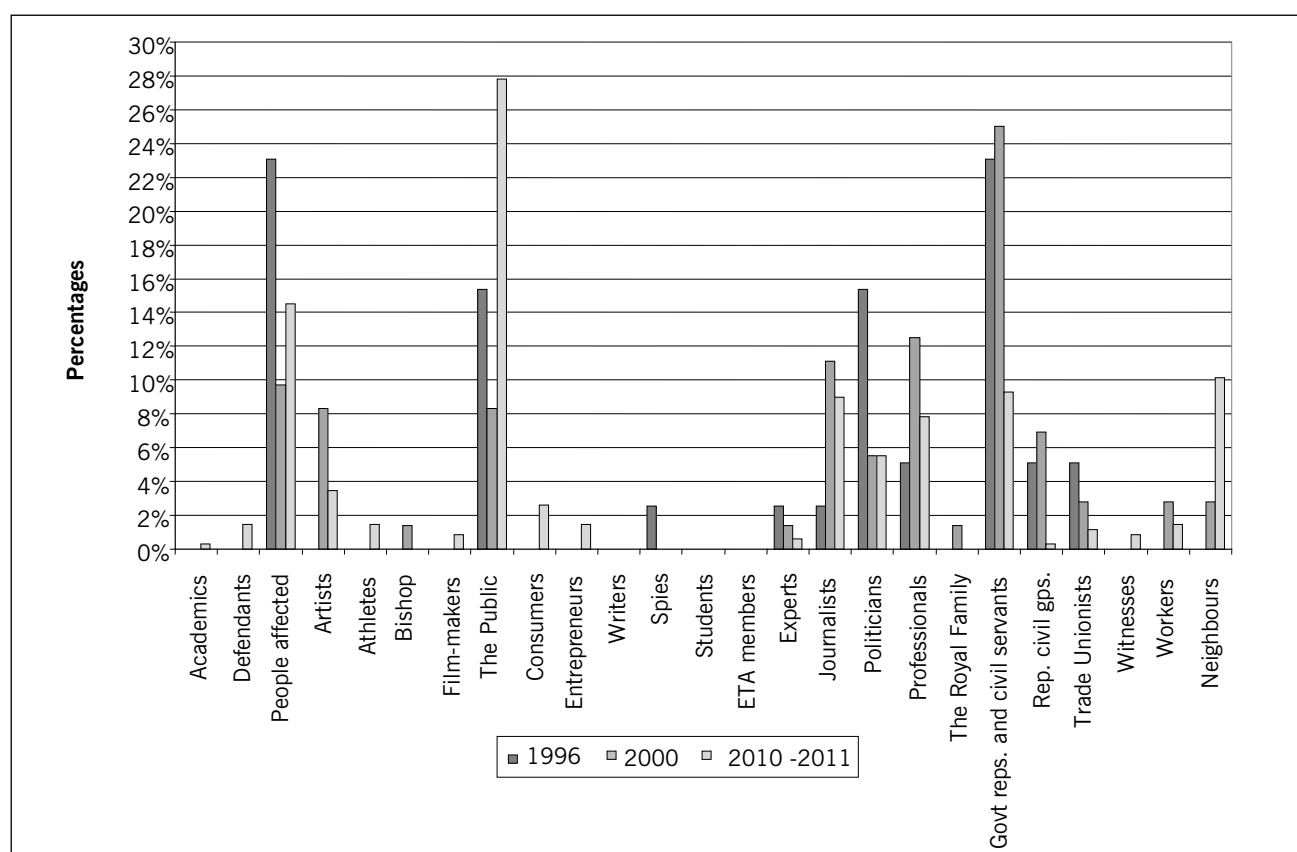
Graph 1. Comparison of international coverage on Telecinco. 1996, 2000 and 2010-2011



Source: Authors.

Graph 2. Trends in topics on Telecinco news programmes. 1996, 2000, 2010-2011

Source: Authors.

Graph 3. Trends in speakers on Telecinco news programmes. 1996, 2000 and 2010-2011

Source: Authors.

news that is useful to viewers, known in the United States as “news you can use”. This reveals a creativity and a desire to explain things that are happening. These stories tend to be irrelevant; interesting, but not particularly important in terms of the knowledge that they contribute.

We believe that Telecinco has now positioned itself and is now geared towards soft news or infotainment. The sounds of conflict and gunfire, screams heard during violent situations, these are the everyday soundtrack to these news programmes that hide neither blood nor pain nor the emotional images caused by all kinds of disasters. All this is served up in the main headlines and then in the subsequent headlines that appear during the news programme.

Analysis of public television: TV3

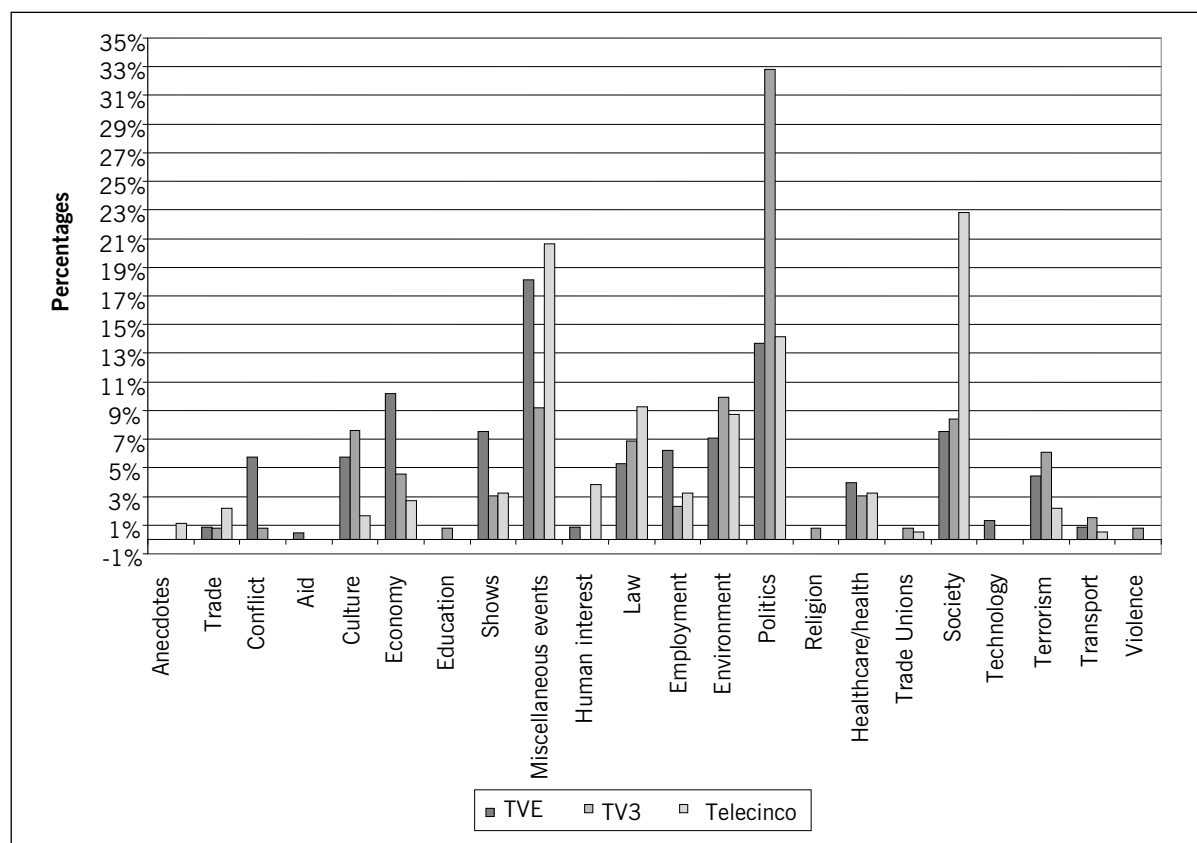
After analysing the evening news programmes on the public channels, TV3 and TVE, from December 2010 and January 2011, we see that these come under the quality news programme criterion. These offer a wide range of topics (an average of 17 on TVE and 19 on TV3, not counting sport and weather), they include many news stories that go beyond the event, beyond a sensational image, accidents and irrelevant topics and they provide a balance between the public's inter-

ests and concerns and institutional issues (see graph 4). On TV3, the most popular topic is politics (about 33% of news stories are related to this) and far removed from others. There is a highly balanced presence of different topics: culture, legal, the environment, etc. alongside topics about events and society. On TV3, society topics cover questions that relate to a large part of the audience, such as the policy regarding the burkha in Lleida or the dispute about animal rights. These news programmes also educate and do not simply provide information about traditions (two important stories about the farmer's year), history and social trends.

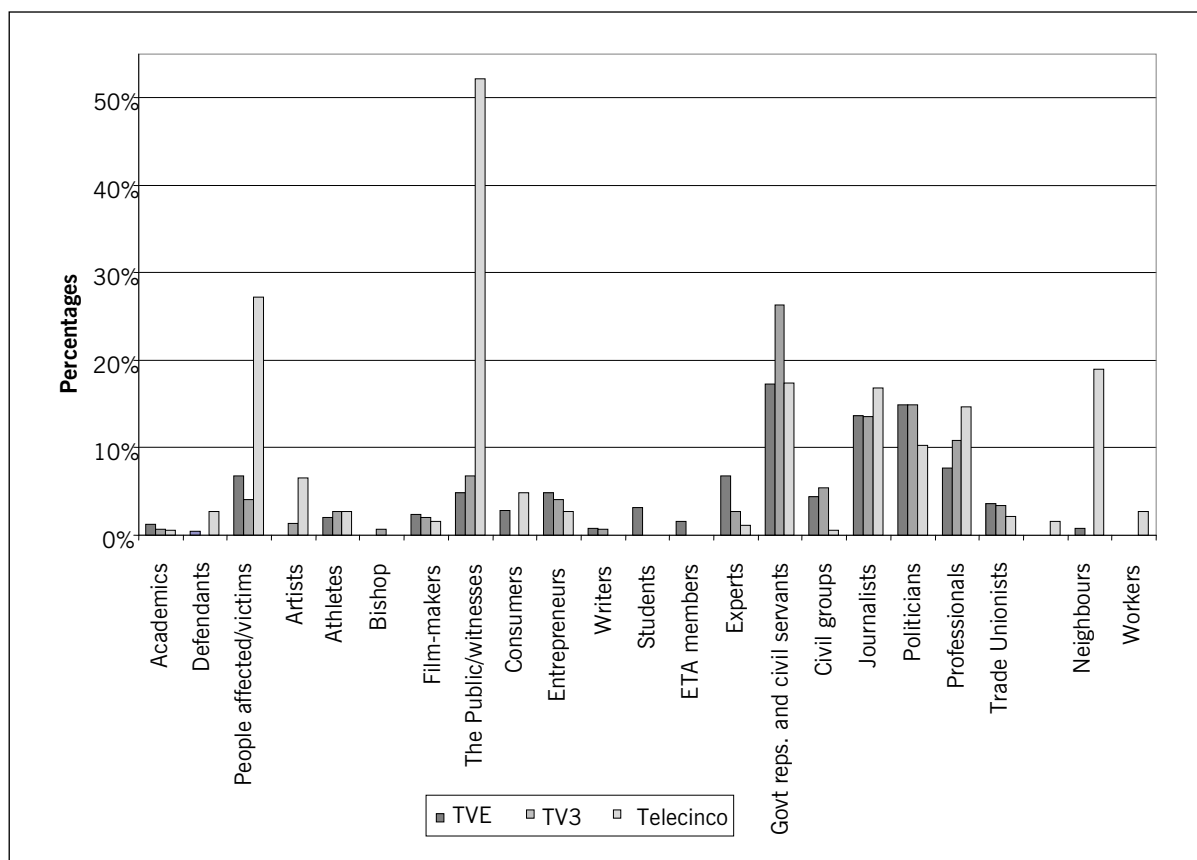
Government representatives and representatives of civil servants from the different administrations accounted for 25% of actors appearing on TV3's *Telenotícies vespre* (evening news). Politicians constitute another large group at around 15%, with journalists and correspondents (14%). Generally speaking, there is a wide range of information sources, which include all types of professionals and experts, from which we can deduce that professionals working for the channel take great care to find the most suitable and authorised sources to speak about each news story. Around 31% of these people who speak do so in Catalan (see graph 5).

In addition, in terms of the topic and presence of leading figures who speak, we can conclude that news programmes on TV3 are especially interested in including institutions from the

Graph 4. Comparing the range of topics covered by TVE, TV3 and Telecinco. 2010-2011 Season



Source: Authors.

Graph 5. Who speaks on television news programmes. Comparing TVE, TV3 and Telecinco. 2010-2011 Season

Source: Authors.

democratic society in their content. The majority of news stories last a minute and a half, although there is a small number that are longer.

Analysis of public television: TVE

With regard to TVE, this can also be said to follow the quality television news format, as shown by the range of topics, which include institutional information, debates about ideas and social and political trends. Unlike TV3, on TVE news programmes you become aware of the competition created by the main private channels: a third of news stories cover occurrences and also so-called miscellaneous events (half this kind of information is about accidents and all types of violence and crime) and society (ranging from frivolous and irrelevant stories about people going to the beach because it's hot, to more in-depth stories about the difficulty of educating today's teenagers, using suitable and authorised sources).

In 2010-2011, on TVE, politics takes up a large slice of news programmes (around 13% of stories), almost the same as on Telecinco, although the treatment on TVE is serious and the points of view and sources are balanced and appropriate

to the news story. In terms of information sources, the people who appear most often talking on news programmes are still government representatives and representatives from the different institutions (18%), followed by politicians (15%), but there are many professional voices of all kinds to be heard, as well as those of experts on the different topics under debate, all strictly following the quality news programmes scale. Stories have become longer compared with other times: most last between a minute and a minute and a half, but 14% are longer.

Conclusions

In Catalonia, *TN vespre*, from January 2011, enjoyed the largest audience for news programmes in its timeslot with a 23.1% share;¹⁵ Telecinco's evening news, broadcast at the same time, was next with a 16.6% screen share, followed by the second edition of *Telediario*, with 13.9%.¹⁶ In terms of the programme quality assessment panel conducted by GFK, TV3 was awarded an 8.01 in January, the best mark achieved since September 2008, when it joined this survey. One of the most highly regarded programmes is *Telenotícies vespre*.

In Spain in January 2011, TVE news programmes occupied

the top position among audience rankings for 41 consecutive months. *Telediario 2* (TD2) is the only evening news programme (9 pm) to achieve over three million (3,076,000) viewers. It enjoys a 3.9 points advantage over its nearest rival.¹⁷ On 31 January 2011, TD2 had an 18.4% share, followed by Telecinco's news programme broadcast at the same time, which on 1 February enjoyed a 15.3% share.¹⁸

The conclusion is that television viewers value quality news, designed as a public service, aimed at asserting the public's right to know and understand things that are happening in their world. In this sense, they agree with the report on the Project for Excellence in Journalism (November/December 1999),¹⁹ which states that quality leads to success and is rewarded with good audience ratings, as is the case of TV3 and TVE. This analysis shows that, as in the case of the United States, Telecinco's infotainment also attracts viewers, although with fewer possibilities of beating audience figures on the public channels analysed. It has been stuck in second place in terms of audience in Spain for almost three and a half years and at a stand-still in Catalonia for months.

Notes

- 1 AMANPOUR, C. *Keynote Speech at the 2000 Murrow Awards Ceremony*. September 2000. Minneapolis, United States. [Online] <<http://gos.sbc.edu/a/amanpour.html>> [Consulted: September 2000 and December 2010]
- 2 PATTERSON, T. E. "Doing Well and Doing Good: How Soft News and Critical Journalism are shrinking the News Audiences and Weakening Democracy– and What News Outlets can do about it". In: *KSG Working Paper*, no. 01-001. December 2000. [Online] <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/reports/soft_news_and_critical_journalism_2000.pdf> [Consulted: December 2003]
- 3 *Loc. cit.*
- 4 *Loc. cit.*
- 5 POTTER, D.; GANTZ, W. *Bringing Viewers Back to Local TV News. What Could Reverse the Ratings Slide*. [Online] <<http://www.newslab.org/research/bringback.htm>> [Consulted: 22 September 2000]
- 6 The Project for Excellence in Journalism is a sister project of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, in which journalists, communications experts and non-profit institutions devoted to journalism take part. After 9 years in existence, the project was incorporated into the Pew Research Center in 2006, where it continues today. [Online] <http://www.journalism.org/about_pej/about_us> [Consulted: 9 January 2001 and 15 December 2010]
- 7 ROSENSTIEL, T.; GOTTLIEB, C.; BRADY, A. L. "Special Report: Local TV News, Quality Brings Higher Ratings, But Enterprise is Disappearing". In: *Columbia Journalism Review*, November/December 1999, p. 84-89.
- 8 *Loc. cit.*
- 9 Local TV News Project 2002. What Is a "Good" Newscast? [Online] <<http://www.journalism.org/node/235>> [Consulted: 19 June 2001].
- 10 "What it Takes. Cultivating Quality in Local TV News". In: *NewsLab*. Washington DC, 2000.
- 11 The author's personal experience.
- 12 The following evening television news programmes were analysed using the scales described:
Telecinco: 17/2/96-27/2/96-1/3/96-25/2/2000-7/3/2000-8/3/2000-10/12/2010-11/12/2010-11/1/2011-12/1/2011 and 12/2/2011.
TVE: 6/3/2000-7/3/2000-8/3/2000-9/12/2010-10/12/2010-11/1/2011-12/1/2011 and 12/2/2011.
TV3: 9/12/2010-10/12/2010-11/12/2010-11/1/2011-12/1/2011 i 12/2/2011
- 13 Telecinco evening news programme from 12/1/2011.
- 14 *Idem*.
- 15 [Online] <<http://www.tns-media.es/actualidad/audiencia-tv/audiencia-semanal>> [Consulted: February 2011]
- 16 [Online] <<http://www.tv3.cat/actualitat/122839/TV3-lider-dauidencia-el-gener>> [Consulted: February 2011]
- 17 [Online] <<http://www.rtve.es/rtve/20110201/1-152-arranca-2011-como-television-mas-vista-mas-distancia-respecto-competidores-2010/400136.shtml>> [Consulted: February 2011]
- 18 [Online] <<http://www.tns-media.es/actualidad/audiencia-tv/audiencia-semanal>> [Consulted: February 2011]
- 19 ROSENSTIEL, T.; GOTTLIEB, C.; BRADY, A. L. "Special Report: Local TV News, Quality Brings Higher Ratings, But Enterprise is Disappearing". In: *Columbia Journalism Review*, November/December, 1999, p. 84-89.

Gender roles, romantic and sexual relationships in fictional series. The case of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*

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Abstract

This article collates the main findings of the analysis of the portrayals of sexual and affective relationships in the first season of the TV series *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*. This research is framed within a broader project funded by the Catalan Audiovisual Council, which has the aim of studying gender relationship models proposed by *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*, as well as its reception by Catalan teenagers. This media product offers a traditional model of relationships that establishes a link between passion and violence.

Keywords

Adolescence, TV Series, Gender Relationships, Sexuality, Discourse Analysis.

Resum

Aquest article recull els principals resultats de l'anàlisi de les representacions de les relacions sexuals i afectives que estan presents a la primera temporada de la sèrie televisiva *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*. Aquest treball forma part d'un projecte més ampli, finançat pel Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya, que té com a objecte estudiar els models de relacions entre gèneres proposats per *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* així com la seva recepció per part de les i dels adolescents catalans. Aquest producte mediàtic proposa un model tradicional de relacions que estableix un vincle entre la passió i la violència.

Paraules clau

Adolescència, sèries televisives, relacions de gènere, sexualitat, anàlisi del discurs.

1. Introduction

Sin tetas no hay paraíso is the title of the debut novel by Gustavo Bolívar Moreno, published in 2005 (Bogotá: Quintero Editores) and presented with the advantage of being based on real events. One year later, in 2006, Caracol Televisión produced a TV series in Colombia based on the novel. The series' success ensured that it was sold to other countries, including European ones such as Greece and Finland, and was also directly responsible for the creation of adaptations, such as the one produced for the Spanish TV market, which is the one that we will be analysing in this paper.

Sin tetas no hay paraíso was first broadcast on Telecinco in early 2008 (the first season of 12 episodes was scheduled for January to April). The production company which adapted it was Grundy Producciones, SA. The Spanish adaptation and promotion strategy for *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* sought an adolescent target audience that could access it not only via the TV screen but also other platforms, such as the Internet. The series' launch was reinforced with an official website (www.telecinco.es/sintetasnohayparaíso), nothing new for

Spanish TV in 2008, but which was aimed at a specific type of viewer, technically competent young people.

2. Theoretical framework: attraction, loving and sexual relationships in fiction. The teenage perspective

The aim of this study is to analyse the representations of sexual and loving relationships in TV series, specifically in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*.

We start with the theories that sustain that love is a social construct (Gómez 2004; Duque 2006) and that state that what attracts us is what we have assimilated socially and transformed into the desirable. In learning about love and relationships, the media plays an important role, together with other socialisation agents that intervene in the constant flow of interactions into which our lives are organised (Oliver and Valls 2004). Similarly, we also understand that the media help create an idea of love as irrational and inevitable, in addition to predestined and linked to suffering, as well as other superstitions.

To channel the representations of relationships and love that we find in the media, we have taken as our basis the models of loving and sexual attraction-choice defined by Gómez (2004), whereby the emotions, desires and interactions that are created from socialisation in loving relationships can be classified into two models: a traditional and an alternative model.

The first model is characterised by loving and sexual values associated with a hierarchical (patriarchy), authoritarian, discriminatory and individualistic society. In terms of attraction, “the family and school, the media and peer groups transmit desire, attraction and arousal towards the hero who stands head and shoulders above the rest and who can overcome any difficulty, including the use of violence, and towards the beauty who dazzles with her looks and surrenders to the seductive power of the hero” (Gómez 2004: 67). Although the model also proposes affection, friendship and even the establishment of stable relationships towards people with positive and cooperative values, these individuals are not considered attractive and are disassociated from passion. Therefore, the idea is created that we have to choose between passionate, blind and unavoidable love – which tends to mean suffering – and practical and adequate love, which means renouncing passion (De Botton and Oliver 2009). Attraction is based on what is difficult to achieve and, in short, we accept that what is exciting is not to be treated tenderly or equally but the search for “someone inaccessible, someone with cachet and, more than likely, a good dose of violence” (Gómez 2004: 73). The traditional model is based on three broad patterns, namely womanisers, women who imitate the male model and stable, passionless couples.

The alternative model, however, is linked to the radicalisation of democracy and proposes relationships based on dialogue, respect and the fusion of passion and stability. In this vein, Giddens (1995) states that the demands of women during the twentieth century have taken relationships towards a new model, one of confluent love, which requires dialogue and agreement to build a relationship that equally satisfies both parties in an equal relationship. For both Gómez and Giddens, this new model shifts the focus from the projection of romantic love onto the idealised other to the co-construction of a relationship, to the communicative process of establishing and maintaining voluntary links between people with equal rights, duties and loving capacities. This involves a democratisation of personal relationships and is encapsulated in the *Critical Theory of the Radical Love* (by Botton and Oliver 2009), which favours the possibility of establishing relationships that are passionate, equal and emotional.

Jesús Gómez (2004) feels that the pre-eminence of the traditional model in cultural products may be one of the reasons behind the persistence of gender violence, since this model links desire to violence. Authors who have worked in this field state that “there are teenagers who establish a link between attraction and violence. This link encourages relationships

where gender violence may arise” (Valls, Puigvert and Duque 2008). Adolescents have a fundamental role to play in terms of the continuity and changes regarding how love is perceived and understood. Adolescence has been studied as a key stage in the construction of personal and social identity which, according to Hallin (1983), quoted by Chapin (2000), is formalised in a series of life tasks that include intimacy and sexuality. The important biological, psychological and social changes during this stage of life are the key moment in the development of intimacy. When adolescents are asked about attraction models, the imitation of traditional male roles remains firmly in place (Padrós 2007). When discussing attraction, from what adolescent boys say, explicit issues emerge relating to the beauty and sexual attributes of girls, and girls, for their part, attraction towards boys who underrate or deceive them. Girls find *sexiness* in *bad boys*, which is a socially valued model, and boys assume that if they want to be successful they have to behave in this way. In addition, there is still a deeply rooted attraction for a trophy woman and for girls considered “impossible” (because the whole school fancies them or they are in the year above, for example). “Attraction is perceived as less reflective and more instinctive, more fleeting and more associated with domination, control, power and even aggressiveness” (Padrós 2007: 64). In fact, it is during adolescence when, for our society, school and the family cease to be the main socialising elements and relinquish influence to peer groups and the media. It is therefore right to question the role of the media in promoting regressive or, on the contrary, progressive affective models which help eradicate gender inequalities and violence; and even more so when products with significant social impact need studying.

Genres such as TV series present models with which we identify and which tend to create stereotypical representations (Galán 2007). Authors who have dealt with this issue and have observed its effects suggest that television content is in harmony with conventional gender stereotypes and that it probably activates and reinforces existing stereotype roles rather than questioning them (Ward, Hansbrough and Walker 2005). Media images condition the beliefs of adolescents in terms of gender roles and relationships between men and women (Rivadeneyra and Ward 2005; Ward, Hansbrough and Walker 2005) and research points to a direct relationship between media portrayal and the beliefs of young adults regarding sexual relationships (Ward 2002). Adolescents with more exposure to sexual contents and those who are more motivated by the media to have sexual relationships display a greater desire to have sex with penetration than other young people. In addition, the media acts as a *super peer* for teenagers seeking information about sexuality because sexual content is omnipresent in the media and because other socialising contexts do not meet their needs in the search for references (L'Engle, Brown and Kenneavy 2006).

Research focusing on the way in which people give meaning to audiovisual narratives –rather than research which is restrict-

ed to observing the effects – suggests that identification with TV series is more closely related to the plots than the characters. Also, when we talk of media consumption we need to go beyond the moment when a specific series or audiovisual product is received and focus on those moments when audiences talk about the audiovisuals and give them meaning. Series are also a form of contact with friends and “provide information about aesthetic codes and prevailing aesthetics without setting foot outside the home and without fear of ridicule” (Figueras 2005: 8).

Our ideas about intimate relationships are increasingly media-based through films, TV, magazines, the internet and popular fiction. *Mediated intimacy* refers, therefore, to the way in which the media construct our intimate relationships (Gill 2009). From childhood, most of us learn a great deal about what constitutes a couple by watching the media, which very seldom present healthy loving relationship models (Galician 2004). This author has spent time itemising what she terms *myths about love* used by the media to *intoxicate* the public. Some of these myths which the author itemises and for which she gives examples are as widespread as the belief in love at first sight, the eternal overemphasis of this affective bond and the need to suffer for love in the hope that, if they do suffer, the loved one will be redeemed and return all this love. Galician (2004) attributes to these myths a remarkable role in establishing relationships that are likely to include violence. We will see how these narratives are present in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*.

3. Analysis methodology

To extract the different sexual attraction and relationship models present in the series analysed, a type of discourse analysis was applied that links analytical categories from three different methodologies. These are the theory of argumentation, of semiotic narrative and of enunciation. The reason for using contributions from different theories is to try and analytically cover the different parts of the discourse with the most relevant categories in each case. This way, as a number of authors state (Albaladejo 1993; Ruiz Collantes 2002; Greimas 1971), the text can be viewed as a structure divided into different levels of meaning that are coherent with each other and which affect the discourse in its entirety, from the more abstract level of meaning – which we call the *in-depth level of meaning* – to sensitive manifestation through characters and narrative plots – which we call the *level of manifestation* – without forgetting the audiovisual expressive devices that convey the message to us – which we call the *enunciative device*. All three levels cooperate coherently in transmitting the final meaning conveyed by the TV series to the audience.

Consequently, three textual levels have been analysed in order to configure the sexual attraction and relationship models in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*: the in-depth level, the level of

manifestation and the enunciative level, although this article only refers to the in-depth level of the discourse. This level can be defined as the portion of the (represented) world selected by each discourse and transmitted as meaning. Put another way, each message listens to certain traits, elements, characteristics, aspects and values of reality and therefore constructs a specific view of the things it is dealing with. It therefore conveys a specific view of the world within which whatever appears will have a certain coherence. This symbolic and abstract construction is known as the *possible world* by authors such as Umberto Eco (1993). In other words, *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* provides a specific view of the aspects dealt with in the series: the world of drugs and delinquency and adolescence in a deprived area, relationships between parents and children, relationships between friends and also a specific view of how men and women relate to one another: who do they find attractive and why? How and who initiates a relationship and how does it develop, etc? This paper has focused specifically on the latter aspects and therefore concentrates on ascertaining which possible world is constructed in relation to attraction and the sexual relationships in which adolescents are involved. The remaining aspects presented by the series will be taken into account collaterally insofar as they help to understand the question being studied in this paper. In other words, we note the profession of El Duque only insofar as the fact that he's the head of a group of hit men makes him more desirable or not in the eyes of women.

Therefore, considering the very core of the discourse as a possible world allows us to establish the discourse's limits of coherence and, from here on, determine what is possible or not in the discourse or, likewise, what is coherent or not within the established parameters. It is for this reason that, in the world constructed by *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*, the actions carried out by the characters are coherent. Consequently, a possible world is a cultural construct which reflects part of reality; in the case we're discussing, these are certain attraction, sexual relationship and affective models which, in the section above, are defined as the *traditional model* and the *alternative model*. Both these possible worlds are composed of a series of elements that characterise them at this abstract level. To establish the categories that define the traditional and alternative model at this level, we have used the argumentation theory proposed by Chaïm Perelman, a mainstay of rhetorical studies. This theory provides fundamental elements for studying the referential universe present in the discourse. Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca (1994) classify the reference into values and facts. Funes (2006: 10) concentrates on the analogical level and defines it as “the deepest level. It comprises a limited number of values which form the structure of the adolescent identity. This level contains basic values which form the representation of this identity in TV fiction, giving it meaning and durability.”

From this point of view, each affective/sexual model constitutes a different possible world. In other words, the sexual and affective relationships of adolescents in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*

so could constitute a possible world of traditional relationships or a possible world of alternative relationships (with the relevant definitions and the implications set out in the definition above for the theoretical framework). This is a translation, to narrative strategies, of the fact that sexual and affective relationships may be traditional or alternative.

Both the possible world of traditional relationships and the possible world of alternative relationships are created using specific values and facts. The values form part of the meaning conveyed and are strategic. In other words, the broadcaster of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* creates specific possible worlds which reflect a portion of reality and a position regarding this reality. In addition, the reason for defining a specific view of reality is to construct a model of reality that may be subsequently imitated by adolescents, as it shows a perception of relationships between men and women, adolescents and/or adults.

Taking as our basis the definition of traditional and alternative models that we have seen in the theoretical framework, different values have been linked to each model, used to construct analytical grids. We have associated the traditional model with submission, dependency, violence, mistreatment, infidelity, instability, abuse, jealousy, fear, rejection, love linked to suffering, and the desire for redemption of a lover towards the other person, among other values. These are all connected to a way of conducting a loving and sexual relationship based on suffering, submission and, in short, the irrational and inevitable nature of what happens within a couple. However, via the alternative model we have associated the analytical grids with friendship, equality, love, the independence of the two partners, cooperation, respect, loyalty, passion linked to stability, tenderness, transparency, non-violence and dialogue between equals.

4. Findings

The sexual and loving relationships established between the three main characters during season one of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* are based on a traditional relationship model, in line with Gómez (2004). According to this author, and if we look at the discourse analysis results, we can see that the series is linked to desire and attraction with violent behaviour. One clear example is El Duque, the most desired and attractive character in the series who, in the very first scene of the programme, cruelly kills his partner. However, El Duque hurts his partners even in less painful relationships. In the case of his relationship with Jessi, it's particularly problematic that the woman falls in love with the man while he underrates and mistreats her. This traditional model also associates attraction with power, in the case of the men, and with beauty, in the case of the women, and this is precisely what we have in the series: the availability of El Duque's power and influences is what makes him attractive to both Cata and Jessi. The way in which both women show their surrendering to male power is different, yet

similar: Jessi wants to escape a poor area, while Cata is happy with the status that being El Duque's girlfriend gives her. The female attraction in the series would lie in beauty, a fact that is evident both in the opinions of the men (the characters say that Cata is very pretty, and she is the female character most fancied by the men) and in the girls' desires, who work to "make themselves" beautiful. This drive towards beauty is encapsulated in the physical changes Cata makes to please El Duque and also in her obsession to have larger breasts. In the series' narrative, this is established in the first scene where the two characters have a sexual relationship. El Duque then guesses her problem and leaves some money on the table and suggests that she undergo breast enlargement surgery. The male character – for love – says that he likes Cata just the way she is ("to me you're perfect, you're enchanting, but the important thing is that you feel good"), but helps her go ahead with the operation. This, in fact, will be one of the series' dilemmas, as the reason for the breast enlargement operation is represented as the protagonist's (and therefore a female) obsession, but set against a background that considers big/huge breasts are more beautiful (from a male point of view). This is heightened by the continuous comments made by the girls (especially Jessi) and the men, such as the gangster Morón regarding the smallness of Cata's breasts. Therefore, the deep-seated reason for Cata's transformation indulges this male opinion that reigns supreme in the diegetic world of this series and which, above all, is shared by its love interest (El Duque). In this sense, and in reference to her own body, Cata identifies submission with love in statements such as "I want to be perfect for you", and evaluates herself using these parameters. El Duque's response is ambiguous and, when he leaves the money, he says: "It really doesn't mean a thing to me. And for you it could mean a lot".

The mise-en-scene also enjoys displaying the female body even when this not required or justified by the narrative context. The girls are exaggeratedly sexualised, even when they have no contact with the male characters. The sexualisation of the female body is an integral part of the identity of the women who dress provocatively and often look at themselves in the mirror or drop their gaze to check their appearance.

The female characters' obsession with beauty takes place under the assumption that this beauty will afford them recognition and opportunities in life – even if this involves going into prostitution – and also stresses a commercial view of female beauty and identity: this is particularly highlighted in the luxury products bought by *men*. Therefore, the economic and social power of men is largely important to the women in the series because it allows them to become more believable characters within the traditional parameters: be more beautiful, more fancied, more sexually attractive to men and more powerful. This idea can be seen when the girls from the poor area appear to find happiness in going shopping in luxury stores accompanied by the gangsters. Also, in the case of Cata, El Duque is the one who should allow her to have larger breasts (even though, in the end, it will be Jessi who pays for the operation, always

assuming that, if one day El Duque returns, he will like them), and the other prized male character, Cortés, is exaggeratedly rich, powerful, elegant and generous (with the women), despite also being manipulative, a drug trafficker and a cynic.

With regard to Jessi, although she follows traditional femininity parameters in terms of her fascination with beauty, she would be “the woman who imitates the male relationship model” in Gómez’s model (2004), as she supposedly establishes relationships without commitment in which she does not get involved and that simply maintain the inequalities between the two partners in the relationship. We later see that things are not as clear-cut as this and that Jessi develops feelings for El Duque, even though, at the start of the series, they establish a purely instrumental bond. He is attracted by Jessi’s persistence and ability to operate in his world of drug traffickers and generally improve the environment through her activities as a prostitute: “you’ve got some loaded and very bored friends and I’ve got some really stunning, great fun girlfriends”, she says. El Duque and Jessi are attracted to each other because they are similar, and it could also be added that the supposed stability this similarity affords may be one of reasons for the breakdown in the attraction between the two characters (especially El Duque towards her). There are no more opportunities to see whether Jessi would act differently as there does not appear to be any other man interested in her beyond anything sexual, precisely because, in certain aspects, she breaks the traditional role of women in relationships.

As a whole, the series presents an affective model that associates passion and attraction with relationships that lack stability and with choosing unattainable people. El Duque is presented precisely as a paradigm of this unattainability and instability to the point where it could be said that proposing him as the impossible partner is the factor that generates the most attraction among the female characters in the series. Consequently, the love between El Duque and Cata (represented as the “true love story” of the series) is inevitable, unique, love-at-first-sight and everlasting. The series’ plot is that the two characters have been friends since they were young when, as El Duque recalls, “you had two plaits” and he made her promise “that you’d marry me”. This way, their getting together is represented as the resumption or conclusion of a predestined love story based on a children’s game. Continuity with childhood gives the relationship a touch of innocence which radically distances it from the relationship that El Duque has with Jessi and also allows a pact with the idea of inevitability and the cliché of eternal love. In fact, El Duque tells Cata in this scene that “you never forget your first love”.

The series does not consolidate this idealised love, season one ending with a relationship between Jessi and El Duque riddled with doubts about its fragility. The love or tenderness that El Duque seems to finally show Jessi are based on the gratitude he owes her and on the desperate situation of the male character, but they are far removed from romantic motivation which, contrary to this, is still linked to Cata (although she

appears to have definitively abandoned emotional reciprocity with El Duque). Instead of this, Cata agrees to marry a man whom she does not love because he offers her material comfort and peace of mind and, above all, the possibility of getting her revenge on El Duque. Therefore, at the end of season one of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* we are presented with a traditional model that disassociates romantic passion (between El Duque and Cata, who have moved from love to profound hatred) from stability (with Jessi having lost all passion, which is accessible to El Duque, they establish a stable relationship which does not satisfy the man; and, for her part, Cata also starts a stable relationship out of spite).

It’s hard enough to find a transformational relationship in the series, where those involved in the loving-sexual bond acquire a rational, dialogue-based, shared approach and renegotiate the course of the relationship. Possibly the relationship between Cata’s mother and the tailor was more in keeping with this template, but it was still a relationship where the male character presents himself as the woman’s “knight in shining armour”, who helps her even when she does not want helping. In addition, the relationship is not always presented as passionate and attractive, so it cannot always be said that it unites the values of passion and stability. Finally, the relationship between Cata’s brother, Jesús, and Paula is also rather more positive than the rest, despite being very brief, and begins and develops based on a moment of unfaithfulness and, when it starts, Jesús’s only motivation is his protective obsession for his younger sister and the continuous persecution of El Duque.

We should also consider that all the sexual and affective relationships established in the series are based on a heteronormative model, which takes for granted that erotic tension can only be created between people of the opposite sex. While the gender stereotype is exaggerated to the point that it cannot go unnoticed, heterosexuality is taken as read. There is only one lesbian relationship represented in season one and it is an instrumental sexual relationship that Jessi establishes with a famous actress in order to blackmail her. Therefore, this relationship, which is seen as being outside the heteronormative boundaries, is represented as “shameful” and stigmatised by the diegetic social context presented by the series, as well as being cold and instrumental; established by two cold, calculating women. In addition, the purpose of the blackmail is to prostitute the actress so that she has a heterosexual relationship with one of Jessi’s clients, which is why even this character, noted for an alternative sexuality to the norm, is punished by being forced to have a heterosexual relationship. Given all this, we can state that *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* feeds the dominant paradigm (“thinking straight”) in terms of sexual and affective relationships and makes alternative possibilities invisible (Ingraham 2006: 308).

In the series, the men are drug traffickers or policemen/paternalistic and protective brothers, and the women are ambitious prostitutes or good girls who allow themselves to be led into this underworld. The men covet social prestige in comparison

with the other men to help them take advantage of or control the women. When, in episode eight, the two female characters go to the house of a friend of Jessi's, this friend even ends up attacking them. Therefore, the directionality of the male characters is clearly aimed at sex and business, or, in the case of Torres and Cata's brother, at an exaggerated paternalism towards women. As Inagraham stresses (2006:312), "we have not adequately determined if what we consider gender or gendered behavior would even exist if not for its relationship to the institution of heterosexuality" as an organising force. We can therefore state that the narrative of *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* proposes a world governed by a heterosexual system which, as Wittig would say, is based on the belief that women are sexual and sexed beings incapable of living outside the male norm and therefore have to be subjected to a "heterosexual economy" (Wittig 1992:7).

5. Conclusions

It should be said, especially during the initial episodes, that *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* appears, to a certain degree, to criticise the model of femininity and establishment of relationships the series itself proposes. By way of a *moral*, but also in reference to the original novel, the series appears to be a brief catalogue of exemplary punishments where, for example, Cata's vanity is punished with an attempted rape, Vane's stupidity with an overdose and subsequent drug addiction, Cris's ambition with the failure of her desire to become an actress and Jessi's cruelty with being looked down on by El Duque. However, especially after the second half of the season, when Cata runs away with Jessi and has the operation on her breasts, every possible tool the series has to offer for a critical interpretation is diluted through the visual portrayal of the women's bodies and their pleasure in making themselves pretty, working in the porn industry, meeting other men on whom they are dependent and "getting pregnant" as a transformation (in the case of Paula, from prostitute to mother). In terms of the women, the series creates a skewed comparison between sexual emancipation and control over one's body – and the fact of selling it – when the story exalts the male fantasy of sex with minors – it is they who, in the series, want relationships with the adult men. This link between the sexual use of a woman's body as a form of empowerment is particularly true in the case of Jessi, who uses her sex as a way of achieving power and resources and even prostitutes her friends for her own ends.

Many components from traditional models are used in the characterisation of the protagonists and their interactions, primarily the link between desire and attraction with violence. After El Duque kills his partner at the very start of the series, all the relationships in which he will become involved will end violently and, one way or another, will involve his partners. El Duque is presented as dual-sided character; according to the publicity for season two: "Defiant, daring and dangerous. Per-

sistent, vengeful and seductive. Sweet, cruel and fun. And bad. Very, very bad. The most desired character is back". This sense of danger is what makes El Duque attractive; to Jessi, because "he's so hot" there is no need to censure the illegal methods he has used to carve out his position in society, and according to Cata because love will allow her to redeem this "other Duque" and, therefore, she is attracted by the uncertainty and the power of changing the monster into a prince.

In *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* love is linked to destiny, suffering and dependency. Destiny also involves suffering on the part of El Duque's potential partners because a relationship with this man places the characters in situations of physical and emotional risk. The two women who fall in love with the protagonist suffer and both interpret this pain as a sign of true love. In addition, the relationship creates dependency as it becomes the main vehicle for these women's every action. Cata abandons her family, her studies and her friends to try and establish a relationship with El Duque, and Jessi needs him as a springboard from which to launch herself socially and to escape poverty.

This analysis of how sexual and affective relationships are represented in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* shows how far the traditional model continues to be rooted in successful fiction. It would therefore be necessary to construct stories that, from the point of view of complexity, could develop alternative sexual and affective relationships which move away from the traditional archetypes. New, varied and wide-ranging relationship models which help transform our own relationships, which foster equality, respect and the possibility of defining oneself freely and which overcome stereotypes and inequalities that slot into our imagination and therefore affect our everyday lives.

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Harmonisation of the digital dividend in the European Union and its impact on national DTT planning in the United Kingdom and Spain

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Abstract

Decision 2010/267/EU creates a unique digital dividend in the European Union in the 800 MHz frequency band. European harmonisation of this band will have a different impact on the structure and national planning of DTT in European countries. Specifically, this paper analyses the consequences of digital dividend harmonisation in the United Kingdom and Spain. Although both countries have some dependence on the broadcasting network, their television structure and, above all, their strategies and objectives for the implementation of DTT at a national level have given rise to different effects on the legal systems of both countries.

Key words

DTT, harmonisation, digital dividend, United Kingdom, Spain.

Resum

Amb la publicació de la Decisió 2010/267/UE es crea un dividend digital a la Unió Europea, situat a la banda 800 MHz. L'harmonització europea d'aquesta banda de freqüències impactarà de diferent manera sobre l'estructura i la planificació nacional de la TDT als països europeus. En concret, aquest treball analitzarà les conseqüències de l'harmonització del dividend digital al Regne Unit i a Espanya. Malgrat que tots dos països tenen una lleugera dependència de la xarxa de radiodifusió, la seva estructura televisiva i, sobretot, les estratègies i els objectius de la implantació de la TDT a escala nacional han donat lloc a diferents efectes sobre els ordenaments jurídics de tots dos països.

Paraules clau

TDT, harmonització, dividend digital, Regne Unit, Espanya.

1. Introduction

Decision 2010/267/EU establishes the 800 MHz frequency band as a digital dividend in the European Union so that member states will have to allocate this band (which ranges from 790 to 862 MHz) for other services than broadcasting by 2012. This Decision will have significant consequences for the national planning of European countries as many of them will have to reallocate their DTT services to lower frequencies.

Always on the basis of the existence of a high level of national autonomy in defining DTT policies, this article will focus on the impact on the legislation of the United Kingdom and Spain supposed by the European harmonisation of the digital dividend. Various factors have led to this choice. Firstly, both countries constitute, together with Germany, France and Italy, the five large audiovisual markets in Europe and leaders, with Sweden, in the introduction of DTT in Europe. On the other hand, the markets of the United Kingdom and Spain have a structural dependence in terms of the broadcasting network - the terrestrial broadcasting platform is the most extensive among the population - and therefore, in both cases, the digital switchover is a complex and costly process that gives rise to the emergence of the digital dividend.

The purpose of this article is to verify the impact on the national DTT structures of the United Kingdom and Spain of

the European harmonisation of the digital dividend on the 800 MHz frequency band. It should be noted that any reference to the digital dividend necessarily involves digital terrestrial television policies, which condition and often determine the existence of this space. That's why reference will be made to the national digitalisation policies. We are particularly interested in the objectives established, such as the freeing up of spectrum that occurs once the switchover is complete. Although both experiences were based on a prior subscriber model and its subsequent failure led them to encourage open transmissions, the United Kingdom and Spain are based on opposing structures; the former, centralised and the latter, decentralised.¹ Finally, having determined the national strategies to apply this television technology, we will look at the consequences, in the terrain of national regulation, involved in releasing the 800 MHz frequency band and allocating it to services other than broadcasting. It's important to note that we do not propose to compare public policies for the digital switchover but are interested in the impact of the European harmonisation of the digital dividend on the planning and development of DTT in these countries.

2. DTT planning and the digital dividend in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom was one of the first countries in the EU

to introduce digital television in 1998. Applied from an economic and industrial perspective, British DTT policies have been characterised by their level of coordination and planning² and also by adopting an equally coordinated and planned position of freeing up the system³ (García Leiva 2008). From the start, the United Kingdom has seen the release of the spectrum as one of the main political objectives of the national switchover to digital television, as well as the British regulatory authorities being pioneers in Europe and perhaps the first to introduce new ways of managing the spectrum.

2.1 Centralised model oriented towards freeing up the spectrum

Digital television was introduced in the United Kingdom in mid-1995 with the publication of the white paper *Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting: The Government's Proposals*.⁴ The publication of this document affected the development of digital television in the United Kingdom in two aspects; on the one hand, highlighting the lines of action of the regulatory framework which would form the basis for launching DTT; and, on the other, setting the political objectives that had to be achieved by implementing this technology. The United Kingdom's model of DTT is characterised by its desire to release the spectrum and its centralised structure has made it easier to do so, also facilitating the emergence of the digital dividend.

Some of the political objectives contained in the white paper were to extend viewers' choice, to benefit domestic electronic equipment manufacturers, spread interactive services, increase competition between multichannel TV platforms and improve the efficiency of the spectrum via analogue switch-off (Goodwin 2005). Precisely, this last objective related to the spectrum makes Britain a particular case in terms of spectrum strategy as releasing part of the radio spectrum has formed part of the political agenda for DTT in the United Kingdom since the middle of the 1990s. In this way, and ignoring the social, technological and democratic arguments regarding the DTT roll-out in the United Kingdom, the economic justification for this technological change was related to the value of the spectrum that would be freed up after the digital switchover. To some extent, we could claim that the United Kingdom's interest in this question was influenced by the policies implemented in the United

States aimed at promoting auctions to allocate spectrum licences (Levy 1999:108).⁵

From a British point of view, the introduction of DTT was seen as a dual opportunity: to release the radio spectrum and change how such a strategic resource was managed. Meeting spectrum demands was one of the priorities of the British authorities and, in 2003, the plans for the digital TV switchover included the freeing up of 112 MHz, a total of 14 channels distributed on two other bands than the spectrum (see table 2.1). According to the plan, the United Kingdom's digital dividend was made up of 48 MHz located at the top end of UHF, between the frequencies of 806 and 854 MHz (channels 63-68), and another, larger one, 64 MHz, at the lower end of UHF, comprising the frequencies 550-630 MHz (channels 31-35, 37 and 39-40) (Ofcom 2007, 2009).

The emergence of the digital dividend is also seen as an opportunity to introduce changes in how the broadcasting network is managed. In recent years, the regulatory authorities for this network have been reviewing the traditional management mechanisms (based on a command and control model) to implement more dynamic and flexible mechanisms that meet the needs of a sector immersed in change and in constant technological innovation, within a context where spectrum demand is growing quickly and unpredictably. In fact, one of the problems of the traditional command and control model, characterised by a high degree of centralisation and tough administrative control, is related to the fact that spectrum policy might be subordinated to the interests of broadcasting and, according to this model's proposals, broadcasting needs might be met without taking into account the specific availability of this valuable resource (Cave 2006:116).

An example of this tendency can be found in the United Kingdom in 2002 with the "Radio Spectrum Management Review", which opened the door to reforms being introduced in its radio spectrum regulation.⁶ The creation of Ofcom in 2003 was also a regulatory response by the British authorities to technological convergence, as it was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain regulatory regimes based on the application of different rules or procedures for different forms of communication (Smith 2006). As stated by the regulation to set up Ofcom, one of the main political objectives of the new organisation was

Table 2.1. List of channels that make up the United Kingdom's digital dividend

21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69

☐ Channels released

Source: Authors, based on Ofcom, 2007.

to ensure the optimum and efficient use of the radio spectrum in Britain. In this way, what had been announced since the mid-1990s became a reality, adopting specific measures to make the use of the radio spectrum more flexible and enable it to be sold off. The introduction of DTT in the United Kingdom has been marked by greater pressure on the uses of the radio spectrum, helping a more flexible and open regulatory framework to be introduced.

Another characteristic of the digital TV model in the United Kingdom is related to its centrality. Regarding this, we must refer to the enactment of the 1996 Broadcasting Act, a direct consequence of the publication of the 1995 white paper, which established 6 national multiplexes, 3 of which were allocated to the ONdigital subscriber channel.⁷ At the beginning, as happened in Spain, the British government relied on private business to promote the new TV technology but, given the failure of this model, it had to rectify the situation, being forced to introduce an open model and allocating the multiplexes previously given to ONdigital to the Freeview⁸ platform. Nevertheless, what we should note here is not the failure of the subscriber model but the number of multiplexes authorised. Although the British authorities favoured a structured dominated by the expansion of digital channels generating more supply (rather than higher quality in terms of image and sound, such as high definition television or innovation, by encouraging the introduction of interactive services), DTT planning in the United Kingdom has 6 multiplexes, all with national coverage. The lack of regional or local channels is a consequence of the centralist structure that characterises this country's broadcasting networks and gives rise to a much lower occupation of the spectrum. A larger digital dividend is therefore more likely to result.

In summary, the releasing of the spectrum or, in other words, the emergence of the digital dividend has been, from the start, one of the key points in the national development of DTT (García Leiva 2009). That's why the United Kingdom's digitalisation policies have been implemented while taking this objective into serious consideration, aimed at freeing up the spectrum. As we will see, harmonising the 800 MHz frequency band does not suppose further planning problems for this country.⁹

2.2 The impact of harmonising the 800 MHz frequency band on the United Kingdom

Decision 2010/267/EU on the harmonisation and releasing of the 800 MHz frequency band in the EU has been received in the United Kingdom with the firm defence of its national interests, even more so if we take into account the fact that, internally, this country had already incorporated measures such as those provided for in this European regulation.¹⁰ In this respect, we should mention that, during the World Radio-communication Conference in 2007 (WRC-07), the British government undertook to release the same frequency band for communication services other than television. We will now look at

the impact of European harmonisation of the 800 MHz frequency band on the national planning of DTT in the UK.

Firstly, we must point out that this country has been a pioneer in Europe in adopting new ways of managing the radio spectrum, as can be seen in the publication of the 2006 Wireless Telegraphy Act which introduces a more flexible and market-oriented approach to the British structuring of spectrum regulation. Ofcom took a similar stance, defending a market-oriented approach for the digital dividend that ensures users have enough flexibility to decide how to use it (Ofcom 2007).

The digital dividend planned in the United Kingdom comprises the 600 MHz frequency band, between 550 and 606 MHz (channels 31-37), and the 800 MHz frequency band, between 790 and 862 MHz (channels 61 and 62), harmonised by the EU. In accordance with this, European harmonisation of the digital dividend will mean that two digital multiplexes allocated to providing DTT services will have to be reallocated (channels 61 and 62). After a consultation stage held in 2009, Ofcom decided to transfer the digital multiplexes of channels 61 and 62 to channels 39 and 40, belonging to the digital dividend located at the lower end of UHF. Channel 38 will be allocated to PMSE services,¹¹ as had been planned (Ofcom 2009).

The appearance of the digital dividend in the United Kingdom is the result of the coordinated, strategic planning of public digital TV policies. In this way, future European harmonisation of the 800 MHz sub-frequency band will not cause too many problems for the British authorities and the reticence they have shown towards Decision 2010/267/EU to guide European countries to free up the 800 MHz frequency band for services other than broadcasting by 2012 is basically in defence of their national interests.

3. DTT planning and the digital dividend in Spain

One of the characteristics of the DTT switchover in Spain is the lack of in-depth public debate on this issue, as demonstrated by the large number of rules the Spanish authorities have pub-

Table 2.2. List of EU harmonised frequencies and current United Kingdom occupation

Channel	Frequencies	National plan
61	790-798 MHz	DTT Multiplex
62	798-806 MHz	DTT Multiplex
63	806-814 MHz	Digital dividend of the upper section of UHF planned by Ofcom
64	814-822 MHz	
65	822-830 MHz	
66	830-838 MHz	
67	838-846 MHz	
68	846-854 MHz	
69	854-862 MHz	PMSE Programme Making and Special Events

Source: Author, based on Ofcom, 2009.

lished to tackle the development of this TV technology.¹² Another of the particularities of the DTT model in Spain is related to its dimension at a state, autonomous community and local level. This strongly decentralised structure meant that the authorities had to prioritise the number of channels above their quality and innovation.¹³ The decentralisation of the Spanish broadcasting network has meant that room has had to be made on the radio spectrum for operators from different territories to the extent that, in Spain, the digital dividend was not expected to come about until mid-2009.

3.1 Decentralised model aimed at providing broadcasting services

Spain's DTT policy has been characterised by little planning and great legislative fragmentation, making the process somewhat uncertain. Two aspects have dominated DTT policy in this country right from the start: on the one hand, the decentralisation of the broadcasting network and the lack of a plan to release a part of the spectrum once the switchover is complete; and on the other hand, the almost total occupation of the UHF band for broadcasting services, which has been the dominant tone in Spain. Its authorities have not considered the possibility of freeing up of the spectrum nor the consequent opening up to communications services other than broadcasting. The EU will have to act as a guide for the Spanish authorities in this direction.

At the end of the 1990s, with the approval of Royal Decree 2169/1998, the National Technical Plan for Digital Terrestrial Television (PTNTDT) was published and Spain headed the list of European countries in the development and implementation of digital terrestrial television. As stated in the PTNTDT, the digital terrestrial television service would be operated in Spain on the frequency bands between 470 and 862 MHz and would be developed between spectrum channels 21 to 56 without there being any planned release of any channel. The whole radio spectrum in Spain was therefore occupied by channels with state, regional or local coverage to the extent that there was no room for services other than broadcasting. In fact, we should note that the PTNTDT not only did not include the releasing of frequencies for other uses but actually widened the availability of the spectrum for broadcasting services.

The PTNTDT subdivided the operation of frequency bands into three different bands aimed at broadcasting services of a different level. In this respect we need to distinguish between two kinds of network: Single Frequency Networks (SFN), which allow a zone of a territory to be covered (a service zone) by using the same frequency or spectrum channel on all stations without the possibility of locally different content. Another type of network is the Multifrequency Network (MFN), through which a service zone is covered using a different frequency or spectrum channel for each station. On this kind of network, locally different content can be produced and the decentralised structure of Spain's TV system meant that this kind of network was the most suitable to promote pluralism.¹⁴

The first band is between 470 and 758 MHz and supplies spectrum channels 21 to 56. These networks would be dedicated to establishing multifrequency and single frequency networks for local coverage. The second frequency band would range from 758 to 830 MHz, made up of channels 57 to 65, used mainly for single frequency networks covering autonomous communities, provinces and local services. Finally, the last band into which the spectrum is divided would range from 830 to 862 MHz, whose channels were 66 to 69, planned for establishing single frequency networks at a state level.

At first, the subscriber model dominated DTT in Spain and, consequently, at the beginning of 1999 a tender was held for licences to use national SFN multiplexes from channel 66 to 69 as subscriber television. Quiero TV won the tender. As happened in the United Kingdom, the subscriber model did not work for terrestrial TV and, in 2002, after the failure of Quiero TV, the Spanish authorities reassigned the channels occupied by this subscriber platform. With the change in government, Royal Decree 944/2005 was published, approving a new National Technical Plan for DTT that left the spectrum planning of 1998 intact, without considering other uses than broadcasting and without reference to the possible releasing of space on the radio spectrum.¹⁵

Apart from the little or non-existent presence of the digital dividend on the Spanish DTT agenda, decentralisation was another dominant characteristic in the process as, right from the start, the plan was for the digital terrestrial television platform to be operated at a state, regional and local level.¹⁶ This three-dimensional focus of DTT meant that, to a certain extent, this country's authorities ignored the possibility of freeing up space on the radio spectrum and the demands for spectrum space from autonomous communities and local corporations had to be met, due to the network's decentralisation. The tradition of local and regional television in Spain meant that DTT development took into account these areas of broadcasting. Nonetheless, although the 1998 PTNTDT planned digital television at a local, regional and state level, it did so with little precision when defining the implementation in these areas and was not enough to develop regional and local digital broadcasting.¹⁷

Taula 3.1. Distribució de freqüències de TDT segons el Pla nacional de TDT de 1998

Band	Frequencies	Channels	Use
I	470-758 MHz	21-56	Local MFN and SFN
II	758-839 MHz	57-65	Regional, provincial and local SFN
III	830-862 MHz	66-69	State SFN

Font: Elaboració pròpia a partir del Reial decret 2169/1998.

The existence of a complex DTT map in Spain, hugely decentralised and with various administrations involved in carrying out the process, has made it difficult to release the spectrum. Once the many different demands on the broadcasting network had been met, made by various actors (local, regional, public, private, etc.) to provide broadcasting services, the Spanish government found it difficult to free up part of this resource for other wireless electronic communications services.

3.2 The impact of harmonising the 800 MHz frequency band on Spain

DTT planning in Spain – the 1998 and 2008 PTNTDT – has been characterised by the total planning of frequencies between 470 and 862 MHz for providing broadcasting services and has given rise to almost total occupation of the spectrum without it being possible to release any portion. In principle, this situation means that there is almost no possibility for the emergence of the digital dividend to improve the coverage, capacity and speed of mobile broadband networks. This situation led the Spanish government to acknowledge that it was unlikely to comply with the European trend of opening up the digital dividend to electronic communication services.

Nevertheless, the European trend towards releasing the 800 MHz frequency band for all kinds of services and the report by the Telecommunications Market Commission (CMT)¹⁸ led to a commitment by the Spanish government to release the 800 MHz frequency band for all kinds of communications by 2015. Specifically, the recently approved State Act 2/2011, on the sustainable economy states that “the 790-862 MHz frequency band is principally aimed at providing advanced electronic communications services in line with the harmonised uses agreed by the European Union. This band must remain available to be assigned to its new uses by 1 January 2015” (article 51).

To this end, in mid-2010 Royal Decree 365/2010 was published, governing the assignment of DTT multiples after analogue terrestrial TV broadcasting ends.¹⁹ Always based on the legal framework established by the DTT National Technical Plan, approved by Royal Decree 944/2005, this legislation aims to regulate the assignment of DTT multiples once analogue terrestrial TV broadcasting ends, without having to assign additional capacity in providing DTT services or granting new digital channels or multiples. With the aim of the 790 to 862 MHz frequency sub-band being released by 1 January 2015, Royal Decree 365/2010 plans two phases of action.

The first phase allows DTT services to be operated on all frequency bands, even on those between 790 and 862 MHz. In turn, this first phase has two stages: in the first, DTT services can be operated on channels 66 to 69 (both inclusive) at the same time as including the planning of 3 more multiples based on analogue channels operated by the private companies Antena 3 Televisión, Gestevisión Telecinco and Sogecable. In this first stage, private operators and the Corporación RTVE must achieve 90% coverage of the population with the new

multiples planned. At the beginning of March 2011, the second stage of the first phase started, during which channel 66 is gradually left free and the number of operators is extended to the rest of the channels (67, 68 and 69), so that operational capacity is shared between those with DTT service licences (see table 3.2). During this stage private operators and Corporación RTVE must achieve 96% coverage with the planned multiples.

After three months the second phase starts, during which three new digital multiples are planned with state coverage to replace radio spectrum channels 67, 68 and 69; these new multiples will constitute single frequency networks (SFN) and the frequencies between 790 and 862 MHz will not be included in any case. Within nine months of the assignment of the new channels in the frequency range of 470 to 790 MHz (radio spectrum channels 21 to 60), operators have to achieve at least 96% coverage of the area planned. It's important to note that Decree 365/2010 provides for a period of simultaneous broadcasting until the degree of aerial conversion for the new digital multiples planned in phase two is similar to those planned in phase one (article 4.3). At that point, the companies authorised to provide DTT services will stop broadcasting on and sharing channels 67, 68 and 69 and will only broadcast on a newly planned digital multiplex, assigned to each of these companies.

Regarding the costs resulting from the new broadcasting network planning, the second paragraph of article 51 of State Act 2/2011, on the sustainable economy, states that “the costs resulting from the reorganisation of the radio spectrum that is necessary to carry out to free up the frequency band of 790 to 862MHz must be met by the Administration with the revenue obtained from the public tenders held to assign the radio spectrum”. The introduction *in extremis* –once the transition period has ended– of the digital dividend in Spain will have significant consequences entailing the reorganisation of the UHF band, as the frequencies affected by European harmonisation, namely 790-862 MHz (channels 61 to 69) were assigned to broadcasters with state and regional coverage, both public and private.

4. Conclusions

European harmonisation of the digital dividend on the 800 MHz frequency band will have differing effects on the internal legislation of the United Kingdom and Spain. On the one hand, in Britain, harmonisation of the 800 MHz frequency band will entail minimal cost because the British authorities had already planned to release a greater amount of the radio spectrum than the amount harmonised via Decision 2010/267/EU. The establishment of the European digital dividend on the 800 MHz frequency band will force the British authorities to extend it to the high part of UHF, initially planned on 48 MHz, and the two multiplex channels planned for channels 61 and 62 will have to be moved to the low digital dividend band, specifically channels 39 and 40 (Ofcom 2009).²¹ In spite of the small adjust-

Table 3.2. List of frequencies harmonised by Decision 2010/267/EU and occupation in Spain according to Royal Decree 365/2010

Channel	Frequencies	Occupation
61	790-798 MHz	Autonomous community multiplex
62	798-806 MHz	Autonomous community multiplex
63	806-814 MHz	Autonomous community multiplex
64	814-822 MHz	Autonomous community multiplex
65	822-830 MHz	Autonomous community multiplex
66	830-838 MHz	Channel released as from March 2011 ¹
67	838-846 MHz	
68	846-854 MHz	
69	854-862 MHz	

Source: Author, based on Royal Decree 363/2010 and data from SETSI.

ments to the planning of the digital dividend in the United Kingdom, the reservations expressed by the British authorities regarding this issue are related to questions of national sovereignty rather than technical or programming difficulties.

In the case of Spain, complying with Decision 2010/267/EU is more complex technically and more expensive. We have shown that the Spanish authorities had not planned to release frequencies after the digital switchover, so that the harmonisation of the 800 MHz frequency band has forced them to modify DTT regulation and planning a few days before analogue broadcasting ended. Specifically, as contained in the Spanish DTT planning before the approval of Royal Decree 365/2010, the harmonised channels 61-69 were occupied by state and regional broadcasters. In this way, complying with European and international obligations, the Spanish authorities will have to carry out a significant reform of the legislation that will include, among other aspects, the modification of the PTNTDT and the relocation of broadcasters operating between the frequencies of 790 and 862 MHz, affected by European harmonisation. The operators in question will have to be reassigned to lower frequencies between 490 and 790 MHz, as established by Royal Decree 365/2010, governing the assignment of digital terrestrial television multiples after analogue terrestrial broadcasts have ended.

In short, harmonisation of the 800 MHz frequency band, establishing the digital dividend in Europe, will mean that the digital switchover in Spain will have a much higher economic and social cost than in the United Kingdom, which had already planned for the emergence of the digital dividend. A space whose 790-862 MHz frequency band was harmonised by the EU in mid-2010 for electronic communications services other than broadcasting, as provided for in Decision 2010/267/EU.

Notes

- 1 Over time, both models have gone back to including subscriber content on the DTT platform.
- 2 A good example of this is that the 30 December 2012 has always been maintained as the date that analogue TV would be switched off throughout the country, unlike in Spain, which has changed the date of the analogue switch-off on several occasions.
- 3 The experience of the British digital switchover has been extensively studied by Collins (2002); Galperin (2004); Goodwin (2005) and a comparative analysis of the public digital TV policies in the United Kingdom and Spain by García Leiva (2008).
- 4 This white paper led to the publication of the 1996 Broadcasting Act, which establishes 6 national multiplexes, 3 of which were assigned to the subscriber platform ONdigital.
- 5 In 1996, the government published a white paper on the management of the broadcasting spectrum that pre-established certain lines of action to prevent spectrum congestion and guarantee it was used efficiently.
- 6 The report "Radio Spectrum Management Review", by Professor Martin Cave for the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom.
- 7 The remaining three open multiplexes were assigned as follows: one to the BBC, another shared between Channel 3 from ITV and Channel 4 and the third also shared between Channel 5 and S4C in Welsh. Each multiplex had 8 MHz.
- 8 Free multichannel platform for digital terrestrial television promoted by the BBC in which BSkyB and Crown and Castle took part. The DTT model in the United Kingdom is currently characterised by offering predominantly free content, led by public and private agents.
- 9 The United Kingdom plans to free up 112 MHz once the switchover is complete. In total, Ofcom calculates that 128 MHz

will be released on UHF, 8 MHz of which will come from suppressing aeronautical radar, 8 MHz more from astronomy and the rest, 112 MHz, from analogue broadcasting.

- 10 It should be noted that the British authorities have been against the EU fixing a deadline for member states opening up the 800 MHz frequency band to other communications.
- 11 Reserving channel 69 for PMSE means using it for wide-reaching TV broadcasts, such as the Olympic Games, world championships, etc.
- 12 Additional provision 44a of State Act 66/1997, of 30 December, on fiscal, administrative and social order measures. It should be noted that DTT was introduced in Spain by an accompanying act without any greater democratic discussion in the parliament (Suárez 2009: 394-395 and García Leiva 2008: 211).
- 13 Nevertheless, the PTNTDT establishes the possibility to develop mobile services and high definition.
- 14 The European Commission wants to promote SFNs rather than MFNs (European Commission, 2009).
- 15 The 2005 PTNTDT advanced the data for 98% digital coverage (public broadcasters) and 95% coverage (private broadcasters) of the population to 3 April 2010.
- 16 According to Royal Decree 2169/1998, of 9 October, approving the National Technical Plan for Digital Terrestrial Television, and Royal Decree 944/2005, of 29 July, approving the National Technical Plan for Digital Terrestrial Television.
- 17 It was not until 2004, six years after the publication of the PTNTDT, that the National Technical Plan for Local Digital Television was approved, which provided more details regarding coverage and the geographical division of digital television, although that same year it was amended with the arrival in power of the Socialist Party, with some geographical scopes changing.
- 18 The CMT's report to the First Vice-President of the government and the Ministry of the Presidency on the Draft Bill on the financing of the Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española (RO 2009/747) states that the assignment of part of the digital dividend to electronic communications services, along the same lines as has occurred in France, Sweden and the United Kingdom and Finland, would benefit citizens as a whole, promoting access to services of the information society and narrowing the digital divide. It would also promote competition, innovation and, in short, economic growth and the wellbeing of society.
- 19 Revised in 2011 by Royal Decree 169/2011, of 11 February, amending Royal Decree 365/2010, of 26 March, governing the assignment of digital terrestrial television multiples after analogue terrestrial television broadcasts have ended, and Royal Decree 691/2010, of 20 May, governing digital terrestrial television in high definition. Royal Decree 365/2010 provides for the temporary use of the digital multiple associated with channel 66 in order to avoid loss of coverage.
- 21 See tables 2.1 and 2.2.

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Interest groups and social movements on TV3 news

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Abstract

Interest groups and social movements are important actors within the public sphere and public debate. Public television is committed to the values of pluralism and diversity of information, both essential for the proper functioning of democracy. This paper is aimed at contributing to the understanding of the production processes of news related to interest groups and social movements in TV3's Telenotícies. By means of a content analysis of 227 news items and in-depth interviews with both news professionals and the communication managers of some of the aforementioned groups, it was possible to conclude that the possibility for these actors' voices to be heard is quite unequal. Groups and smaller communities can hardly make their voice heard within the public sphere.

Key words

Interest groups, social movements, news coverage, pluralism, public opinion.

Resum

Els grups d'interès i els moviments socials són actors importants en l'esfera i en el debat públics. La televisió pública està compromesa amb els valors de pluralisme i de diversitat de la informació, fonamentals per al bon funcionament de la democràcia. Aquesta aportació intenta contribuir a comprendre els processos de producció de les notícies relacionades amb els grups d'interès i els moviments socials en els Telenotícies de TV3. Mitjançant una anàlisi del contingut de 227 peces informatives i entrevistes en profunditat als professionals de la informació i als responsables de comunicació d'alguns grups, es conclou que la capacitat d'aquests actors per fer-se sentir és molt desigual. Els grups i els col·lectius més petits difícilment poden articular la seva veu en l'esfera pública.

Paraules clau

Grups d'interès, moviments socials, cobertura de les notícies, pluralisme, opinió pública.

Introduction

Plurality and diversity of information are among the essential elements for the proper functioning of democracy. Television plays a central role in the representation of the public sphere. The visibility or invisibility that it grants to some events, and the way and time when they are presented, can determine the content of public opinion. The role of television, and of the media in general, in a democracy consists of giving the necessary information and elements of interpretation of reality so that the public can actively participate in the democratic process (Curran 2005; Gardam, Levy 2008; Trappel, Maniglio 2009).

Interest groups try to influence public institutions and policies in favour of their particular objectives (Molins 1998; Jordana 2004). Social movements, by contrast, usually set themselves general objectives and try to involve society as a whole, be it in the short or long term (Ibarra and Letamendia 2004). In both cases, their public visibility is important for their activity to be recognised and for them to take part in public debate. The media generally provide the space where the ideas, proposals and interests of political and non-political actors meet,

so presence in the news constitutes an important objective for them all (Jerez 2008; Ibarra 2005).

The communicative strategies of interest groups and social movements appeal to citizens and try to publicise their objectives. They attempt to exert more pressure from the public sphere on the political powers to influence the decision-making process, be it in specific issues or at critical times of protest by social groups. However, the newsworthiness of their actions, especially that of groups and movements with fewer resources, is very far from that of the recognised political actors.

Interest groups and social movements relate to a wide range of organisations and social groups with very different abilities in terms of financial resources, organisation and strategies. There is a wide variety of possibilities among unions, organisations, associations, charities and citizens' groups. On the one hand, there are groups with a lot of organisational, financial and political resources, which are usually fully integrated into decision-making processes and consequently have highly defined political tactics. On the other, there are social groups and movements that are practically outside these processes.

Parallel to this, the communicative strategies of these groups

also reflect their financial and organisational capacity. The more resources they have, the more possibilities of drawing up communication strategies to influence the media and society through specialist communication offices.

Presidents, governments, political parties and interest groups of the economic and political elites are usually sources of information for their role when defining the news (Bennet and Entman 2001; Schudson 2002; Gans 2003, 2004; Cook 2005). Their communication and public relations resources help to create events that are inserted as newsworthy events into the media. Their communication techniques are increasingly more efficient and influence the television agenda. Those groups with few organisational and communication resources, such as small NGOs, associations, minority unions, etc., have fewer opportunities to enter the media public sphere.

It is also rare for social movements to be in the television news, despite their being a form of collective expression of civil society in the social, political and cultural spheres (Wall 2003). For social movements, the "media issue", as it is called by P. Ibarra and E. Grau (2003), is important and affects the forms of protest on the street. From their point of view, anyone who does not appear in the media does not influence the political powers, to the point where some social movements try to offset their inability to channel collective protest in the street with press conferences and initiatives aimed at attracting media attention.

Communication researchers to date have tended very little towards studying the news coverage of interest groups and social movements. The results of the research conducted even highlight the fact that the news pays little attention to interest groups with scant resources (Thrall 2006) and to social movements (Gitlin 1980; Gamson 1992; Klandermans 1997; Neveu 2002; Rucht 2004). The main reasons are usually the difficulty in the news tackling new subjects and approaches beyond routine matters. Journalists normally resort to sources from the most established institutions (Sampedro 2000). With regard to this issue, we could mention the contributions by Rodas (2006) on the visibility of social actors in television news, and of Montero, Zeller and García Blanco (2008) on the newsworthiness of the alter-globalisation movement in the benchmark international press.

In general terms, there are three important aspects that should be taken into account when producing the news: the criteria of newsworthiness, information sources and objectivity. Newsworthiness refers to the up-to-date aspects, the newness, the significance, the importance of the events, the impact of the images, accessibility, etc. The information sources, meanwhile, have to be credible and reliable. Objectivity seeks to construct a story in which all sides or points of view are represented in a news item.

All these aspects form part of journalism as an activity. Despite this, the journalism profession is carried out within social contexts marked by different political conceptions, party systems and political cultures (Hallin and Mancini 2008). We

can speak, therefore, of diverse journalistic cultures that share some elements and that are different in others. So, for example, some of the shared elements that lead to the similarity of news would be the fact that the information has just been released, the uncertainty about what is important and what is not, and the limitation of external interferences (Cook 2006). The differentiating traits would arise from the type of medium (television, newspapers, etc.), whether it is public or private, if it is partisan or not, the type of audience, etc.

The aim of this article is to analyse the coverage of interest groups and social movements on the TV3 news, considering that public television is committed to the values of pluralism and diversity in the content of information and in the sources.¹ This means, first of all, analysing the content of the news on these actors. Secondly, describing the newsworthiness criteria applied in news coverage related to interest groups and social movements. And thirdly, analysing the interaction guidelines between these groups and movements and the media.

TV3 is a Televisió de Catalunya channel that has an extensive range of news programmes. TV3's news programmes, *Telenotícies migdia* (midday), *Telenotícies vespre* (evening) and *Telenotícies cap de setmana* (weekend), are the channel's daily news programmes and one of the benchmarks in Catalan society for finding out what is happening in Catalonia and the world.

Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives defined above, we applied a methodology that combined content analysis of the news items with semi-structured in-depth interviews of professionals in the news services of Televisió de Catalunya and in institutional communication with the interest groups analysed.

In the first instance, the content of the news items on *Telenotícies*, in which the leading actors were interest groups and social movements, were analysed. Then, in the second instance, news and institutional communication professionals were interviewed. The aim of these interviews was to take an in-depth look at the definition of newsworthiness criteria from the point of view of the professionals involved, in different positions, in the news production process.

The study universe included news items from *Telenotícies migdia*, *Telenotícies vespre*, *Telenotícies migdia cap de setmana* and *Telenotícies vespre cap de setmana* featuring interest groups and social movements over six months, between September 2009 and February 2010. When defining interest groups and social movements, we took into account the definition made by Clive S. Thomas (2009):² "Any association of individuals or organisations, usually formally organised, that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy in its favour. All interest groups share a desire to affect government policy to benefit themselves or their cause."

Based on his proposed classification (five broad categories of

interest group: economic interests, cause groups, public interests, private and public institutional interests, and non-associational groups), when analysing the content, we considered the types of actors specified as follows (see Table 1):

1) News content analysis

On the basis of the study universe, the criterion for selecting the sample was to ensure the representativeness of the news items in different news contexts. In other words, the treatment given to interest groups and social movements in the coverage of specific actions and in the major news subjects was taken into consideration. For this reason the sample was selected at random: one week in each of the months that were in the study universe, between September 2009 and February 2010, chosen at random through repetition of equiprobable stochastic events for each month.

The content analysis unit was the news item. *News item* is taken to be the product that tells of an event in a unique context and is developed around actors and actions that share a same logic throughout the story.

Based on these criteria, the total number of news programmes that were part of the sample was 83. In total, the resulting number of items was 227, which were distributed by month and *Telenotícies* as follows (see Table 2):

Each of the items that form part of the content analysis sam-

ple was treated on the basis of a card with variables relating to the “formal aspects of the information”, the “principal and secondary actors”, the “type of action” and the “information topics”. The treatment of the data obtained from analysing the content of the 227 sample items was carried out using Excel, with dynamic tables.

2) Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with professionals from Televisió de Catalunya and the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals

A total of nine journalists and professionals from TV3 and the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA) were interviewed, all of whom had extensive experience in journalism.

The research technique used was the semi-structured, in-depth interview. Based on a prepared script, the interviewee was asked open questions so that the professional criteria and work routines of journalism emerged during the conversation. The interview script tackled the following aspects: information sources, opinion of interest groups and social movements as information sources, an assessment of these sources in relation to other political actors, the values of the information, newsworthiness criteria and plurality of content, formats, the image the journalist has of the audience, and the opposite, the journalist's opinion regarding his or her image of what the audience feels about the profession and news in general.

Table 1. Types of actors

Economic and business groups	Foment del Treball Nacional, Confederació Espanyola d'Organitzacions Empresarials, Chamber of Commerce, Gremi d'Empresaris de Cine, etc.
Economic working groups	Comissions Obreres, Unió General de Treballadors, Confederació General del Treball, etc.
Economic groups of farmers and breeders	Unió de Pagesos, etc.
Professional groups	Professional associations
Groups defending the general public interest	Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières, Intermón Oxfam, Caritas, Amnesty International, Save The Children, etc.
Public or private institutional groups	Universities, media, etc.
Think tanks	Fundació Catalunya i Territori, Fundació Rafael Campalans, Fundació Trias Fargas
Cause groups	Catholic church, etc.
Political associations and citizens' platforms	Amical de Mauthausen and other camps of all Nazi victims in Spain, Associació Defensa Drets Animal, Associació Plataforma per la Llengua, parents and teachers associations, residents' associations, FEDELATINA, etc.
Social groups and activists	Activists in defence of alter-globalisation, groups of immigrants, workers, students, residents, etc.

Source: Author.

Table 2. Distribution of news items in the sample for analysis

Broadcast / News items	2009				2010		Total
	September	October	November	December	January	February	
<i>TN migdia</i>	18	11	26	26	9	9	99
<i>TN vespre</i>	12	14	14	16	9	14	79
<i>TN migdia cap de setmana</i>	1	3	5	7	4	4	24
<i>TN vespre cap de setmana</i>	4	7	5	5	1	3	25
Total/months	35	35	50	54	23	30	227

Source: Author.

3) Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with institutional communication professionals from the interest groups

The selection of the interest groups in order to interview some of the members was made following criteria of representativeness based on the results of the content analysis. Despite this, we did not get the same response from all the groups.

The communication managers of the larger groups agreed to being interviewed, whereas some members of the smaller groups declined to be interviewed, as is the case of activists of the recent student mobilisations and the alter-globalisation movement. The main difficulty in interviewing members of the smaller groups and social movement activists was that these groups did not have defined spokespersons or stable organisational structures, and the activists did not regard themselves as representative of the group or of the movement as a whole. Consequently, for this reason, the results of this study do not include the viewpoint of any member of organisations that form part of these movements.

Members of the following organisations were interviewed: Foment del Treball Nacional, Comissions Obreres (CCOO), Unió General de Treballadors (UGT), Confederació General del Treball (CGT), Unió de Pagesos, Médecins Sans Frontières, Intermón Oxfam, Amnesty International, Federació Catalana d'ONG per al Desenvolupament, Federació d'Entitats Llatinoamericanes de Catalunya (Fedelatina).

The semi-structured, in-depth interview was also used in this case with the aim that, during the course of the conversation, the professional criteria on the creation and organisation of events, the newsworthiness and the assessment of the image of their institution on *Telenotícies* and the general assessment of the *Telenotícies* news programme as a whole would emerge. The interview script was based on the following aspects: the opinion about interest groups and social movements as information sources, the assessment of these sources in relation to other political actors, newsworthiness criteria from the point of view of the interest groups, the assessment of *Telenotícies*, the assessment of the portrayal of their organisation in the news and aspects for future improvement.

News about interest groups and social movements

The results of the content analysis found that, on *TN migdia*, the time devoted to news items on interest groups and social movements varied between 7% and 11% of the length of *TN migdia*, excluding the time spent on sports. This percentage rose considerably in November (18.84%) and December (23.26%). In these two months, the news about the recession, the editorial of twelve Catalan newspapers in favour of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy and the referendums on independence among the leading actors, of which there were unions, social groups, citizens' platforms, etc., focused almost all the attention. On *TN vespre*, the time varied between 8% and 9.5% in relation to the total broadcast time of this *Telenotícies* (excluding the time spent on sports). Also in this case, November (15.11%), December (17.58%) and February (15.53%) saw a significant increase in information. By contrast, *TN migdia cap de setmana* and *TN vespre cap de setmana* did not have any regularity in their treatment and their figures were highly disparate, between 3.00% and 16.12% over the period.

The news items in which interest groups and social movements were presented as actors of the information, between 20% and 25% of the sample units, appeared highlighted in the opening summary on all the *Telenotícies*. This news referred to national, Spanish or international, government actors, the two main unions, social groups (of immigrants, alter-globalisation activists, political mobilisations and citizens' platforms), international NGOs (Amnesty International, Caritas), the Catholic Church and universities.

With regard to the format, the items were usually (with a higher percentage than 60%) news narrated from the studio by the newsreader, with voice-over and broadcast of videos from Spanish or international news agencies, and this was also the case on all the news programmes.

On *TN migdia* and *TN vespre*, the items were characterised by a greater presence of political actors, which means that the newsworthiness of the interest groups and social movements was directly related to the political institutions, be they governments or other departments of the Administration.

It was considered appropriate to distinguish between two types of actor in the news item; “principal” actors and “secondary” actors. On the one hand, the “principal” actors were the protagonists of the news, the ones who bore the initiative of the events. Some items were focused exclusively on the action of a single actor but, in other cases, the action carried out by the principal actor was addressed at, associated with or opposed to the action of other actors, whom we call “secondary actors”.

See Table 3, where the “principal actors” of the news items are specified, expressed in percentages.

Normally, this type of item, in which governments and Administration were the leading figures of the news, usually referred to events relating to business organisations and the main unions.

By contrast, the emphasis on *TN migdia* and *TN vespre cap de setmana* was especially on political associations, citizens’ platforms and groups defending the general public interest (NGOs). The absence of government and Administration actors was possibly due to the flow of news itself, which drops off at the weekend and, in its place, softer news items devoted to other social aspects are broadcast. In other words, news that emphasises human interest aspects, focusing the news on anecdotes and covering the more festive aspects of events.

With regard to secondary actors, government and Administration actors stood out on *TN migdia*, *TN vespre* and *TN migdia cap de setmana* (55%, 43.04% and 70.83% of the total items in each *Telenotícies*, respectively). By contrast, on *TN vespre cap de setmana*, the secondary actors were primarily social groups (32%) and political associations (28%).

The variable on the “relationship between principal and secondary actor” included the categories of “collaboration”, “dispute”, “none” and “others”. In the sample as a whole, over half the news items relating to interest groups and social move-

ments made reference to disputes. These disputes were presented, in one-third of the cases, in statements by the protagonists (obviously, in the case of leaders and groups with more resources) and, in another third, through an extensive repertoire of mobilisation strategies (demonstrations, rallies, hunger strikes, performances, etc.).

The geographical location was predominantly Barcelona and Catalonia (45.5%). Madrid and the rest of Spain accounted for 25.9%; Europe and the United States for 11.45%, while the remaining countries, some 13.20%, were on different continents. These results highlight that the location of the news is an important criterion in the selection of news, and that relevance depends on its place of origin.

In all the *Telenotícies*, the most notable “news topics” included the recession, labour disputes (as a further expression of the above) and those relating to national or international politics.

The topic of the recession held first place on all the *TN migdia* (20.20%), *TN vespre* (18.99%) and *TN migdia cap de setmana* (25%). Throughout the period of study, the news focused, in September, on the proposed budget for 2010 of the Spanish government. In November, on the reactions of the unions to the crisis, with the call for demonstrations in Barcelona and Madrid. Finally, in December, the regional summit on the economy was held in Madrid.

Over all the weeks of the sample, *TN migdia* and *TN vespre* featured labour disputes (lay-offs, management and union negotiations, demonstrations, rallies, etc.), which were the second news topic (13.13% and 11.39%, respectively). Despite this, we should point out that, unlike the treatment given to government actors and social agents, this news was usually very short and rather standardised, both in the narration and in the pictures.

The “politics in general” category includes highly diverse aspects relating to international politics, such as the UN

Table 3. Principal actors of the news items according to *Telenotícies* (in %)

<i>Telenotícies</i> / Principal actors	<i>TN migdia</i> (Weekday lunchtime)	<i>TN vespre</i> (Weekday evening)	<i>TN migdia cap de setmana</i> (Weekend lunchtime)	<i>TN vespre cap de setmana</i> (Weekend evening)
Governments/Administration	22.22	20.25	12.50	8.00
Economic and business groups	7.07	7.59	12.50	-
Working groups	9.09	13.92	8.33	4.00
Economic groups of farmers and breeders	2.02	2.53	12.50	4.00
Professional groups	2.02	3.80	-	-
Groups defending the general public interest	11.11	10.13	16.67	8.00
Public or private institutional groups	5.05	5.07	-	-
Think tanks	1.01	-	-	-
Cause groups	3.03	5.07	-	12.00
Political associations / citizens’ platforms	9.09	8.86	20.83	32.00
Social groups / activists	22.22	21.52	16.67	32.00
Others	6.06	1.27	-	-

Source: Author.

Assembly, Honduras after the coup d'état by Roberto Micheletti and developments in the hunger strike by activist Aminatu Haidar. All these topics had a significant presence in all the *Telenotícies*: *TN migdia* (12.12%), *TN vespre* (8.86%), *TN migdia cap de setmana* (16.67%) and *TN vespre cap de setmana* (20.00%).

Of note among the other topics was the editorial of 12 Catalan newspapers "The Dignity of Catalonia" (2.53% and 4.17% on *TN vespre* and *TN migdia cap de setmana*, respectively) and referendums on Catalan independence (5.05% and 4.17% on *TN migdia* and *TN migdia cap de setmana*, respectively).

The interrelation of the variables described above, "principal actors", "type of action" of the principal actor and "news topics", shows the predominant focus on interest groups. In other words, the relationship with the other actors, the action carried out and the news topic that appears most frequently in the news items.

Consequently, the presence of business organisations was diverse; they appeared as principal actors (7.07%, 7.59% and 12.50% on *TN migdia*, *TN vespre* and *TN migdia cap de setmana*, respectively) and their voices were plural. With regard to the main unions, CCOO and UGT (6.06%, 3.80% and 8.33% on *TN migdia*, *TN vespre* and *TN migdia cap de setmana*, respectively) appeared as part of the news referring to the social dialogue between the government and social agents. Minor and radical unions barely appeared in the news.

News items on NGOs were not very numerous (11.11%, 10.13% and 16.67% on *TN migdia*, *TN vespre* and *TN migdia cap de setmana*, respectively) but they were highly diverse. Their most important characteristic is that they are regarded as an actor to be taken into account when defining the situation. In the international sphere, in the case of Honduras (NGO defending human rights), or in the case of Haiti (NGO for cooperation in emergency situations and development aid), they were actors that were present in the progress of the events.

As principal actors, "associations and citizens' platforms" made their voice heard when the news topic referred to an institutional dispute. The news about these actors lasted approximately 9% in each of the *Telenotícies*, and 20.83% and 32% on *TN migdia cap de setmana* and *TN vespre cap de setmana*, respectively. Coverage focused basically on demonstrations and other forms of group mobilisation.

Finally, "social groups and activists" usually appeared in disputes, with images of demonstrations or rallies that, in many cases, contributed little per se to an understanding of the facts (22.22% and 21.52%, 16.67% and 32% on *TN migdia*, *TN vespre*, *TN migdia cap de setmana* and *TN vespre cap de setmana*, respectively).

Journalist viewpoint on interest groups and social movements

According to the interviews conducted with nine news profes-

sionals, we can state that there is agreement with regard to the determining factors of news production relating to interest groups and social movements. The first is time pressure on everyday tasks in many aspects: including the topic, the format, the depth and length of the items. The second is the broadcast time limitation, which means that news items are hierarchised. The third is the possibility or not of having images or means to capture images.

In the day to day, the newsroom combines the philosophy and principles of action of the media (defined by the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals together with the Catalan Government and the Control Commission of the Catalan Parliament), those of the company and the values of the journalist. The materialisation of all these principles regarding work practices is not free from tensions and journalists tend to resolve them in their day to day work.

Among the interviewees, there are different perceptions and sensitivities when it comes to other aspects such as newsworthiness, plurality and information sources. In general, newsworthiness criteria with regard to interest groups and social movements are the same as those applied to other facts or events: general interest, newness, relevance, etc., but there are some important nuances regarding pluralism, sources and representativeness. By way of example, we reproduce the opinions of three of the interviewees:

Interviewee 2: "[...] as it is a public TV channel, we have in some way a duty of plurality. This plurality we speak of (the word isn't imposed but, let's say, "self-imposed by law and by fundamental principles") is that they have to appear. Plurality can't only happen in strictly political terms. Our desire and obligation is to be plural and that not only should the different political parties appear but (also) a broad representation of society. Understanding this to mean civic bodies, NGOs, union and management bodies, not just unions... And we also bear this very much in mind when we outline a news story.

We have a tendency – we, I would say the public TV channels – of giving an organised structure to phenomena that appear in society. We are more into looking for people who represent social movements than the "gross expression" of that social movement. Let me explain: if there's a dispute, for example, in Salt [...], to do with immigration, the news is not asking questions in the street to find out what immigrants or the people in the street think. But we try to seek out different organisations that represent the various points of view.

Because representativeness gives it plurality. And it also better represents the collective expression of society..., not strictly the point of view of a person."

Interviewee 3: To begin with, we are... subject a little to the control of the Control Commission of the Catalan Parliament which, as you know, is made up of different parliamentary groups. And, at the same time, it's not that we're tied to the political parties, but we do have to show, as a bit of an intro-

duction, regarding the parliamentary spectrum, on the one hand, the Catalan Parliament and Congress on the other. [...] Some people criticise why we make everyone have an opinion on everything. [...] Because we believe that the ones with more or less representation are representatives of the people of Catalonia, in this case, and that it's necessary.

Sometimes this advantage, since six groups take up a lot of room on the news, it means that these actors you're talking about [interest groups and social movements] are left a bit in the background or are more marginalised. If they're not very clear topics about unions or labour relations or whatever. With the subject of NGOs or also topics that affect them more directly. But it's more complicated to decide who is representative of whom, or of what.

Despite this, I think we always try to look for different voices, we always do it with political parties. Representatives, but unions as well, it's fairly established.

What's more complicated here are the NGOs or, shall we say, diverse organisations. Also, even though, considering that politics is very much in disrepute, it also happens to some extent with the agencies. There's a feeling that NGOs also have their own interests, that they're not all that transparent, that they're a business and... you have to be very careful with projects."

Interviewee 5: "For us, the most important thing is when it's an NGO that has prestige, therefore what they tell you is not what the actors involved (political parties or governments or unions...) will tell you. By contrast, an NGO such as Amnesty International or Intermón Oxfam or the Red Cross can give you details that we can, in principle, see as reliable.

Therefore, they are NGOs that we think have information. They give you a flow of legitimacy. It's a criterion we apply often to international news. On the ground, who do you believe? Well, you believe the one with prestige, a track record, who gives you reliability for one reason or another. Therefore, we use quite a lot of information that comes from NGOs in this respect. With spontaneous social movements, the most typical ones (groups that are created for a specific issue, in one country or another), to be honest we analyse them very much case by case."

The role of public television, pluralism, the representativeness of actors, their reliability as information sources are all topics that are present in the everyday work of journalism. In the case of political actors, their parliamentary representation and social position might follow objectifiable guidelines, but the criteria are not as clear when they are transferred to other social spheres. What determines representativeness in this case? Professionals choose to approach the stronger organisations: business organisations, majority unions and prestigious international NGOs. Their "legitimacy" as information sources is determined by the "reliability" of their statements and this is

based, at the same time, on their organisational capacity, their position in society, international recognition, etc.

Finally, in most cases, the answer to these questions is provided by the practical solution to the problems and the nearest and most usual sources. Consequently, interest groups and social movements become part of topics in which news items are highly standardised: negotiation between government and social agents, natural disasters, labour disputes, reports or human interest "soft" news.

Point of view of institutional communication professionals

From the other side, that of interest groups and social movements, the tendency is to professionalise relations with the media through press departments or offices. The aim is to make communications effective and get maximum support from public opinion for their aims. The financial resources of these groups are therefore crucial if they want to professionalise their communicative activities. For smaller groups, the difficulty of having spokespersons and of drafting press releases, communiqués, etc. can be a significant drawback.

The problems that interest groups have are varied and their attitudes towards the media have as many nuances as there are types of organisation. The strongest and largest organisations tend to recognise TV3's *Telenotícies* as a quality product in the Catalan communication system. The communication departments of most of these organisations are made up of professionals and they are, generally, satisfied with the communication flows established with *Telenotícies* professionals. The exception is the perception by some of these organisations of the excessive importance that is given to the provenance of the news in Catalonia.

The thoughts of the professionals in the communication departments and offices interviewed suggest some elements that should be taken into account: excessive emphasis on politics and on news items on statements to the detriment of an in-depth look at the real problems of most people, or the stereotyping of news linked to groups and actions, such as in the case of the unions. This is expressed by the following interviewees:

Interviewee 11: "Let's see, I think that, at the moment, it's one thing how it should be, what I think should attract journalists' attention, and another, a bit, is the line taken by news programmes. I think that politics sometimes has an excessive presence in news programmes. That's the impression we have, and there's a very large part of news programmes that become question and answer sessions: one answers, another answers [the response to the first]... and that covers too much news and goes away a little from the big social movements, really, of the people.

And then it's true to say that they cover a large part of the social movement. Meanwhile, we think that sometimes, on the TV3 news programmes, there's no balance really

between the movement of real people in the street with the time devoted to the news on the programme”.

Interviewee 12: “In social groups, we could say that we unions are lucky. Up to a certain point, but we are lucky. We’re lucky because our role is very evident. Our role is clear: we represent a part, we have political projection, we are a [...] representative institution, therefore, you don’t have to tell [the media] much because they’re aware of you.

And I say we’re lucky up to a point because it’s true to say that this very specific, highly determined role often prevents you from doing different things, or dealing with your own issues differently. Everything’s like in quotas [...]. You don’t get a share on screen, like the political parties, nowhere near. We have to fight for our share. We don’t have the news guaranteed just because we’re a main union and among the most powerful and organised organisations.

[...] But we have a lot more opportunities. Very often we have this opportunity, not because of the interest or relevance of what we do, but very often because we’re part of the chorus of [reactions] to a political event...”.

With business organisations, the opinion about the cover of topics related to its sphere of action is positive:

Interviewee 10: “We’re fairly satisfied with how they present us. Obviously you’d love the statements you make about something to be more extensive [...]. But normally, as relations with TV3 journalists are good, the news can be pretty balanced. We all know that very often the union can have more power than the management, it’s more social, it’s this trend of the more social news and the stigma of the entrepreneur as the root of all evil.”

From the point of view of NGOs, newsworthiness lies especially in events linked to disasters, be they natural, humanitarian or in situations where there is evident damage to human rights. When these situations arise, what prevails for television is that the NGOs have images, access to the countries affected or the sharing of knowledge of the political and social reality in those countries. Most of the communication managers in the large NGOs agree that TV3 gives a fairly descriptive and positive treatment of their role in the situations in which they are involved. This is the opinion, for example, of the following interviewee:

Interviewee 17: “We, basically, are reasonably satisfied... Generally, when we want to appear, because it’s a “meaty” subject, we appear. Also because we know that they’re these three topics, which are... easy, there’s not much to say, they sell.”

By contrast, with regard to the points of view of smaller groups, the answer is more guarded, and some are even at the opposite end of the scale, as is the case of the Confederació General del Treball, the Federació Catalana d’ONG per al

Desenvolupament, the Federació d’Entitats Llatinoamericanes de Catalunya (Fedelatina). They questioned, for example, the favourable news coverage for larger unions or the lack of visibility of international aid. By way of example, the following is the opinion of one of the minority trades unions:

Interviewee 13: “In the first place, I want to say that not all the events are shown, normally. We’re entirely convinced that there’s an active boycott and, in this respect, we believe that both the private media, but also the public media, systematically don’t cover the demonstrations we hold, even though very often we are the main union, and even though, in some labour disputes, we ‘call the tune’. The feeling in the union [...] is one of an active boycott.

From the point of view of the smaller organisations:

Interviewee 18: “We have a relationship, a marriage of convenience: very good for some things and very bad for others. There’s a mix-up of all the driftwood the media have made, of spectacularisation, of sensationalism, of gossip... These are all things that also affect us, a lot.”

Conclusion

In a democracy, the functions of the media are: to provide information about the principal events that affect society, to watch over the exercise of power and to offer a space for discussion and the circulation of ideas. Generally, the media provide the chance for the different voices in society to be heard. Furthermore, if it is possible, pluralism is one of the basic objectives of the public media, for which they have to answer to society.

According to the results of the analysis of the news and the in-depth interviews with journalists and communication professionals, we can conclude that the coverage of interest groups focuses especially on the larger organisations that have more resources devoted to institutional communication. Journalists feel that the “reliability” of the source may lie in its capacity to represent the group or its knowledge of a specific situation, among other criteria.

Small groups and social movements, by contrast, have a lesser presence, and on most occasions they appear in situations of dispute or in collective actions supporting their aims or interests. Their proposals, therefore, are usually outside the relevant issues of the day.

The commitment of public television to pluralism and diversity demands the presence of a broad social representation in news programmes, but the criteria applied regarding the representativeness of bodies and social movements are difficult to establish. Journalists usually apply the prevalent criteria of general interest, the unexpected, the novel, but in practice these are difficult to objectify.

Possibly, optimising the communication processes between interest groups/social movements and news professionals could

result in news treatment that tends to provide the public with a wider interpretation. From the point of view of journalists, often highly focused on institutional aspects, resorting to a wider range of these groups would allow them to go into the social reality with greater depth and increase their knowledge of social problems.

From the standpoint of minority groups and movements, establishing a stable structure of spokespeople could contribute considerably to generating news, even though in this case too, of what type should be questioned. Communication departments and offices usually adapt to the routines of journalism and, at the same time, reinforce the production dynamics of newsrooms. They tend to act with the same logic as the political actors. The challenge lies, then, in offering new focuses to explain the social reality.

Notes

- 1 This article summarises the results of the research entitled *La cobertura dels grups d'interès i dels moviments socials a les notícies de TV3* (August 2010). This research was possible thanks to the grant awarded in the Sixth Call for Grants for Research Projects into Audiovisual Communication (Decision 103/2009, of the Plenary of the Catalan Audiovisual Council). The work also had the collaboration of Ms. Marta Civil i Serra in the production and transcription of the in-depth interviews of information and communication professionals.
- 2 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online].
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/290136/interest-group>> [Consulted: 24 May 2010]

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What *El cor de la ciutat* (2000-2009) talks about. A study of the social agenda of Catalan television's longest serial

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Abstract

From a detailed analysis of the 1,906 episodes of *El cor de la ciutat*, the daily serial broadcast by TV3 (Televisió de Catalunya) on afternoon prime time from 2000 to 2009, this article summarises some of the results. In addition to the specific methodological design, we investigate the main narrative strategies regarding the introduction and approach to social issues in fiction. We also identify the agenda of the most relevant social issues the serial has presented to its audience for their consideration. There are three thematic clusters: social conflict, groups at risk of marginalisation and social policy-making.

Key words

TV serial, fiction, social issues, social problems, thematic agenda, Televisió de Catalunya.

Resum

A partir de l'anàlisi exhaustiva dels 1.906 capítols d'*El cor de la ciutat*, serial diari de prime time de tarda emès per TV3 (Televisió de Catalunya) del 2000 al 2009, aquest article resumeix part dels resultats obtinguts. A més del disseny metodològic específic, presentem una aproximació a les principals estratègies narratives d'introducció i de plantejament dels temes socials en la ficció. I identifiquem l'agenda dels temes d'interès social més rellevants que el serial ha posat a la consideració de la seva audiència. Els nuclis temàtics són tres: la conflictivitat social, els col·lectius amb risc d'exclusió i la definició de polítiques socials.

Paraules clau

Serial televisiu, ficció, tema d'interès social, problema social, agenda temàtica, Televisió de Catalunya.

1. Introduction

The field of analysis of soap operas and TV drama serials assumes that the repertory of social issues and problems introduced by the fiction discourses is based on their prior definition within the context of production and reception (Kottak 1991; Ramos 1997; Buonanno 1999; O'Donnell 1999; V. de Lopes 2002; Henderson 2007). Far from an objectivist point of view, the definition of *social problem* is subject to the activity of public demand through which attention is focused on certain social conditions and a problem is situated in a particular perspective from which it is necessary to understand it; i.e. certain aspects of it are emphasised, its causes are localised (attribution of responsibilities) and a solution is recommended for it, often exemplified by means of cases. The *framing* through cultural acceptance of Hertog and McLeod (2001) or the so-called *typifying of the nature of the problem* (Best 1988) therefore become an integral part of the social construction of problems.

From an interpretative perspective, reality, as a social product, leads us to contemplate the world constructed intersubjectively through its representations in the interactions of social actors (Schutz 2003/1974; Berger and Luckmann 2001/1966). According to Buonanno (1999, 2004), experi-

ence is divided into stratifications of the worlds of life, the world of fiction being one more status of reality, superimposed and in interaction with the world of everyday life.

Following the precepts of the consensual view of communication of James Carey (1988), the definition of television as a central storyteller (Newcomb 1999), the bases of television studies (Fiske and Hartley 1978) and cultural psychology (Bruner 2004), the Italian sociologist describes TV fiction as the modern bard (a story of and for us) with which we domesticate what is unexpected or we become familiar with other possible realities, all helping to maintain the community. It becomes especially significant to observe how the maintenance of the community is not exclusively restricted to a sense of conservation but also involves the role of TV fiction as a promoter and/or catalyst of social change when this places current problems within the framework of consolidated experiences.

In this respect, soap operas and TV drama serials have been described as a privileged forum of debate and/or repertory of themes (and specifically of social issues) in accordance with their serialised structure, the many different points of view and their referentiality. Authors such as Henderson (2007) and Livingstone (1990) in the Anglo-Saxon sphere and Ramos (1997) and V. de Lopes *et al.* (2002) in Latin America agree in attributing to television serials the capacity to facilitate

understanding of certain social issues rather than determining consensus about them.

So, although accepting the hypothesis that TV fiction is fed, with regard to the themes and the social issues it presents, from social and media discourses (preferably news) of its environment, we are interested in observing which themes are presented as social issues or, in their definition of conflict, as social problems about which we must think and/or act, through the themes as a whole proposed by the Catalan serial in question, namely *El cor de la ciutat* (2000-2009). Therefore, *a priori*, we will look at all those themes tackled in *El cor de la ciutat* that might have a public or social dimension in the contemporary Catalan context, from drug addiction to care work, for example, when these are represented as objects of public discourse, both through the communicative action of political institutions and also the rest of social agents, among which themes we distinguish those presented as social issues or problems within the serial.

2. *El cor de la ciutat*: audiovisual product and text

El cor de la ciutat is the only afternoon serial produced by Televisió de Catalunya in-house as an open serial; i.e. without an initially planned end, which exceeded 1,900 episodes and 9 years of broadcast.¹ It started on 11 September 2000 and ended on the night of 23 December 2009, which was its tenth and last season by way of an epilogue, as it is composed of a single block of 75 episodes instead of the usual 200.

Like most fiction produced in-house by Televisió de Catalunya, *El cor de la ciutat* is a production aimed at domestic consumption with a strongly marked national identity at the level of representation (regional, linguistic and cultural references, particularly) (Castelló 2005). It remained audience leader in its time slot, namely early afternoon (from 15.40 to 16.20, approximately), although in absolute terms it gradually lost followers over time, especially during the last four years.²

El cor de la ciutat is divided into seasons that follow the school year. The episodes last approximately 30 minutes and were broadcast with a single advertising break. Over the nine years the serial was broadcast, it was preceded by the lunchtime news and weather (*Telenotícies migdia*, *El temps*) and a cookery programme (*Cuines*), while the magazine programme that completed the afternoon's programming varied.³

The professional routines implemented by the Drama Department of Televisió de Catalunya over the last fifteen years have helped to make the production process for serialised fiction more responsive and to define *El cor de la ciutat* as a text that is permeable to the circumstances of contemporary public opinion and to the complaints or preferences expressed by the audience, as noted by Ortega (2002). Distance in time is minimal with regard to viewers and this means they can be taken into account in the final production of the text. Although this does not result in a dynamic of plot interference, it does rein-

force certain mechanisms of permeability in constructing dialogues and contemporary contextual references (Castelló and López 2007).

We must also remember that Televisió de Catalunya, in addition to being subject to the need to make a profit, is also a broadcaster with a clear social vocation. The production team pays particular attention to the serial's impact in the press and often establishes a dialogue with Catalan institutions, groups, associations and other social agents represented in some way (that can be identified with or resemble those of the series) (Ortega 2002; Castelló 2005).

On the other hand, *El cor de la ciutat* became, right from the start, the object of discourse on the part of Televisió de Catalunya itself by means of various sections in the afternoon magazine programme and through special broadcasts of media events generated around the popular viewing of the last episode of each season. Aspects were tackled in all these entertainment spaces that were related to conditioning factors in both narrative and production terms, as well as debates on the content covered. Generally, these debates were related to Catalan society; i.e. discursive spaces where the time periods from the serial are transferred to the forum of public debate. This promotional task, of symbiotic benefit for the serial and channel, was complemented with use of the internet as a vehicle to create and reinforce virtual interpretative communities.

The world represented in *El cor de la ciutat* is located geographically in the Barcelona district of Sant Andreu and, temporarily, in Sants. Its desire to be realistic is also accentuated in the time dimension, as it follows the line already set by *Poblenou* and represents a continual present in parallel with that of the broadcast context. The characters grow with the viewer and each episode summarises one day, summer being a break in time for the diegesis (*unrecorded existence*, Geraghty 1981). The use of time distortion (biographical analepsis, prolepsis and ellipsis) is extremely sporadic.⁴

In general terms, the predominant type of plot in the serial has a variable duration between the season and broader narrative cycles, as well as blocks of plots, which means that stories can be alternated between the Christmas or Easter breaks. *El cor de la ciutat* uses a narrative structured around situations of dialogue-based interactions in which action, although not completely excluded, is clearly minimised (concentrated into the final episodes aimed at evening prime time).

The serial is based on a polycentric protagonism in which various individuals from the middle classes, self-employed people and employees,⁵ located in the same urban context, are grouped together in family clusters or via social relations (love, friendship, neighbours and employment). From the complex web of paradigmatic relations, many different, simultaneous and interwoven stories are structured that, following a strict definition of the model of *community soap* (Liebes and Livingstone 1998), would be developed in a parallel and non-hierarchical way. Here we need to introduce some fine distinctions.

On the one hand, the serial's starting point would seem to be

marked by a certain protagonism of the character of Clara Bosch, whose coming out of prison became the trigger for many of the stories that transform the initial situation of the neighbourhood.⁶ But the centrality of the Bosch-Vidal family cluster is gradually diluted and the protagonism of the female character loses all validity as from the second season.

In fact, the alternating of relative weight from one character to another as the serial progresses means we can isolate three family clusters with the most protagonism: Bosch-Vidal, Peris-Noguera and Borràs-Crespo. All three are made up of characters that remain from the beginning of the serial, especially the Peris-Noguera family, who formed the basis of a change in setting, and give rise to the most important stories, both in terms of presence (relative time dedicated during the season) and extent (starring in predominately serial-long plots).⁷ The stories conducted by these fixed main characters usually have a greater impact on the general outcome of the diegetic universe and involve a larger number of people (actively or passively). Logically, the relationship with the viewer gains in intensity as the serial advances and is enhanced by a historical and biographical knowledge of the characters.

Apart from these main family clusters, there is a whole number of characters that make up the social backdrop of the serial's universe, some as pure scenery or collective in nature ("neighbouring community") and others as supporting characters that might become central in some plots.

The human panorama is revitalised by introducing new characters using two basic strategies: either the characters are inserted temporarily as more or less independent family clusters (of contained paradigmatic relations, which means they can be replaced at the end of the season) or are integrated as particular individuals with one or more members of the stable battery of characters (which makes it easier for them to become permanent). This play of weights and counterweights in the multi-centred protagonism of *El cor de la ciutat* means that the character structure must be observed season by season.

3. A hybrid serial model

El cor de la ciutat is presented as a serial that takes, as its references, the British soaps that best represent the traditional model of realistic community soaps without losing sight of the differential features of Brazilian soaps and other successful formulas, compared with the US supersoaps, which have also penetrated audience tastes via previous productions.

In spite of the desire to revive the narration of customs of *Poblenou* and to aim for a treatment closer to the British social realism, throughout its history *El cor de la ciutat* has been defined as a hybrid model.

In accordance with the degree of textual coherence between seasons, two stages can be outlined: a *birth stage* (seasons 1, 2, 3 and 4) and a *rebirth stage* (seasons 6, 7 and 8), the last season being a clear exercise in restructuring the diegetic uni-

verse and basic plot lines that have run through the text up to that time. In the middle, we must consider season 5 as a turning point and season 9 as a thematic and narrative transgression that requires an epilogue (season 10) to provide textual coherence to the serial as a whole.

The birth stage achieves a certain equilibrium between the community soap model that wishes to be realistic and the weight of the melodramatic component (love triangle, revelation of secrets, revenge and betrayal, expiation of blame or impossible love stories) that bring it, from time to time, closer to the dynastic model and the classic TV drama serial. The fourth season is undoubtedly the one that is most firmly dedicated to a realistic soap of everyday stories and introduces more controversial social issues.

The interruption is marked by the fifth season, in which Manel Bonany takes over from Maria Jaén as head of plot and redirects the serial along a line of suspense, applying the Benet and Jornet brand and as an aftertaste of the archetypes so well explored in *Nissaga de poder*.

The rebirth stage goes back to the initial strategy with a change in setting (the Peris family move to Sants) and renewing the community of characters, structured into family clusters and common settings (at work or school). In this new cycle the axis of generational relations is also restored, as significant weight is given to stories starring the group of teenagers (between school and the disco) and a new group is created with its own secondary plots, namely the elderly. This stage ends with a return to Sant Andreu and a gradual and clear return to the main family clusters.

Nevertheless, the eighth season suggests the composition of a diegetic universe constructed under new parameters and narrative variations towards a detective and intrigue-based plot. This trend is confirmed in the last exercise: although the structure of fixed family clusters is maintained, the distribution of the plots decreases their specific weight and tends to fragment them. The stories occur within the generational axis, in the settings or spaces, but not unequivocally. Rather they tend to proliferate or involve characters based on various axes.

4. Methodological design

The contextualisation of audiovisual production and a close reading of the serial briefly outlined above help to draw up a descriptive map of the paradigmatic structure of relations that make up the *possible world* offered by the serial in question.

The characters (age, gender, profession), their relations (family, work, love or various social relations) and their relation to the spaces represented are the axes used to detect the organisational structure that serves as the basis for the many different plots that make up each season.

The season is therefore the segment we take as our reference to break the TV serial down lineally, to which we have applied the interpretative schema of Milly Buonanno (*ad hoc* method-

ology of the Osservatorio Sulla Fiction Italiana, OFI). Also noted are the narrative aspects that must be taken into account when ordering the text content as relevant variables to evaluate the formal procedure employed.

Our aim is to delimit the agenda of social issues constructed by *El cor de la ciutat* throughout the time it was broadcast and to evaluate this in terms of presence, recurrence and relevance. We employ content analysis “as research”, making the categorisation and variables more flexible rather than structuring or quantifying the data obtained (Casetti and DiChio 1999:246). What is of interest here is to be able to evaluate the firmness or courage with which the serial tackles certain social issues within a season: for example, greater if it does so with a consolidated character in the imaginary of the audience rather than with a new character introduced for this purpose. We move away from a comparison of media content with the real world and from an evaluation of the image of specific social groups, an area that research on television serials using this technique has traditionally focused on.

The question is: which social issues have been proposed as a priority by *El cor de la ciutat* in its agenda? And the initial hypotheses are as follows:

1. *El cor de la ciutat* concentrates its attention on a limited number of social issues which it repeatedly deals with.
2. Social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* are introduced via new characters minimally related to the network of social relations described by the serial.
3. Social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* are not established as long-term plots nor are their protagonists the most leading characters in the possible world described by the serial.

To select the variables, we have used the agenda setting research tradition which is preferably applied, although not exclusively, to news genres (Gifreu et al. 2007; Gifreu and

Gómez 2009) and with regard to the selection of specific variables in fiction, we refer to the work by Geraghty (1991), Strange (2002) and, subsequently, Henderson (2007). Without forgetting the number of studies that deal with the text analysis of serials: from the structuralist work of Dyer et al. (1981) to the socio-semiotic approach to interpretative frameworks of Lacalle (2005, 2008).

Initially, the sample includes the synopsis reconstructed by viewing the 1,906 episodes that make up the entire universe to be analysed. In a first stage, the unit of analysis is the plot or story being told. The analytical categories include the identification of the plot, the protagonist, the theme and the narrative genre (table 1). In this last variable, the default value is drama. We therefore propose to evaluate the components, principally of *comedy* (in the dramatic sense), that may be expressed in some of the plots according to the variable orientation the serial has adopted throughout its history.

Added to this are indicators, on a scale of intervals, throughout the plot: episodic, a medium narrative cycle (minimum of 30 episodes or spread over more than a month and a half of broadcast), a block (approximately 70 episodes, or the quarter between holidays) and serial (the season or continuously). An intermediate value is introduced to identify those stories occurring throughout two of the three blocks into which the season is divided and these sub-segments are employed as localisation indicators – block 1, 2 or 3.

From the results of this initial content analysis we obtained a detailed list of the themes covered by the serial, from which we have selected those related to social issues, which we will analyse in a second phase.

Having arrived at this point, we believe that to predetermine the content analysis categories with regard to the social issues represented would be to move away from our interpretative aim

Table 1. Analytical categorisation: study of narrative plots

Identification	Plot	(Descriptor: includes predefined subcategories of characters and settings)
	Protagonist	(Descriptor: character of a predefined relationship for the season)
	Theme	(Descriptor: issue or problem)
	Genre	Comedy
		Intrigue
		Other (to be defined)
Relative weight	Plot length	Episodic or self-concluding
		Medium narrative cycle (minimum 30 episodes)
		Block (1) (approx. 70 episodes)
		Blocks (2) /70 + 30/70 episodes)
		Serial or continuously
Location	Season (1-10)	Block 1 (from Sept. to Dec.)
		Block 2 (from Jan. to Easter)
		Block 3 (from Easter to July)

Source: Author.

for the object of the study. We have adopted a classification criterion based on defining the units via key words that allow us to structure the themes by area of incidence or spheres of action, in which variables of gender and age are included (table 2).⁸ Regarding the isolated list of social issues, while maintaining the subdivision by season, we have applied a second analytical framework in which, apart from the categories to identify an issue, character, genre, plot or length of plot, we have also introduced those variables used to evaluate the relevance granted to social issues within the serial.

Firstly, we have considered as a variable of prioritisation the specific weight acquired by an issue (unit of analysis) in terms of the time dedicated to it, a dimension via which we propose to go back to the interval-based indicators for plot length and introduce some operational variations to detect continuity over different seasons (table 3).

Secondly, we have looked at the quality of the characters conducting the issues, in accordance with the map of paradigmatic structure produced by season in the preliminary phase. Following Anglo-Saxon studies (Buckingham 1987; Geraghty 1991) we have measured the biographical value of the character as a variable of the viewer's involvement (textual competence) and we have taken into account whether the character is fixed or occasional. We have also used as intermediate values those that allow us to consider the battery of characters

Table 2. Spheres of action

Relations with oneself and others	Health
	Delinquency
Family	Social movements and organisation
Partner relations	Justice
Sexuality	Politics
Love	Religion
Work	Leisure and culture
Economy	Groups at risk

Source: Author.

longitudinally. With regard to occasional characters, we have applied what Lacalle (2008) describes as *relation with what is social* and which, in the preceding research, has been defined as *paradigmatic relations in a family, sentimental or socio-labour sphere* (Allen 1985).

Lastly, we have worked with the variable *introduction of social issues* and have considered various indicators for the dimensions of *character* and *narrative variations*. We have thereby noted whether the issue is introduced as a result of changes in the space or time scenario, changes in the social setting (often determined by the appearance of new spaces,

Table 3. Analytical characterisation: study of thematic agenda

Variables of introduction	Biographical value (accumulated knowledge) of the character	<i>Occasional</i>	<i>One season</i>	
			<i>More than one season /alternates</i>	
			<i>Introduction to fixed</i>	
		<i>Fixed</i>		family
				sentimental
				professional
Variables of prioritisation	Narrative variations	<i>Initial clusters</i>		
		<i>Intermediate seasons</i>		
		Narrative genre (comedy, other)		
		Temporary scenario (describer)		
	Plot length	Spatial scenario (describer)		
		Social setting (describer)		
		Episodic or short cycle		
		Medium narrative cycle		
	Character's specific value in the paradigmatic structure	Block (1)		
		Blocks (1) continuously		
		Block (2)		
		Blocks (2) continuously		
		Season		
		Serial continuously		
		<i>Protagonism</i>	Main	
			Secondary	
			Scenario	

Source: Author.

such as secondary school, which makes education-related issues possible) or changes in narrative genre. In this last case, the changes can deviate from being assigned to some plots to genres of comedy or intrigue, or from the more generalised bias the serial may have from one season to another (renewing the scriptwriting team is an intrinsic feature of the system used to produce this Catalan serial).

We have discounted other variables of an extra-textual nature, such as the reorientation of the serial's target audience or incidences resulting from production factors (terminating actors' contracts or replacing the scriptwriting team, for example).⁹

The dimensions described by the variable *introduction of social issues* are not prescribed as exclusive, since one issue can be covered through a plot starring a fixed character whose development is redirected with new narrative arcs via a change in setting.

In short, this analytical phase, from an agenda setting hypothesis, allows us to isolate those social issues that the serial, as a particular participant in the forum constituted by the television system, currently prioritises on the public agenda of its viewers. In other words, those issues it highlights as relevant, about which we should talk and on which the imaginary should be focused.

Without wishing to contrast genres of fiction and reality, we would like to note here that studies on the effects of *priming* applied to fiction via cognitive psychology show how fiction, like the news, can influence judgements regarding the relative urgency with which (narrated) social problems should be overcome or redressed (Strange 2002:277).

5. Findings: the social issue agenda

So, what does *El cor de la ciutat* talk about? Obviously it talks about interpersonal relations (love, friendship, family) and relations with oneself (identity crisis, grieving, stories of personal triumph). And on these pillars it introduces stories about battling for the custody of children, domestic violence, reaffirming sexual identity, drug addiction and the processes of reinsertion in society.

In accordance with our study's regrouping criteria, the range of relevant social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* can be summarised into three broad lines:

- *social conflict* (delinquency, domestic violence and harassment/bullying),
- *groups at risk of marginalisation* (due to stigma of a legal nature, of sexual identity or gender, illness or disability or socio-economic and cultural reasons in the case of immigrants), and
- *definition of public policies and/or policies of a legal nature* (via socio-health or socio-economic problems, such as unemployment, abortion or the right to a dignified death).

An exploration of the thematic map of *El cor de la ciutat* has also allowed us to isolate the main strategies employed to intro-

duce and present social issues, both within the same season and in a comparison across the seasons:

1. Dual presentation of social issues within a season. The same issue is tackled via two (or more) plots conducted simultaneously by different characters, either interrelated or not. The relevance given to each one can vary (fixed and occasional characters or serial and block-based plots). This strategy means that the narrative treatment of the issues and/or variables of representation can be diversified.

2. Concentration of social issues and problems onto a small number of characters (generally fixed and main) presented in a chain throughout a season, so that the first provides the contextual keys for the others to appear.

3. Recurrence of social issues between seasons with variations in terms of relevance (main/secondary character, serial/block/cycle-based plots) that help to distinguish two applications: a) the progressive introduction of social problems that are not consolidated in the TV imaginary and/or generate clear social rejection (e.g. child abuse as suspected in the second season and as an actual reality in the fourth); or b) the resonance of social issues introduced as relevant from the start (such as former inmates being reinserted into society).

Returning to the initial hypotheses, the first has been confirmed: *El cor de la ciutat* focuses its attention on a limited number of social issues which it repeatedly covers.

In fact, in presenting social issues with public repercussions, single cases are exceptional: serial rapist, transsexuality, assisted suicide and the squatter movement.

This first social issue corresponds to the fifth season's deviations (from the predominant model), in which intrigue is introduced concerning the identity of the rapist in the neighbourhood, forming the basis for renewing the network of occasional characters as possible suspects. But this is not the only case of rape narrated in *El cor de la ciutat*, although it is the only time this constitutes a relevant issue, both due to the serial-based treatment and the quality and breadth of the network of characters involved via the different victims. Along the same line of deviation from the model we would also place the inclusion of a criminal mafia organisation in the ninth season based on a plot about hiding a corpse. Although this isn't the first time such issues have appeared either, it is the time when they stand out the most.

Transsexuality becomes a notable exception if we take into account that it is the only appearance of gender dysphoria. Considering the treatment it receives in *El cor de la ciutat*, however, it can be easily assimilated into the themes of risk of marginalisation and sexual identity that unify the groups of lesbians, homosexuals, transsexuals and bisexuals in their public demands in Spain.

All have been represented as subjects of the possible world of *El cor de la ciutat* throughout its history through fixed and occasional characters with a differing degree of protagonism. Regarding their presence in plots where relevant social issues

are defined (by extension, protagonism and recurrence), of note are homosexuality related to the construction of identity in adolescence and homophobic attitudes (table 4). On the other hand, bisexuality has constructed a less relevant issue in plots of love and sexual triangles and the only lesbian couple in *El cor de la ciutat* was involved in an almost episodic plot concerning their breakup and dispute for child custody.

On the other hand, although we can group assisted suicide together with other themes related to health and preparing to die, and we can find prior dialogue-based incursions or similar situations and plots, this is a social issue covered relevantly on just one occasion.¹¹ As with the squatter movement (this being with new characters), it is configured via a serial-based development that involves quite a wide network of characters, either through a complex link between the protagonists with the neighbourhood community or how it affects the neighbourhood as a group.

The four social issues highlighted here are characterised by the high degree of controversy they generate within the social context of producing and receiving *El cor de la ciutat*, i.e. the contemporary Catalan society in which they circulate as media discourses. Clear references for all of them can be found in news items that have either been located in sections on incidents, society and politics in the contemporary press (such as the rapist of the Eixample neighbourhood in Barcelona or the removal of squatters in recent years),¹² or have become the object of claims for public attention to promote changes in the legal or medical situation (the definition of transsexuality, the

right to a dignified death or how to deal with serial rapists are some examples of this).¹³

In contrast to this initial reflection, both the second and third hypotheses formulated regarding the relevance given by the serial to social issues have been rejected, since the variables of *introduction* and *specific weight* of the plots are not valid for the whole.

We have therefore established what might be described as a contained and prudent commitment to social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* with regard to how they are introduced, which cannot be generalised in all cases.

Second hypothesis: Social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* are introduced via new characters minimally linked to the network of social relations described by the serial.

As we have explained above, most of the social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* are covered on more than one occasion. Consequently, in grouping and comparing the most relevant cases, the findings point to a combination of plots where the theme is introduced via occasional or new characters with plots conducted by fixed characters, main and/or secondary, connected to the community network of the diegetic world. This system is shared by all highlighted themes except for those in which offences against sexual indemnity, life and public health allow a stable pattern to be fixed, exclusively introduced by new characters.¹⁴

Third hypothesis: Social issues in *El cor de la ciutat* are not established as long-running plots nor do they involve the most

Table 4. Homosexuality and risk of marginalisation

Theme	Highlighted cases (chronological order)		
	Season	Protagonist	Length
Definition of sexual identity (adult)	1	Occasional	Medium cycle
Temporary heterosexual relationship (girlfriend)	2	(scenario) <i>Lluís "El Fato"</i>	(episod. S. 1)
Definition of sexual identity (adolescent)	3	Fixed	2 blocks
Self-confirmation and acceptance in peer group		(main) <i>Max Carbó</i>	
Homophobia in the family sphere (adolescent)	4	Fixed	Medium cycle
Rejection of stepfather: psychological illness		(main) <i>Max Carbó</i>	
Homophobia in the family sphere (young adult)	6	Fixed	Episodic
Acceptance of biological father		(main) <i>Max Carbó</i>	
Definition of sexual identity (adolescent)	7	Occasional S. 7-8	Medium cycle
Refusal, crisis, personal and social acceptance		(secondary) <i>Enric Viadé</i>	
Homophobia - peer group	7	Occasional S. 7-8	Medium cycle
(adolescent/young adult) (double case: physical aggression)		(secondary) <i>Enric Viadé</i>	
Homophobia in the family sphere	7	Occasional S. 7-8	Medium cycle
Rejection of father versus grandfather	8	(secondary) <i>Enric Viadé</i>	(episod. S. 8)

Source: Author.

prominent characters in the possible world described by the serial.

The third hypothesis would be rejected from the moment that almost all the cases detected in the analysis segmented by season respond positively to the variable *relevance of plot length*. In other words, they last one or two blocks and even throughout the serial. Medium cycle plots tend to correspond to social issues that are doubled up within the season or follow a strategy of using many cases throughout the serial.

Among the former there is the first season's double representation of former prison inmates getting back into society and the relapse in the consumption of opiates, which are concentrated on the occasional character of Lali Carbó, as a replica of fixed characters' successful processes or, in similar terms, with regard to the attitude of personal sacrifice for the good of the children, namely the relapsed drug addicts of the epilogue, Ingrid and David Peris (table 5).

With regard to those cases of thematic recurrence between seasons, we note the progressive introduction of social issues such as alcoholism or child abuse, often supported by a strategy to concentrate social problems onto one character.

On the other hand, the resonance of social issues dealt with throughout the serial, returned to in short plots, applies in the case of former prison inmates getting back into society (seasons 1 and 7) and school bullying (seasons 6 and 9), although this is a frequent mechanism because, as we have already mentioned, it means that aspects of the treatment can be diversified

(maternity versus abortion) or new variants introduced (such as gender-based violence or teenage alcoholism) (table 6).

We have only isolated two problems exclusively in medium cycle plots: sexual harassment and homophobia in the family or peer group, often as a complement to the plot regarding the definition of sexual identity in adolescence, while the two cases detected treated via a short or almost episodic cycle (xenophobia and extortion at work) are included in the epigraph *immigration* in opposing directions (local to immigrant and vice versa).

With regard to the *protagonism* variable, we should note once again that the recurrence observed for the most relevant cases suggests the alternation of fixed characters, main or secondary, and occasional characters.

5. Conclusions

Contrary to our initial hypotheses, the thematic agenda of *El cor de la ciutat* indicates a constant and highlighted presence of social issues.

On the one hand, we note that the serial's characteristic recurrence of themes is due to strategies to introduce and present social issues aimed at facilitating their diversified treatment within the season. On the other, we have isolated two further characteristics of the serial: a manifest concern for emerging problems in Catalan public debate and constant attention paid to more consolidated issues in the social imaginary.

Table 5. Drug addiction (1)

Cases highlighted (chronological order)			
Theme	Season	Protagonist	Length
Recidivism of drug addict (adult) (heroin) Former inmate, failed re-insertion: overdose	1	Occasional (secondary) <i>Lali Carbó</i>	Medium cycle
Recidivism of drug addict (adult) (heroin) Identity crisis. Achieved clinical rehabilitation (family support)	1	Fixed (main) <i>Jordi Vidal</i>	Block
Drug consumption in adolescence Early detection (family). Psychological treatment (causes)	1	Fixed (main) <i>Núria Vidal</i>	Medium cycle
Young drug addict (pills) (risks) Depression. Failed medical rehabilitation, overcome with family support	4	Fixed (main) <i>Marta Vendrell</i>	2 blocks
Young drug addict (pills) (stigma) Depression. Represented withdrawal: overcome with family support	7	Fixed (main) <i>Juani Galiana</i>	2 blocks
Recidivism of drug addict (opiates) (pregnant) Gives up the baby. Failed second chance. But recovers maternal instinct.	10	Occasional (secondary) <i>Ingrid</i>	Medium cycle
Recidivism of drug addict (cocaine) (*) Relapse. Consequences (family, work). Second chance via paternal love	10	Fixed (main) <i>David Peris</i>	Serial (epilogue: single block)

Source: Author.

Table 6. Drug addiction (2). Alcoholism

Cases highlighted (chronological order)			
Theme	Season	Protagonist	Length
Alcohol abuse (temporary) Widow (grief) who loses custody of her daughter	2	Fixed (secondary) <i>Mari Esteve</i>	Block
Alcoholism (depression). Homeless person with relapse after reinserted in society. Clinical rehabilitation (not represented)	2 3	Occasional S. 2-3 (secondary) <i>Iolanda</i>	Medium cycle (2 alternate)
Alcoholism (depression). Family consequences and social risks. Rehabilitation in family not fully successful (leaves)	3	Fixed (main) <i>Quim Noguera</i>	Serial-season
Alcoholism (depression). Consequences for health (death by cirrhosis)	6	Occasional S. 2-6 (secondary) <i>Andreu Ferrero</i>	Block
Alcoholism and adolescence. Late detection (family underestimation). Consequences for health (ethylic coma). Clinical rehabilitation (not represented)	10	Fixed S. 6 and 8-10 (secondary) <i>Àlex Amorós</i>	Serial (epilogue: single block)

Source: Author.

In the first case, there is the strategy of gradually raising awareness by means of many different cases in different seasons or alternatively, which we can describe as a relevant approach. We include those themes where the protagonism falls on a fixed, main character for which regular viewers have extensive biographical knowledge and where the story is developed throughout the serial. Among these, we have highlighted those unique cases that lead to the logical inference of the contemporary social and news context and dissemination among a large part of the battery of characters, assisted suicide being paradigmatic due to the controversy introduced in a prioritised way. But illegal behaviour on the part of children, unemployment, the risk of marginalisation and mental disability in adult life are also relevant social issues.

This allows us to conclude that *El cor de la ciutat* (2000-2009) is firmly committed to narrating stories in which social issues are highlighted, and it has become a privileged forum of Catalan society of the last decade.

Notes

- 1 The record is held by *Guiding Light* (CBS), which ended shortly beforehand, on 18 September 2009, and exceeded 15,700 episodes over 72 years. In Spain, *Goenkale* (ETB, 1994), a contemporary of *Poblenou*, reached 3,000 episodes in July 2010.
- 2 Reaching 1,000 episodes in its fifth season, it had an audience share of 42.1%. Although afterwards this fell to 35.1% when the serial was renewed and, since the seventh season, the share has been less than 30%, it is still clearly above the average annual share of TV3, which it doubled up to the sixth season (index of positive contribution to the channel).

- 3 *La Columna* with Julia Otero (2000-2004) and *El Club* with Albert Om (2004-2009) gave way, in September 2009, to *Divendres* presented by Espartac Peran and Xavi Coral, which accompanied the end of the serial.
- 4 The most significant analepses can be found in the sixth season (sparking off in the summer period) and the ninth (altering the enunciative point of view to a multiple point of view through detective-based plots).
- 5 In general terms, it chooses to habitually over-represent the services sector, more suitable in narrative terms because it provides places for the characters to meet.
- 6 Moreover, as someone reinserted into the community, she initially plays the role of narrator and the serial avoids resorting to enunciative figures that interrupt the apparent neutrality of the story.
- 7 For the end, Televisió de Catalunya broadcast a summary of the serial throughout the summer in episodes of one hour that followed the core line of development of the main characters. *Històries del cor* is based, precisely, on these three family clusters.
- 8 We apply the ethnographic content analysis model proposed by Altheide (1996). The initial document sources are VQPT reports on RAI, the proposal of Berrio (1999) and sociological studies applied to the Catalan situation that allow us to obtain indications regarding the degree of controversy of social issues (Giner, 1998; Andrés, 2001). In addition to the few studies applied to Catalan serials, already mentioned, other significant precedents are certain analytical approaches, from Gallego (1999) to Sáez (2008).
- 9 Although many different incidences can be detected in *El cor de la ciutat*, as a serial with an open structure (disturbances or accidents with visible consequences), and these are often made public on social networks or in texts secondary to *El cor de la ciutat* (in magazines or the internet itself), we cannot include these analytical variables without also studying the broadcaster.

- 10 The last Gay Pride Demonstration organised by the State Federation of Lesbians, Homosexuals, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (FELGTB) and the Madrid group COGAM, held in Madrid on 3 July 2010, was in fact under the slogan of "For Trans equality". They demanded diversity be recognised in education and employment, as well as measures of positive discrimination and a health system that facilitates the transsexualising process (including surgical alteration) in all autonomous communities. And they asked the World Health Organisation to remove transsexuality from the international classification of illnesses.
- 11 The first season includes the verbal tale of former Welsh priest Matt Collins regarding assisted suicide. The second narrates the tough situation experienced by the Peris family when they disconnect their daughter, brain dead after a traffic accident, while the fifth season presents us with Toni Esteve as a terminally ill patient who is planning his suicide. But the most explicit discourses on death reappear in the epilogue to *El cor de la ciutat* in the plot "celebrating life", where the elderly characters take their leave.
- 12 Squatting as social conflict related to property speculation appears on *El cor de la ciutat* just after the squatters were removed from La Makabra and then Can Ricart at the end of 2006. The old industrial warehouse in Poblenou (Barcelona) was squatted for six years as a home and civic and cultural centre where members of stage schools or renowned circus troops could rehearse, such as Circ Cric, who spoke out against the police action.
- 13 Euthanasia and assisted suicide are issues that are still being strongly debated in society and, as yet, there have not been any consequent solid political initiatives or changes in Spain's legal framework. By chance, the first TV incursion (Periodistas, Globomedia, 1998) precedes the most relevant news item, that of Ramón Sampederro. *El cor de la ciutat* covers this issue in 2004, at a time when new imaginaries for this are being constructed via fiction (Mar adentro, by Alejandro Amenábar, is contemporary to this). The controversy still rages and is visible today in other formats (e.g. Banda ampla, 28 April 2011).
The reinsertion of serial rapists was also an object of debate in parallel to the serial being broadcast. The leading reference is Martínez Sigul, "the second rapist of the Eixample", who came out of prison in May 2007, in accordance with the old Penal Code: he had not been rehabilitated but had completed 16 years of a 65-year sentence for 14 sexual assaults. He returned to prison in October 2009, awaiting the fourth sentence accumulated since he had left. A legal debate has been started due to social pressure and the dissemination of scientific studies on sexual delinquents that cannot be rehabilitated.
- 14 On the one hand, some of the social issues belonging to the epigraphs of reinsertion into society, domestic violence (child abuse and child sexual abuse), harassment or the generic issue of delinquency are included and, on the other hand, some of the problems we have grouped under the umbrella of risk of marginalisation (transsexuality and immigration). It should be noted, however, that not all these are in line with the variable minimal relation to the network of social relations described by the serial.

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Constructing the identity of youth in fiction: interviews with professionals

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Abstract

Creativity is a fundamental part of producing fiction but, on television, production processes and the target of programmes also play a decisive role in designing characters and plots. This article summarises the opinions expressed by 18 professionals of TV fiction, interviewed as part of research into the social construction of the identity of youth in Catalan and Spanish TV fiction. The sources of inspiration, the construction of stereotypes and the most common types of young characters, the construction of credibility the use of language and fashion are some of the aspects explored. In spite of numerous coincidences, the answers present some significant differences depending on the type of TV channel or the age of the scriptwriters.

Key words

Young people, television, fiction, interviews, professionals.

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Resum

La creativitat és una part fonamental de la producció de ficció, però, a la televisió, els processos productius i el target dels programes també tenen un paper determinant en el disseny de personatges i de trames. Aquest article resumeix les opinions expressades per 18 professionals de la ficció televisiva, entrevistats en el marc d'una recerca sobre la construcció social de la identitat juvenil a la ficció televisiva catalana i espanyola. Les fonts d'inspiració, la construcció d'estereotips i les tipologies de personatges joves més recurrents, la construcció de versemblança, l'ús del llenguatge o la moda són alguns dels aspectes explorats. Malgrat les nombroses coincidències, les respostes presenten algunes diferències significatives en funció del tipus de cadena televisiva o de l'edat dels guionistes.

Paraules clau

Joves, televisió, ficció, entrevistes, professionals.

The importance attributed historically to information, both in forming public opinion and in terms of influencing viewers, partly explains the large number of studies on the journalistic profession carried out as from the 1980s.² Nevertheless, the predominance achieved by TV fiction in the 21st century has been decisive in increasing the bibliography of Anglo-Saxon origin on the processes involved in producing fiction.³ Complementary to this, the diversification of the economic exploitation of fiction is exponentially multiplying merchandising.

Along the line of contributions such as those by Nazzaro (2002) and Priggé (2005), studying the contribution of professionals in TV fiction by directly interviewing the professionals, this article summarises the opinions expressed by 18 interviewees as part of research into the social construction of the identity of youth in Catalan and Spanish TV fiction. The people interviewed are mostly scriptwriters, whom Priggé considers to be those ultimately responsible for the impact of a project of fiction (Priggé 2005, 1). There is also one director, three producers (one of whom directs) and a TV producer, as well as the collective interview with the fiction production group of Notro TV.⁴ Finally, we have included quotes from scriptwriters from the two most popular series among young Catalans in

2009: *Física o Química* and *El Internado*, from interviews published on different websites specialising in television.

The quality and large number of Catalan professionals in the area of TV fiction, most of whom work both in Catalonia and Madrid, has led us to include a large number of Catalans. Another point of interest in selecting the people to be interviewed has been the possibility of having five young professionals (four scriptwriters and one producer responsible for one of the large Catalan production houses, Diagonal TV). The discrepancies or coincidences between young professionals and the rest can help us to understand the role of professionalisation in representing the young image.

The director and TV producer Lluís Maria Güell and the scriptwriter Javier Olivares were interviewed in depth, while a standard interview model was used for the rest of the professionals, with a pre-established script, differentiated according to the professional groups. Based on an initial draft of a general interview, three slightly different questionnaires were developed for scriptwriters, directors and/or TV producers and producers, respectively. Except for the two in-depth interviews, where interpersonal communication between the interviewee and interviewer was essential, the rest of the professionals

chose how they preferred to do the interview (face-to-face, by telephone or in writing). Although the oral interviews were carried out with some flexibility, the script always formed the backbone of all the interviews.

The interview script was structured around the construction of young characters and the processes of identification or projection intended in the viewer. In the first case, the interviewees reflected on the need to adapt to the programme's target, the sources of inspiration, the use of stereotypes and the development of character. The aspects of the relationship with the viewer considered by the professionals focused on the construction of credibility and on activating mechanisms of identification or projection. In order to make it easier for the reader, we have always grouped together coinciding replies, systematically contrasted with any qualifications or discrepancies that have been observed throughout the analysis.

1. Including young characters due to thematic requirements or aesthetics?

In general, the people interviewed state that whether young characters are included depends on the characteristics of the production (a mix of the channel, production company, plot and target audience). Xavier Uriz and Mercè Clascà think that young characters are mainly included due to the potential audience; i.e. the target for the TV product.

Young scriptwriters give a lot of weight to the characteristics of the broadcasters. Agustín Ortiz points out that including characters aged between 15 and 29 is related to the channel's policy. Ángela Armero believes that channels with a preferably young target are more likely to produce fiction aimed at this audience, while Irene Pascual contrasts the systematic introduction of characters of all ages in Spain with the United States, where fiction is always aimed at a more specific audience.

Joan Sol and Piti Español state that the channels are demanding increasingly more family fiction, representing all age ranges. However, Lluís Arcarazo points out the dramatic need to include young characters in programmes that are not aimed specifically at a young target; Kiko Ruiz⁶ shares his opinion. Similarly, according to Irene Pascual, young productions also require adult characters so that the young people have someone to confront and to show rebelliousness (parents, teachers, etc.).

Among other reasons that warrant the introduction of young characters, Manuel Ríos and Victoria Dal Vera state that "youth provides a breath of fresh air and elements that are very valuable for a series, just like in life". Along the same lines, Sergi Pompermayer talks of "the cult of youth", which leads channels and production companies to believe that young characters "sell" more. Paula Ortiz also believes that beauty and appeal are the main values of a production environment in which commercial aims take priority over any other consideration.

Table 1. Reasons for including young characters in fiction

Need to attract a potential target and establish the channel's image
Demand for family fiction by channels in order to reach general audiences
Aesthetic and specific thematic reasons related to young people

Source: Author.

2. Sources of inspiration

According to the people interviewed, the main sources of inspiration for developing young characters are life itself and reality per se,⁷ in accordance with the replies of the great North American scriptwriters (Mark Brazill, Alan Ball, Dave Hackell, etc.) in the book by Prigge (2005). This is a compendium of resources, such as life experiences on the one hand and contact and dialogue with young people on the other, although there are scriptwriters such as Joan Sol, Lluís Arcarazo, Kiko Ruiz or Ángela Armero, and also the producer Alexandre Bas Abril, who admit that they include events and behaviour inspired by the news (bullying, violence towards teachers, new forms of communication, etc.).⁸

Raimon Masllorens also resorts to personal experience but adds the importance of the creator's audiovisual background and, together with Uriz and Pascual, admits that he is inspired by other fictional characters. Joan Sol, meanwhile, contradicts this last point and states that, in general, this kind of reference is avoided, as does Agustín Ortiz. Like Sol, the director Lluís Maria Güell also believes that inspiration comes from life's experiences and that the use of already successful models of fiction is dangerous. Kiko Ruiz, TV producer of *Ventdelplà*, says that, in his case, characters are also developed based on the requests by the Catalan government, which asks to include contemporary social issues, such as immigration, AIDS, abortion, drugs, etc.

In conclusion, there are many sources of inspiration used by scriptwriters when developing characters, to the extent that it is practically impossible to determine them, as pointed out by Ríos San Martín and Dal Vera.

Table 2. Sources of inspiration to include young characters in fiction

Characters based on one's own life and reality presented in the media
Including experiences from films and other fictional programmes
Characters with social traits defined by public institutions

Source: Author.

3. Constructing young characters

Ten interviewees believe that there is no kind of difference in constructing young characters compared with adults and, as stated by Sol, “the same scriptwriters for the series construct characters of all ages”. It is therefore not a question of age but of degree of complexity, says Pompermayer, while Masllorens highlights the tendency to stereotype young characters, principally because they are secondary characters in most cases.

Curiously, the younger scriptwriters do see appreciable differences in the construction of different characters. Paula Ortiz claims that young people, unlike children, adults or the elderly, are not based on the range of the real population but are rather a mix of trends and aesthetic fashions. Irene Pascual remembers that attempts are often made to integrate young characters within an urban tribe or to label them under a social group, something that is generally not done with adult characters. Agustín Ortiz points out that, in the case of young characters, the first thing we must know about them is their age, a characteristic that immediately determines their activity.

Javier Olivares takes the middle way when he states that the development of characters is the same for all age ranges but adds that, when a character is created, a logic is applied that varies according to the age. However, a dozen scriptwriters admit, one way or another, the importance of age in constructing character. Arcarazo, Ríos and Dal Vera agree that age constitutes an important part of the character, as it has its own characteristics, goals and conflicts at each stage of life and this is what enables them to establish the objectives, desires, concerns and expectations of each one.

3.1. Specific or constructed characters?

All the people interviewed defended the position that specifying the features of a character from the start is not at all incompatible with allowing the character to develop but rather that these are different undertakings. Sol believes that one thing is a consequence of the other, from the time when a coherent development depends on a precise definition of the character. Ríos and Dal Vera state that good fiction requires both a solid initial definition and consequent development as the story develops. Uriz believes that, on occasion, the need for characters to develop might even make them escape the hands of their creator and therefore recommends defining them very well right from the time they are created. Pompermayer also qualifies the importance of a character’s initial construction.

In general, the professionals think that it is simpler to relate characters to each other and create coherent plots with their environment, problems and personality; at the same time, these also stop the character from becoming distorted and losing credibility and realism.⁹ In other words, the characters must always preserve the basic elements of their personality, what makes them attractive and identifiable in the eyes of the viewer but, as pointed out by Arcarazo, the need for characters

to evolve is inherent in fictional stories. Masllorens distinguishes between the cinema, where a character’s development or transformation is gradual, subtle and especially partial, and stories told on television. However, the young producer Bas Abril states that the decision to define characters from the start or to make them develop with the story is subject to their importance in the programme (leading or secondary).

Apart from the cases of actors leaving a programme voluntarily, radical development or the disappearance of a character depends both on intrinsic factors (a plot line running out, introducing new lines, etc.) as well as extrinsic factors (viewer preferences) but also on the quality of acting and how well the actor suits the character. For example, Pascual says that, if a character gets more attention thanks to the actor playing the role, then he or she is given more weight, while Güell points out that, when the wrong actor has been chosen, the only thing you can do is “get rid of them and look for another”, otherwise the character will also disappear.

3.2. Typologies or stereotypes?

Seven interviewees believe that the range of young characters that might feature in TV fiction is highly varied. Referring to fiction on TV3, Sol says that they are like the young people in any Catalan town, “with the same concerns and problems as their peers in real life”. The scriptwriter Arcarazo, the team of the production company Notro TV and the producer Bas Abril agree that, rather than types, the fundamental element of any young character is conflict, a typical characteristic of their age. According to Arcarazo, there are some key issues that must be included in constructing young characters, such as “discovering love, tension between freedom and commitment, between affection and the need to experience things that makes them grow as people”. Along the same lines, the young scriptwriter Àngela Armero points out that the narrative appeal of youth lies in the fact that it is the time of life when the most important decisions are taken (work, partner, etc.).

Ríos and Dal Vera, Pascual, Olivares, Paula Ortiz and Armero herself outline types of young characters. Armero points out that most young characters are problematic, rebellious and provocative, and that some stereotypes abound, such as unsure people, those who flirt with drugs, etc. Among other stereotypes, Ríos and Dal Vera highlight “the ladies man, the girly swot, the thug who couldn’t care less, the shy intelligent female, the popular sexy woman, the freak, the funny guy out for a good time, etc.”. Agustín Ortiz claims that typologies need to “seem very real” and particularly that a lot of things need to happen.

Olivares also says that young characters are based on universal stereotypes, including “the handsome guy, pretty girl, the one who’s not handsome, the hero, the girlfriend, etc.” and Clascà recalls the dramatic functions invariably found in any kind of plot: “the star, the antagonist, the star’s friend, the romantic character, etc.”. However, Pascual clarifies that the identity of characters depends on the place they occupy within the group.

Five scriptwriters are critical of the repetition of young stereotypes. Paula Ortiz states that, although Spanish fiction has not copied certain North American archetypes (the cheerleader, the member of the science club, the captain of the American football team, etc.), it has created much more dangerous clichés, such as alternative types, the sexy, attractive girl or the problematic guy, among others. Similarly, Pompermayer states that he does not watch much Spanish young fiction, precisely due to the abundance of pigeon-holed and stereotyped characters. “A very specific kind of young person is portrayed, basically urban youngsters, from the area of Madrid, essentially concerned about what they look like and about scoring”. Uriz summarises the young archetypes in fiction in the following terms: “Flat characters with problems, idiots who fall in love with idiots who have flat problems”.

3.3. Characteristics and values

Seven of the people interviewed agree that there is no “table” with characters’ values and traits. But, while four insist that each character is different from the rest, the other three dare to list a few essential elements, easily identifiable in young characters. Arcarazo believes that young characters are different from adults principally in how they tackle conflict. Sol demands coherence and thoroughness in constructing young characters, while Uriz claims there is a need to treat them based on specific concerns and values and in accordance with their age.

The young scriptwriters agree on the basic ingredients of young programmes. For Ángela Armero, these are “large doses of falling in love, passion, sex, idealism, rebellion, rivalry, non-conformism, risky behaviour and bad relations with their parents and the previous generation”, while Paula Ortiz adds “sexual conflict and initiation to sex and affection” to this list. Irene Pascual highlights the usual characterisation of young characters with “a more open mind” regarding issues such as immigration, ethical differences and homosexuality. Among the adult scriptwriters, the team from the Notro TV production company highlight physical attraction and Pompermayer criticises the abundance of young stereotypes associated with situations such as going out at night, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, sleeping around, etc. Along the same lines, Ríos and Dal Vera state that, since the start of humanity, there have been characteristics and values that we all like and that, although TV fiction does not have to reflect them, it usually does: “beauty, sensuality, braveness, intelligence, a sense of humour, originality, freedom, a talent for something, self-confident people, charming people, ingenuity, etc.”.

Curiously, the young Armero claims that the difference according to gender and format does not substantially alter characters’ values or traits, while Ríos and Dal Vera, as well as Sergi Pompermayer and the producer Bas Abril, think the opposite.

3.4. Polarised or ambivalent characters?

There are 13 interviewees who prefer non-polarised characters. In other words, those with both positive and negative values

and traits because, in addition to being credible, they provide more scope in terms of plot and narrative. However, the young scriptwriters state that “good guys” and “bad guys” are frequent in fiction, as we are reminded by Pascual. Agustín Ortiz admits that, although TV fiction has been trying to move away the good/bad dichotomy for some time now, in genres such as detective series there will always be “cops and robbers”, i.e. good guys and bad guys, from the time when these genres are based on a constant reference to reality.

The characteristics of the different genres and formats play a key role in characterisation. Sol, Paula Ortiz, Arcarazo, Ruiz, Masllorens and Bas Abril state that comedy, especially sitcoms, always present polarised, stereotypical, archetypal, radical and even caricatured characters, while drama tends to try to balance the good guys and the bad guys. On the other hand, Piti Español does not entirely agree with these professionals and states that, in serials, polarised characters work better, especially in the case of the bad guys. Perhaps this is due to what Pompermayer says when he states that, the more polarised a character, the greater the conflict and “the more hate or compassion aroused by the characters in the audience”. Armero and Olivares also confirm the polarisation of characters in serials, accentuated by the fact that this kind of product is less demanding. Masllorens agrees on this point when he says that, in the most popular products, “basically, what people do expect from you is to identify in half a second who is good and who is bad and that the bad guy should be as bad as possible and the good as good as possible”.

Finally, five interviewees refer to the possible differences between public and private channels in character polarisation. Sol maintains that private channels can take greater risks with clearly bad characters, while public channels must be more careful and watch any conduct and behaviour that might be offensive or offend sensibilities. Other scriptwriters, such as Paula Ortiz and the Notro TV team, also agree that there are differences between channels, as does Masllorens, who stresses that on public channels “there are controls and private channels don’t have such controls”. On the other hand, both Pompermayer and Bas Abril state that there isn’t much difference in how fictional young characters are constructed on public and private channels. Agustín Ortiz goes further and believes that all public channels today function as if they were private and that, consequently, there’s no difference regarding how characters are defined.

4. Constructing credibility

Regarding the question of whether young characters are realistic or not, the interviewees range between “yes, always” and “it depends on the genre”. Clascà, Sol, Español, Bas Abril and the Notro TV team state that the youngsters represented are realistic. Sol, Armero and Arcarazo establish differences between genres and remind us that the characters in comedies are often

Table 3. Constructing young characters in fiction

There are no differences in how young and adult characters are constructed
Specified personality traits from the start but with the possibility to develop
Young characters range between stereotypes and general typologies
They are frequently related to values such as love, sex, rebellion, beauty, etc.
The preference is to construct young characters with non-polarised traits
Disagreement regarding the tendency to polarise depending on genre and format
Influence of the channel's image and ownership

Source: Author.

caricaturised. But Mariano Baselga, executive producer of *El Internado*, and Luis Morillo, scriptwriter for the same series, claims that the characters are realistic even in a fantasy thriller such as theirs.¹⁰

Ríos and Dal Vera, Armero, Arcarazo and Ruiz mention the concept of credibility to explain the influence of the genre or format on constructing a more or less realistic character. Pompermayer reminds us that if characters were realistic instead of credible, they might be extremely flat, “basically because, in real life, fortunately, not as many things tend to happen as they do in a fictional series”. The director Lluís Maria Güell is of a similar opinion to Pompermayer and notes that fiction condenses stories because “otherwise it would be incredibly boring”.

Fiver interviewees question the “realism” of young characters in Catalan and Spanish fiction. Paula Ortiz believes that, unlike other age ranges, young characters are not realistic at all. “Youth is much richer, multifaceted, surprising and alive [...] than what is shown by TV fiction”. An idea also outlined by Sergi Pompermayer when he states that the young people represented are only a part of those that really exist. Masllorens and Olivares agree with the position taken by Ortiz and Pompermayer, although with some nuances. In this respect, Masllorens points out that, in constructing young characters, the perception adults have of them takes priority. This same scriptwriter adds that it is considered more profitable to show extreme things and situations taken to the limit, such as those experienced by the characters in *Física o Química*, rather than common situations that would be experienced by a normal young person.

4.1. Identification between viewers and characters

All the interviewees agree that it's fundamental for TV viewers to identify with the characters, although they justify this from different perspectives.¹¹ Both Español and Armero state this

identification forms the basis of “gaining viewer loyalty” while Arcarazo adds that striving for identification forms part of the dramatisation process. Paula Ortiz also confirms the importance of identification but reminds us that it's not always achieved.

Uriz underlines the importance of empathy with the characters, while other interviewees, such as Pompermayer and Agustín Ortiz, place age at the centre of the identification process. Bas Abril also mentions the importance of age and reminds us that, while adult viewers identify young people with their own children, the opposite rarely happens.¹²

Sol believes that young TV viewers are much more demanding that the rest in terms of representing their peers. “If the young characters that are supposed to represent them don't think, talk, feel or act like them, they reject them and don't want anything to do with the series”. Félix Jiménez Velado also observes this radical nature of young viewers against anything that might seem “moralising” to them. “If young people suspect moralising in the dialogues or content, they give up on the series”.¹³

4.2. The use of language

Five interviewees state the widespread belief that one of the most important elements to achieve identification with young viewers is how the characters talk, a statement that authors such as Valeria Selinger also believe to be fundamental (Selinger 2008, 73). Félix Jiménez Velado claims that scripts attempt to introduce neutral language that young people like but doesn't bother the parents and admits that producers demand from dialogue writers that the characters should speak like the young people being represented. “Producers ask us to make them talk like young people or be more explicit in sex in order to sell the series”.¹⁵

Ruiz believes that the language of young characters is key to achieving a realistic result. “Language is more important among young people than adults. If the words in a script for a young person aren't well chosen, even though the acting is good, it won't be realistic”. This TV producer and director also believes that credibility through the use of Catalan must take into account the fact that this language exists side by side with Spanish, because “there are some things they say in Spanish when they're talking”.

Pascual and Güell highlight the role of young actors in the use of language on television, to the extent that some of the professionals adapt the script to the current speech of young people, as pointed out by Pascual. “I try not to put too much slang in because the actors themselves already include some slang, words”. Velado points out that the way of speaking and the voice are essential complements to the character, added by the actor. “We do create characters on paper without a face, without a body, without a voice and then they give them a body and we mould ourselves a little to that”. On the other hand, Javier Olivares believes that actors should adjust to the language of the script, albeit admitting the need for advice on the part of professionals.

Table 4. Constructing credibility in young characters in fiction

Young characters must be more credible than realistic
Professionals disagree regarding the degree of realism in Spanish fiction
It is considered fundamental for viewers to identify with the characters
Age affinity is a decisive factor when identifying with the characters
Characters' language is key to achieving the desired effects of credibility

Source: Author.

5. Characters and fashion

Ten interviewees state that they do not aim to set trends, fashions or styles through the characters. Ruiz, Pompermayer and Sol claim that they have never worked on series that have this objective but Sol states that it is normal to receive letters from viewers asking for information on the clothes worn by characters or elements of the set.

Pascual thinks that, rather than setting trends, TV fiction attempts to show them and reflect them. Clascà, Arcarazo and Armero don't think the aim is to set trends either but admit that doing so means being able to connect with the public and that this is yet another consequence of the programme's success. Armero adds that trying to set trends would be like "starting to build a house with the roof".

Paula Ortiz criticises the constant desire for identification through fashion trends and claims that characters are desired in TV fiction that set these trends. "They want 'Amayas Salamancas' and 'Hugos Silvas'. People who set trends rather than constructing deep affective experiences with stories that reflect young people and teenagers". Similarly, Agustín Ortiz believes that TV is always a platform for beauty, youth and, evidently, it also "creates trends in many things: music, style, fashion, etc."

Español also believes that private channels do try to set trends through fiction. Masllorens agrees with Español and says that this is the reason why brands give clothes for free but he does point out that perhaps this isn't done deliberately.

Bas Abril claims that setting trends depends largely on the style and type of series being produced and notes that merchandising plays a key role in series aimed at a young target. Ríos and Dal Vera do believe that artistic and commercial gains are desired but that the phenomenon has already happened and the effect has been noticed, as demonstrated by the characters in *UPA Dance* or *Física o Química*.

Table 5. Fashion and young characters in fiction

Young characters' fashion attempts to show and reflect that of youngsters in reality
Disagreements regarding the construction of characters that set trends or fashions
Differences between chains in the importance given to fashion and style

Source: Author.

6. Conclusions

The interviews carried out confirm our initial hypothesis regarding the broad range of freedom (within a market logic) enjoyed by scriptwriters in constructing fictional characters once the corresponding production company and channel have determined the genre and overall theme for the programme. However, the answers given highlight that the programme's target and the ownership of the channel that broadcasts it (public or private) exercises a self-regulating role, to some extent comparable to the political orientation or ideology of journalistic organisations.

There are many different reasons why young characters are chosen to appear in a fiction programme, starting with the desire to reach this target, the most highly coveted by the channels. The requirements of the plot, a request by the production company or the inevitable association between youth and beauty in a society where aesthetics play a key role in the construction of social representations are other reasons acknowledged by the people interviewed. Fashion, design and aesthetics in general are considered to be highly efficient vehicles to capture the youth target, although a programme is unlikely to set any trends.

The interviewees do not see any notable differences between the construction of young and adult characters and point out that there is no "table" of values or traits for young characters. But while some believe that there are not many differences when constructing a young character compared with any other from a different age group, other interviewees dare to list a few elements related systematically with young characters: going out at night, consuming alcohol or drugs irresponsibly, sleeping around, unwanted pregnancies, idealism, rebellion, rivalry, non-conformism, risky behaviour, bad relationship with parents and the previous generation, etc. Scriptwriters take their inspiration from their own experiences although the youngest ones admit to being influenced by television and cinema, principally North American.

All the professionals believe it is necessary to define characters well from the start but with sufficient room for them to grow and develop. One part of them also recognises the role of the genre and format in the creation of more or less stereotypical characters, although they tend to avoid polarised charac-

ters. However, publicly owned channels and the image of some of these may influence both the construction of characters and the events narrated.

It is essential for young TV viewers to identify with the characters because this target is much more demanding than the rest of the age groups in everything that affects them in one way or another. The aim is to make young characters more credible rather than realistic and the narrated events are inspired by the real world, although everyone believes it's necessary for there to be a great deal of conflict to ensure a lot of things happen in the plot. How the young characters speak is one of the most important elements in order to produce this effect of realism and to encourage viewers to identify with them.

The agreement in most of the answers given by the interviewees and the certainty with which all of them define the process of constructing young characters in TV fiction provide an unmistakable indication of the practices accepted by professionals. A fact that is reinforced by the disagreements shown between the younger and older scriptwriters, highlighting that creativity does not exclude, at all, the professionalisation of this group of people.

Notes

- 1 Aquest article ha estat escrit en el marc de la recerca *La representació dels joves a la ficció televisiva catalana i espanyola: construcció d'identitats, atribució de rols socials i correspondència amb la realitat*, finançada per l'Agència Catalana de la Joventut de Catalunya. En el projecte, dirigit per la professora Charo Lacalle, hi han participat les investigadores Beatriz Gómez, Manuela Russo, Mariluz Sánchez, Lucía Trabajo i Berta Trullàs.
- 2 Vegeu la clàssica síntesi d'Andrea Garbarino (1985).
- 3 Vegeu Hyde 2003, Readman 2003, Meibach i Duran 2004, Douglas 2005 i Smith 2009.
- 4 El corpus d'anàlisi comprèn tots els programes de ficció d'estrena emesos a TV3 i a les cadenes estatals al llarg de 2008, amb un total de 306 personatges de 15 a 29 anys, 11 *focus groups* realitzats en deu localitats catalanes entre el maig i el juny de 2009, i les entrevistes a professionals presentades en aquest article.
- 5 Vegeu la relació de noms amb un breu currículum de cadascun dels entrevistats a l'annex, al final de l'article.
- 6 Ruiz posa l'exemple del Biel, el fill de la protagonista de *Ventdelplà*, que ha obligat els guionistes a crear un entorn juvenil, incorporant-hi un grup de joves i desenvolupant diferents trames al seu voltant.
- 7 L'analista de guió Miguel Machalski arriba al punt de considerar que els personatges són sempre, en certa manera, *alter egos* de l'autor (Machalski 2009, 68).
- 8 Els professionals nord-americans també insisteixen en la importància de l'experiència personal en la construcció dels personatges. Vegeu Selinger 2008, 77.
- 9 Igual que els professionals, els autors que estudien la construcció dels personatges a la ficció consideren que la seva definició inicial ha de deixar sempre un marge suficient per tal que puguin créixer i evolucionar (Selinger 2008, 80).
- 10 *Hablamos con los guionistas*, <Antena3 vídeos.com http://www.antena3.com/PortalA3com/El-Internado/Hablamos-con-los-guionistas/PA_84035_9850744_9850685> [Última consulta: 25 de juliol de 2009].
- 11 Pràcticament tots els autors que parlen de la construcció dels personatges coincideixen a subratllar la importància de les emocions per atraure l'espectador, des dels formalistes russos fins a aportacions més recents com la d'Anne Huet (2006, 52).
- 12 Chion parla d'identificació (favorable o desfavorable) i fins i tot de contraidentificació, quan l'espectador es creu millor que el personatge (Chion 2009, 216).
- 13 AGENCIA EFE. *Expertos iberoamericanos analizan el lenguaje de los SMS y las series de televisión para jóvenes*. 10 d'abril de 2008, a <<http://noticias.terra.es/2008/genteycultura/0410/actualidad/expertos-iberoamericanos-analizan-el-lenguaje-de-los-sms-y-las-series-de-televisi-on-para-jovenes.aspx>> [Última consulta: 7 de desembre de 2009].
- 14 Vegeu la nota 12.
- 15 *Op. cit.*
- 16 Vegeu la nota 9.
- 17 *Op. cit.*
- 18 *Let's FoQ 2*, Antena3 vídeos.com <http://www.antena3videos.com/video/5444/fisica-o-quimica/let%C2%BFs-foq-programa-2/lets-foq-2-_parte1> [Última consulta: 29 de juliol de 2010].

Annex: list of people interviewed

Àngela Armero, young scriptwriter on *MIR* and *20 tantos* (Telecinco), and *18 RDC* (Antena 3 TV), among others.

Lluís Arcarazo, scriptwriter on *El cor de la ciutat*, *Serrallonga*, etc. (TV3), and on the film *Salvador*, among others.

Alexandre Bas Abril, head of Content and New TV Formats at Diagonal TV. He has taken part in *700 euros* and *90-60-90* (Antena 3 TV); *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (La 1); *Mar de fons*, *Ventdelplà*, *Zoo* and *Infidels* (TV3), among others.

Mercè Clascà, scriptwriter on *Calle Nueva* (La 1) and the TV film *Laia, regal d'aniversari* (TV3), among others.

Victoria dal Vera, actress, scriptwriter, dialogue writer and documentary maker. She has worked on *Yo soy el Solitario* and *Raphael* (Antena 3 TV), and *El comisario* (Telecinco), among others.

Piti Español, scriptwriter and co-creator of *El cor de la ciutat* and of *Majoria absoluta* (TV3), among others.

Lluís Maria Güell, director of *Les veus del Pamano*, *Ventdelplà* (TV3), *La señora* and *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (La 1), among others.

Raimon Masllorens, executive producer of *13 anys... i un dia!*, *A pera picada* and the TV film *Pacient 33* (TV3), among others.

Notro TV, subsidiary of the production company Notro Films for television, responsible for *Cuestión de sexo* and *HKM* (Cuatro); *La familia Mata* and *Doctor Mateo* (Antena 3 TV); *Plan América* (La 1) and *Los simuladores* (Telecinco), among others.

Javier Olivares, executive creative director, scriptwriter and responsible for the original idea behind *Infidels*; scriptwriter on *Ventdelplà* and *Zoo* (TV3), *Los Serrano* (Telecinco) and *Los hombres de Paco* (Antena 3 TV), among others.

Paula Ortiz Álvarez, young scriptwriter and director of three shorts and one feature film. Scriptwriter for the children's educational series *Hoobs Enciclopedia*.

Agustín Ortiz, young scriptwriter who has written and directed several shorts. He has written plots for the serial *Llàgrima de sang* (IB3).

Irene Pascual, young scriptwriter who has worked on *Águila Roja* (La 1), *Un golpe de suerte* (Telecinco) and *HKM* (Cuatro).

Sergi Pompermayer, scriptwriter for *13 anys... i un dia!*, *Porca misèria*, *L'un per l'altre* (2003), *Jet Lag*, *Plats bruts*, *Lo Cartanyà* (TV3), among others.

Manuel Ríos San Martín, director of Fiction for the production company Boca Boca. Scriptwriter and director of *Yo soy el Solitario*, *Compañeros* (Antena 3 TV). He has participated in *Médico de familia* (Telecinco) and *Mis adorables vecinos* (Antena 3 TV), among others.

Kiko Ruiz, TV producer for the serial *Ventdelplà* (TV3), for which he has also directed some episodes, as well as on *Zoo* (2008) and *Mar de fons* (2006-2007), among others.

Joan Sol, fiction content coordinator for the Drama Department of TV3. Scriptwriter on *El cor de la ciutat* and on comedies such as *Pobre noi* (TV3), among others.

Xavier Uriz Nadal, scriptwriter and theatre director. Scriptwriter on *Mossèn capellà*, *Llàgrima de sang* and *Laberint de passions* (IB3), among others.

Interviews published on websites specialising in television

Mariano Baselga,¹⁶ scriptwriter and executive producer on *El Internado*, *Los hombres de Paco* (Antena 3 TV); *Los Serrano*, *Los 80* and *20 tantos* (Telecinco), among others.

Luis Murillo,¹⁷ scriptwriter on *El Internado* (Antena 3 TV) and *Génesis. En la mente del asesino* (Cuatro), among others.

Jaime Vaca,¹⁸ script coordinator for *Física o Química* (Antena 3 TV); scriptwriter on *Los Serrano* (Telecinco), among others.

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Young people, love and television series. The incidence of media literacy on the (re)interpretation of TV love relationships¹

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Abstract

Television series convey stereotyped representations of love relationships which viewers can identify with. Adolescents in particular may view these portrayals as models according to which they may choose to construct and/or change their own identity. This study reflects on the ability of young viewers to decode the discursive strategies of TV series and to be involved in the construction and acceptance of stereotyped love relationships. Our conclusions are founded on the analyses of several focus groups conducted with young university students. These focus groups were especially designed to understand their level of media literacy and their ability to think critically about stereotyped love relationships.

Keywords:

Media literacy, young viewers, fiction TV series, love relationships.

Resum

Les sèries de televisió ofereixen estereotips amb els quals els teleespectadors, especialment els joves, es poden identificar, i que els permeten construir i/o modificar la seva identitat en funció d'aquests models rebuts. Aquest estudi reflexiona sobre la capacitat dels joves teleespectadors de descodificar les estratègies discursives de la ficció seriada i de ser participants en l'acceptació i la construcció d'estereotips amorosos. La reflexió sorgeix de l'elaboració i de l'anàlisi de diversos focus groups amb joves universitaris amb la intenció de comprendre'n el grau d'alfabetització mediàtica i la capacitat de pensar críticament sobre els estereotips amorosos.

Paraules clau

Alfabetització audiovisual, joventut, sèries de ficció televisiva, relacions amoroses.

1. Introducció

"There are people who would never have fallen in love if they had not heard there was such a thing"
(La Rochefoucauld, a Illouz 2009, 209)

The postmodern scenario is the environment where emotions and the need to "feel" take on particular importance. It comes as no surprise that these are the times of psychology, "emotional intelligence", coaching, psychotherapies, etc. In academic debate regarding the social functions of the media, values and uses explicitly related to emotional communication have also been considered. Considerations based on both psychology and sociology and communication theory, which speaks of the rise of the *emotional sphere* and the construction of a self narrative (Bauman 2001; Illouz 2008; Sibilia 2008; Touraine

and Khosrokhavar 2002). Through emotional experiences we gradually construct a kind of *emotional architecture* that will individualise us and differentiate us from the rest. One of the most relevant characteristics of our time is, in fact, the progressive consolidation of "personal internal space" as an individual's principle demand.

Together with today's individualism, we can also recognise social and cultural markers that influence both the production of aspects of personal identity per se and also how they affect what we should expect from a specific situation. If today's individualism is characterised by personalisation based on freedom of choice, on abandoning old social conventions and on the possibility to "create oneself" continuously and flexibly (Lipovetsky 2002), we feel it is pertinent to ask ourselves about the management of media influence as mechanisms to reproduce identity that offer images to identify with and negotiation processes that allow the receiver to reproduce and/or

innovate the models received. Does today's quest for maximum differentiation exist side by side with a collective imaginary? Does this collective imaginary feed audiovisual fiction? It seems that, in this new *postmodern culture of compulsory personalisation*, we must ask ourselves how this is represented in the media.

In previous studies we have attempted to observe the discourse regarding the emotions expressed in contemporary audiovisual narrative. Based on fiction TV series, we have extensively reflected on the types of emotions in play in love relationships (Medina [et al.] 2007, 2008) and, more recently, on the models of parenthood, particularly on motherhood (Aran [et al.] 2009), always analysing their representation in fiction series. Based on the work by Williams (1975) and Ang (1985), we have constructed a category-based model (Medina [et al.] 2007, 23-24) in which three levels of analysis interact:

- The structure of social feeling (ESS in Catalan) or the general framework shared by most of society regarding a theme, in our case the construction of love relationships, and which forms part of the dominant feeling;
- The structure of narrative feeling (ENS) or an analysis of the media story and how media text tackles the reality under analysis (in our case, the feeling of love);
- The structure of experienced feeling (ESV), in other words, how media stories are interpreted by specific social actors, how they react to TV narrative and how they creatively (re)interpret the structure of social feeling.

The main aim of this work is focused essentially on the third level of analysis of the category-based model ("the structure of experienced feeling" or ESV); in other words, a study of **the ability of young TV viewers to decode the discursive strategies of fiction series as participants in the construction of stereotyped love relationships**.

Our research findings have helped us to understand to what extent young people are active interpreters of the messages reaching them regarding stereotyped love relationships (symbolic violence, love relationships, stereotypes of genre and of sexual options, etc.) through fiction TV series; where the references come from that are used to make these interpretations and whether they are related to the person's degree of media education. To achieve this aim, we are looking at a young target aged between 20 and 23, from different first degree university courses, some with an education in media (communication faculty) and others with no media education in their curriculum (faculties of fine arts, architecture and economics) in order to discover the similarities or differences in their interpretative procedures, gathering data by means of focus groups.

Finally, we also look at the relationship between the love models represented and the associated emotional discourses detected in the study sample, as well as the new social realities in the individual practice of love.

2. The role of media education in managing emotional representations of love

Our research group's interest in "social imaginaries" relates directly to the study of viewers' ability to recognise normative images and ideas at a social level in media representations. On previous occasions, we have argued that TV fiction is a field of study that has yet to be explored via an analysis of emotions (Galán 2007; García Rubio 2007; Luengo 2001; Medina [et al.] 2007). In this research, we are particularly interested in observing discourse regarding the typology of emotions projected in constructing fictional models of love. We understand fiction as a space that is nourished from, contributes to or anticipates the social reality via mechanisms of credibility, more or less contained or subjected to the sensationalisation of feelings.

Why is our target young people? Several authors, among whom we may highlight Morley (1986), Lull (1990) and Silverstone (1994), have extensively investigated the real link between everyday life and television's influence on the domestic space and its actors. Others point out how Silverstone's life models largely come from fiction series and even describe these spaces of entertainment as "poetic places where identity and subjects of family interest come together" (Gutiérrez and Medina 2007, 659). The characteristics of TV series, such as redundant, repetitive plots (Tous 2008-2009, 59), do not only aid the memory but also the recurrence of models. The process of constructing identity aims directly at a young target. Through TV images, young people (particularly teenagers but young people in general) can wander through the different social models and alternatives and "opt" for that identity they believe can give them security and value within their peer group. It is this dimension of the audiovisual text as cultural text that has underlies the direction of this research.

Hence also our interest in asking ourselves about the effectiveness of this relationship between media content and social reality, in relating the young audience and the fictional representation of love relationships. For example, is the narrative regarding different ways of loving fed by any aspect other than by the redundancy of models? In addition to the redundancy of models, is it possible to see a contradiction between the fictional representations of these ways of loving in terms of the social space? Moreover, do we find examples of genuine anticipation of new ways of understanding love relationships or of minority models? What is the role of gender and ideology markers? In practice, are these "new forms of social visibility" new because they exceed the previous forms or simply because they add to them?

2.1. The notion of media literacy

From our perspective, in the dialogue between media content and social reality, not only are TV viewers required with a certain type of TV consumption but also a certain activation of the function of referentiality. This is how the term *media literacy* is understood, as the result of a broader process, namely media

education. David Buckingham defines media education as the process of teaching and learning about the media; media literacy is the outcome, the media knowledge and skills learners acquire (Buckingham 2003, 21).

According to Buckingham (2003, 38), media literacy requires analysis, evaluation and critical thought. This researcher proposes dividing the broader notion of media education into four key concepts. These key concepts, adapted from his paper "Media education in the age of digital technology" (2006), are as follows:

A. Representation. All media, including electronic and digital, represent the world and do not merely reflect it. This necessarily leads to questions regarding the voices to be heard and the points of view to be represented.

B. Language. A truly literate individual is capable not only of using language but also of understanding how it works. Consequently, digital literacy must also include systematic knowledge of how the media are constructed and of the exceptional "rhetoric" of communication.

C. Production. Literacy also involves understanding who is communicating to whom and why. Within the context of the digital media, young people must be aware of the growing importance of commercial influences, especially when these are often invisible to the user. This awareness must also extend to non-commercial sources and interest groups that use the media, and increasingly the internet, as a means of persuasion and influence.

D. Audience. Finally, critical literacy involves understanding how audiences are placed centre stage and how real audiences respond. This leads us far beyond the notion of "audience" as conventionally understood in media and culture studies.

What can be deduced from this list of key concepts, as stated by Buckingham (2003, 141) on Vygotsky's distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts, is that media education can be seen as a process that helps to make implicit media knowledge explicit and, as from this initial stage of commitment, can help to systematise and generalise this knowledge and even lead to its enlargement and enhancement.

2.1.1. The notion of competence in audiovisual communication

In Catalonia, a pioneer in Spain in the development and implementation of media education in compulsory education, a distinction is made in the audiovisual area between the so-called *competence in audiovisual communication*, which is located in the sphere of concepts, of procedures, and attitudes related to what are considered to be the six dimensions of audiovisual communication. These six dimensions, although they should not be seen as separate compartments, are: language, technology, production and programming processes, ideology and values, reception and audience and, finally, the aesthetic dimension. Hence we speak of competence in audiovisual communication (CA in Catalan) as an individual's ability to interpret and analyse based on the critical reflection of audiovisual images

and messages and to express oneself with minimal correctness in the communicative area (Ferrés 2005).² As we can see, this definition almost totally coincides with the meaning of the term *media literacy*. In fact, and as pointed out by Magda Blanes (2007, 13), the document, produced by various experts throughout Spain and coordinated by Professor Joan Ferrés, is based on general objectives that constitute competence and on internationally proposed content, based on documents by UNESCO and authors and groups related to media literacy, as would be the case of Professor Buckingham, among others.

José Ignacio Aguaded, another of the media literacy pioneers, also believes that "the concept of *communicative competence* can be seen as the most appropriate orientation for the suitable integration of audiovisual messages within education" (2005, 33). And in referring to a *new media literacy*, José Manuel Pérez Tornero highlights the notion of appropriation as the mainstay of what we have seen in Buckingham in the sum of analysis and participation: "the ability to interpret and to create are united; and the best expression is the concept of appropriation. Appropriation, personal and collective, of the new possibilities offered by the media; *appropriation* aimed at serving individuals' conscious goals and objectives". (2008, 23)

We have structured the analysis and conclusions of our experience based on the development of Buckingham's proposal and with reference to the notion of competence in audiovisual communication.

3. Methodology and procedures

The approach for our research has covered the perceptions of young university TV viewers on the representation of love relationships in fiction TV series based on the access they have given us to their personal opinions, of a public or group nature (by means of four focus groups). The procedure followed was, firstly, to select the audiovisual corpus that would be shown to the subjects and, secondly, to obtain the participants, who volunteered in the different universities via the lecturers on the research team and collaborating lecturers, and without knowing the characteristics of the research. Via email, they were invited to participate in the focus groups in a classroom at the respective universities.

The fundamental variable was whether the university students had media competence, given that the main aim was to analyse their ability to decode the discursive strategies of fiction series in terms of love relationships. As a secondary aim, we wished to observe whether those people who had received media literacy training (communication students) would decode differently to students without training in communication.

We have assumed that the value of the results of the focus groups will always be contextual (Callejo 2001) and, from a constructivist approach, we have approached the analysis of the language not as a transparent way of representing reality but as a construction of this reality or experience that gives it

meaning. A "substantive" representativeness in statistics terms aims, in particular, to understand the statements individually (Corbetta 2003). We agree with the evaluation made by David Buckingham and Sara Bragg (2004) of similar research, in that case based on self-reporting, in which they point out how, even with the varied and variable interpretation made by participants (and researchers, with different methodologies), some categories can be recognised for talking about (and constructing oneself in relation to) the media representations of love, sexuality and relationships.

3.1. Audiovisual corpus

Our research methodology applies an analytical model of fiction formulated from previous studies carried out by the RETEVIS research group (Medina [et al.] 2007, 2008), which helps to analyse the content of narrative structures and illustrates their application in current series with an extensive audience, as the central thread for our critical look at these social constructions. On this occasion, the series analysed and used as a reference are two produced by US companies, *Desperate Housewives*³ and *Brothers & Sisters*⁴, and one from Catalonia, *Porca misèria*.⁵

The sample analysed comes from the first season of all three series: a total of 20 episodes in the case of *Desperate Housewives*, 23 episodes of *Brothers & Sisters* and 18 of *Porca misèria*.

Selection criteria:

- Theme: these are current fiction TV series in urban settings that present us with female stars, inviting viewers to reflect on women and on love relationships in general, without the plot being focused on the professional sphere.
- Narrative: the narrative structure of the series chosen allows us to compare two different kinds of plot structure: plural in the various interconnected central plots of *Porca misèria* (couples as nuclei) and *Desperate Housewives* (family nuclei), and choral in *Brothers & Sisters* based on a matrix nucleus, the family group and the mother, respectively, which connects with other dependent family nucleuses.
- Symbolic: both from the point of view of where the series are produced, specifically the US series, as well as how they have been received and/or distributed, these series are emblematic of the audiovisual industry's intensive power (and extensive power in the case of the two US series) and of the dominant discourses that, mostly from the US, set trends. The fact that these series have been well received by TV viewers and internet users, as can be seen in the audience figures (see the end notes describing each series) corroborate the extensive spread and implementation of this reference, be it at a national or international level.

The specific selection of the sequences or clips, always from the first season of each series, was based on the following criteria:

- Representativeness of the love relationship models, in accordance with Sternberg's model:⁶ the first two examples (*Desperate Housewives* and *Brothers & Sisters*) relate, to dif-

fering degrees, to the notion of romantic love; the third example (*Porca misèria*) shows "friendship-based" love in a young but stable couple. Kinds of couples: older heterosexual, young homosexual and young heterosexual, respectively.

- Intelligibility (without being self-conclusive scenes, they provide the minimum of elements to be able to be understood out of context)
- Similar duration and length (none lasts longer than three minutes).

In accordance with these criteria, the following were chosen: from *Desperate Housewives*, episode 4, "Idyllic images" – a dialogue between Susan and Mike about a dinner they have been invited to and reference to an incident that had happened to Susan that morning – (minutes 00:31:23-00:32:38); from *Brothers & Sisters*, episode 3, "State relations" – a dialogue between Kevin Walker and Scotty regarding the patriarch Walker – (minutes 00:28:15-00:28:56); from *Porca misèria*, episode 6, "Errare humanum est" – a dialogue between Pere and Laia about her scientific discovery and the twists and turns of a script – (minutes 00:32:48:13-00:35:10:22).

3.2. Participants

Selection criteria:

University students in their second cycle from four disciplines (Communication, C; Fine Arts, BA; Architecture, Q, and Economics, E), one of them (Communication) whose curriculum contained media education. The respective universities are both public (UB, UPC, UPF) and private (URL).

Aged between 20 and 23 years.

Gender balance (n= 40, 17 male and 23 female).

The prevailing differential was the course being studied, in accordance with the aim of the research.

Implementation (November 2009 - February 2010):

Focus group (4), with an average of 8 participants for 60 minutes after viewing the scenes (in a classroom at the respective faculties) discussing their impressions and the fictional representation of the models of love relationships, as well as the function and interpretation of the expressive codes, aesthetic resources and ideological implications present in the three audiovisual examples.

As this was a focus group, there was no set list of questions but the sessions were structured around the following questions, via which themes arose such as the narration of fiction and stereotypes:

- What happens in the scene?
- What do the characters talk about?
- Kind of relationship between the characters shown in each scene.
- What information are we given about the characters and their relationship?

- Via what (point of view...) are we explained the story that is happening in the scene? And the recognition of a literal point of view (camera position), functional point of view (of a character...) or ideological point of view (director, scriptwriters...) regarding the characters, relationships and situations. For example, if they notice that any character wishes to appear nice, pathetic, fragile, strong

- How are the situations resolved? (Or what signs lead us towards possible solutions)

Once all three samples have been viewed:

- What do the three scenes have in common?
- What differences do they have?
- Are they similar or different kinds of relationships?
- Are the relationships between the characters explained in the same or similar way in the three examples?
- Do you know the three series? Titles and where they were originally produced, their nationality? Can you say what kind of audience you think they are aimed at? Similar series you know?
- What series do you watch?

Analysis and interpretation:

Analysis of the qualitative data (program N'Vivo 8.0), based on a video and sound recording of the focus groups, regarding the interpretative strategies of television series discourse by participants. Comparing the results among the members of the research team (50% took part in the focus groups, the other half took part *a posteriori* to validate their analyses) by means of the categories proposed by David Buckingham (2003, 38): a) representation, b) language, c) production and d) audience.⁷

4. Results

In this research, we have focused on the interpretations of young university students in three scenes from TV series that represent models of love relationships. Using a focus group methodology, and in order to discover the influence media literacy might have on the construction of these interpretations of love in fiction TV series, we must necessarily talk of results with "substantive" representativeness (see the methodology). Nevertheless, given the scope, and so as not to exceed the aims of this article, here we will refer to representation and language, out of the four broad concepts observed in the two abilities highlighted:

A. Representation (how the media represent the world)

- Critical commitment to the themes and strategies of fiction TV discourse (questions essentially referring to gender and sexual identity, social class, nationality and dominant ideology. No references appear to identity-based aspects of an ethnic or racial nature).

MaleQ1: But I, for example, see the programme in the sense of "I make series, pack of gays"; I mean, if it's just another character in the story that can disappear, appear or another suddenly appears or whatever. Well, and then we go onto a season of 6 episodes without gays and we're happy. Well, that's that, but it does seem like I have to have my pack of gays all the time and, as soon as one goes, they hurriedly stick in another...

FemaleQ1: They have to deal with all themes; like, there's been... I don't know... some problem ...

MaleQ2: But of course it's a theme, it's about the cast ...

- Ability to infer relationships between the stylistic, content and ideological aspects and the social framework (for example, in the enclosed extract, the compositional setting of the scene for an amorous meeting at the foot of some stairs is translated in accordance with the conventions of romantic love)

MaleQ1: In fact, in the first one (DH) it's the girl who's above, who receives the action and in the second one (B&S) she's below. It seems more natural below, doesn't it? Because the guy who's above, it's like he's marking out that thing of: "I'm attacking you". So perhaps the one who's attacking is also, also waiting in the first one... I don't know, they're things... [...]

MaleQ2: Like a knight accompanying the girl to ...

- Knowledge of the potential and social meaning of the media's dominant, hegemonic trend.

MaleQ1: But I think it also goes beyond women, an audience parallel to what the series expresses, of the same characteristics.

MaleQ2: No, of the same characteristics, no. I mean, it's made precisely for those who don't have the same ... mmm... so that you actually dream of that.

Male1: [...] I don't know, it's very American and they broadcast it here. I don't know, the people here, how can they be interested in this if the stereotype is so marked? [...]

Someone: Escapism...

B. Language (of how literate people use the "language" and understand how it works)

- Practical understanding of the mechanisms to construct fictional content, particularly in terms of constructing plots and producing scripts and constructing characters (e.g. they spontaneously mention notions such as "ingredients", "development", "outcome", "hook", they can see the planned construction of characters and point out links between "new characters" and social reality).

MaleC2: [...] I think series use characters that are stereotypes of real life, for example, immigrants. Now they include immigrants as character. Also, 10 years ago there were hardly any homosexuals in a series and now, suddenly, every series has one.

-Moderate knowledge of the expressive and technical resources of audiovisual language (comments on the castings as well as on the use of music and framing to underline emotions or as style markers).

FemaleC1: Well, of course, blonds, blue eyes, but not everyone... [...] (Los Soprano), they're all really ugly and the series is great... I dunno... it's the lighting... it's also the change, the way of life... the shots, the shots are too close ...

GirlB2: In the last series we saw (PM), it was much more everyday ... the mere fact that one of the characters had his back to the camera for half the scene is like, it makes the scene more everyday, like the camera doesn't matter, because what's interesting is the conversations they're having with each other and that gives it an extra touch...

- Applied knowledge of some narrative criteria.

MaleE1: It's still... or rather, the American series are based on the cinema, right? And they're still influenced by all the cinematographic fiction of that ...

- Practical understanding of the mechanisms for constructing fiction audiovisual formats, particularly serialised formats.

MaleQ2: I mean, really the moment (in B&S), I think it's slow, the series is 40 minutes and the episode is complete, I mean, you know it stops..

MaleQ1: Compared with the other one, with Desperate Housewives or... it's like it's developed much more slowly.... much denser ...

- Ability to relate particular observations regarding style and content of the audiovisual discourse within a wide social context.

FemaleC3: Do you watch Física o Química? I think it's a terrible series because it gives a very bad view of, shall we say, stereotypes. There's all the different kinds of character: the gay, the rebel, the one who takes drugs, the amazing looking female who ends up having a fling with 30 and, of course, I think that gives a really bad image and maybe it's a sign of the future because, I swear, I don't think it's like that yet. But maybe in 10 years' time it will be like that.

With regard to the groups in terms of origin, among the communication students we observed more knowledge (logical, due to curriculum design and area of interest) of the aesthetic and technical dimensions of audiovisual language, as well as of the content in terms of the kind of medium, functions and genres. Knowledge of narrative criteria is quite generalised in all four specialities, particularly regarding strategies for serialised programmes and the construction of stereotypical characters. On the other hand, the participants in the different focus groups did not refer to production criteria (C), except for the odd reference from the communication group. Practically the same thing happens regarding the audience (D). Here, the degree of belief in the creative potential of the media as innovative social

agents is almost inappreciable. Finally, reflections on ideology and values are overrepresented in the fine arts group compared with the rest of the groups, an aspect we cover in the following conclusions section.

5. Conclusions

The aim of our research has been to analyse the media competence of university students (specifically those studying fine arts, communication, architecture and economics) to decode the discursive strategies of serialised fiction regarding love relationships. As from this initial objective, we also set ourselves a secondary goal focusing on discovering whether those people receiving media literacy training (communication students) decoded differently from students without communication training. It should be remembered that this research focuses not so much on analysing the different kinds of love-related discourse appearing in audiovisual fiction but rather on how these are interpreted by young people and whether they make inferences regarding the internalisation of behavioural patterns.

With regard to our primary objective, of the four concepts observed (representation, language, production and audience), students of the four specialities have quite generalised knowledge of the first two; specifically, regarding the construction of stereotypical characters (representation) and serialisation-related strategies (language). We have already pointed out that none of the participants had received specific media education during their compulsory education.

With regard to the secondary aim, greater competence can be observed among the communication students in the aesthetic and technical dimensions of audiovisual language, as well as in content referring to the kind of medium, functions and genres. It is also the communication group, together with that of fine arts, that most clearly recognises gender stereotypes in fictional representations. But the identification of gender stereotypes as markers of a rather unequal kind of love relationship (such as the case of the scene from *Desperate Housewives*) has been expressed as manifestly critical and mostly only among the fine arts students. The difference between the two groups can be explained by the fine art students having taken degree subjects with co-education content, something we discovered after analysing the results.

This aspect, which we discovered indirectly and unexpectedly in our results, connects with a recent study by the Universidad Complutense in Madrid and the Ministry of Equality (July 2010) which considers students that have worked on this issue in class to be more protected from gender-based violence (40.9% of the secondary school students interviewed). Skill and specific training in audiovisual consumption are important indeed we would say fundamental tools in today's social scenario. But education that raises the awareness of discriminatory practices seems to be a vital requirement to consolidating a critical spirit in terms of love relationships. We know that, in

acquiring behavioural patterns, the three pillars of reference have been parents, friends and education. Traditional pillars of reference to which are ostensibly added the mass media, most especially television and increasingly social networks via the internet. Observing how young people interact given these agents of socialisation and what influence this might have on their degree of media literacy can help us to understand the viewer-based mechanisms at work (regarding the consumption of serialised fiction) within an environment of gender and sexual identity markers in the representation of love relationships.

In summary, the fact that they talk more about aesthetic aspects than ideological (or regarding values), that they find it difficult to recognise their practices as TV viewers as a part of public behaviour and audience trends, that they clearly prefer escapism as a gratifying element of the consumption of TV fiction, avoiding any mention of something so ancient as what used to be called "the message". All this might lead us to give in to a certain disappointment. Is there anything else in the media opulence pointed out by Baudrillard (1996) when observing two unique trends in postmodern society: iconic densification and dumbing down? But it is precisely here where social science researchers have the most work to do, especially those of us already at a generational distance from young people. Surely it's a question of not allowing ourselves to be carried away by our own moral judgements and of understanding that television is especially seen as entertainment by young people. But the fact that they have a good time (in the case of comedies) or suffer (in the case of suspense) does not mean they are not benefitting from it in socio-educational terms. There has been extensive misuse of pedagogy that, based on a critical interpretation of the media, aimed to redeem society of all its ills. Surely what is still notably lacking is the so-called **"social self-understanding" of the students**, in accordance with the term coined by Chris Richards and used by Buckingham (2003, 147). **What is lacking is "a socially located understanding of their own media consumption practices in the context of broader cultural and social relationships"**.

And, at the same time, as pointed out by Buckingham, a more inquisitive focus should be encouraged of certain popular debates regarding the "effects" of the media. One proposal, which is no longer in the distant future but rather in the immediate present, would be that the leadership exercised for years by Catalonia in spreading media education within compulsory education should not now become discouraged within a context fascinated by the technological apparatus offered by communication technologies, especially in digital environments. In fact, this context requires us not to become complacent but to keep up the tension and increase our demands for genuine media education, particularly essential in the training of teachers and students at a primary and secondary level, in order to ensure that citizens are media literate, something now required by recent European legislation, basic but highly recommendable for (self-)demanding viewer practices. We must remember that, due to their age, our participating students did not bene-

fit from media education during their compulsory education. It will therefore be pertinent to carry out comparative studies with the generations that follow. Even more so given that the new European framework legislation (Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2007/65/EC, of the European Parliament) obliges the Commission to submit a report on the levels of media literacy of all Member States (article 26: not later than 19 December 2011 and every three years thereafter), media literacy being understood as the skills, knowledge and understanding that allow consumers to use media effectively. We believe that this demand is not seen as a mere procedure but enables the real implementation of the meaning and need for media education. Finally, **media literacy, understood within a framework of a skills-enhancing and not limiting media education, appears as a powerful but not miraculous tool to understand not only television as device but especially viewer-based mechanisms and, at the same time, the consumption practices of the new audiences.**

Notes

- 1 This research has been possible thanks to the aid granted by the CAC to the Representacions Televisives i Imaginaris Socials (RETEVIS) research group at Universitat Ramon Llull in the Sixth Call for Grants for Research Projects into Audiovisual Communication in 2009. The team for this research project is made up of Sue Aran, Montserrat Guillén, Rosa-Àuria Munté (URL), Pilar Medina and Miquel Rodrigo (UPF), Cristina Jover (UPC) and Montserrat López (UB). With general thanks to the 40 students who took part in it (see the research at www.cac.cat).
- 2 As a complement, see also the research by Anna Tous (2009).
- 3 *Desperate Housewives (DH)* is a US series broadcast by the ABC network since 2004. It is about how, in the community living on Wisteria Lane, there is a group of four women and how we can access, through their points of view, the experiences of love and family relationships. It is a comedy drama and the first season was broadcast in Spain by TVE, on La 1 (2005), and its average audience totalled 2,566,000 viewers with an average share of 21.1% (data from www.formulatv.com, 2005).
- 4 US series that started broadcasting in 2006 and has been shown by ABC and Fox. The main family, the Walkers, are led by Nora, the matriarch, and the clan made up of the five children and their respective family ties. This is a dramatic fiction with humorous elements and, in Spain, the first season was broadcast openly by Cuatro (2007, three months previously by the subscriber channel, Fox) and achieved an average audience of 1,027,000 viewers and an average share of 8.4% (data from www.formulatv.com, 2007).
- 5 TV3 series produced by Arriska Films and directed by Joel Joan. It was first broadcast in November 2004. It's about the ups and downs of a main couple: Pere (TV scriptwriter) and Laia (research biologist) and their friends. It is a dramatic fiction with touches of humour, which achieved an average audience of 488,000 viewers and an average share of 16.8% (data from Sofres, 2006-2007).

- 6 To extend the categorisations regarding the type of love relationships, see MEDINA, P. [et al.] (2007), based on Sternberg (1989, 2000).
- 7 For reasons of space, we have focused this work on the data obtained regarding the capacity of young TV viewers to decode the discursive strategies of serialised fiction as participants in constructing stereotypes in love relationships. The complete research work can be consulted at www.cac.cat.

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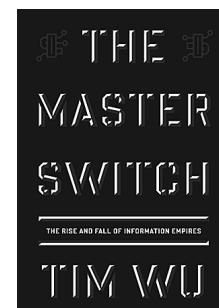
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Critical book review

Wu, T. *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010, 366 p. ISBN: 978-0307269935

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The Master Switch by Tim Wu is an important book by virtue of 3 things: one its eminent readability, the prominence of its author in multiple realms of American society, and the breadth of the argument it advances in tying together the development of the telephone, radio, television, film and internet industries.

Wu is a prominent law professor at Columbia Law School, a columnist at Slate (an online website of some significant popularity), a self-described policy advocate as Board Chair of Free Press (arguably the largest advocacy organization addressing media reform in the U.S.), and a Future Tense Fellow at The New America Foundation. Given these multiple roles, he has legitimacy in both legal academia and in popular culture, and his ideas regarding the arc of information industries advanced in the book will undoubtedly be wielded or critiqued in the ongoing policy debates within the U.S. and beyond.

The book, not unambitiously, provides a history of the communication industries in the United States from 1861 to the present day. Though with only occasional reference to industries beyond the borders, it does so with an appreciation of what Wu calls “the cycle”, which he argues all cultural and communications empires follow. The cycle begins with the technological invention in question, the subsequent centralization of control over it, and ultimately its break-up (either as a result of regulator intervention or new technological innovation). His account is rich in thumbnail sketches of the key protagonists – both leaders of the industries, regulators and the inventors of what he characterizes as Schumpeterian disruptions – as well as what he considers the key moves made by these actors.

Though he doesn’t spell it out directly, he has obvious sympathy for the wronged inventor, regards the actions of regulators critically and skeptically, and credits all powerful industries as driving (for the most part) the shape of media and electric and electronic communications infrastructure. His account, written to be consumed by a non-academic audience, is necessarily partial. He relegates the break-up of AT&T to eight pages, something covered by Steve Coll in his 1986 book

in no less than 380 pages. More recently, the unarguably more deeply primary sourced *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* by fellow Columbia Professor Richard R. John charts the history of just the formative era of electrical communications, the telegraph and telephone between 1840 – 1920, in no less than 413 pages.

Both comparisons, though, are to books that, though they utilize many more primary sources, don’t attempt what Wu attempts in the final section of his book; that is, to look to the future and “face squarely the question that the story told heretofore is meant to help us answer – Is the internet really different? which is mightier: the radicalism of the internet or the inevitability of the cycle?” (p. 256). Here his law professor colors come to the fore. In the last chapter he succinctly makes a normative argument in favor of “a Separations Principle for the information economy.” In his way Wu is resurrecting and extending a policy he outlines earlier (p.184), advanced by President Nixon’s White House with respect to cable television, and doing so (as a law professor is wont) in such a way that it might have purchase with policymakers and other actors. He outlines this argument in the last 21 pages and does so straightforwardly.

His proposal is one that Wu, who also authored of the concept of “net neutrality,” an idea he characterizes as a modern day resurrection of “common carriage to a twenty-first century industry” (p. 311), sees as likely to be necessary for the latter to continue to exist. Though he refers to it as constitutional, his “separations principle” is not proposed as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution but as “a norm taken as axiomatic” (p. 308 footnote), effectively a call to all actors to keep discrete “each of the major functions or layers in the information economy” (p. 304), i.e. those who provide the conduits shouldn’t also own the content. He also argues that regulators should keep their distance and not favor one technology or company, but rather act “as a check on private power, never as an aid to it” (p. 308). He recognizes that some of the “benefits of concentration and unified action” (p. 305) will be lost, but still considers his separation principle valuable as

its implementation will release innovation and preserve free speech through “the habit of fostering a practical environment in which the ideal can be realized.” (p. 306).

This latter point he underscores as important in a way that earlier information monopolies and technological closures (such as that of the later Apple generation computers) were not, due to the internet’s uniquely efficacious design, which has resulted in the convergence of communications. As a result, its control by a small number of corporate information empires could be extremely problematic in a world with today’s “society in which electronic information represents the substrate of much of daily life” (p. 319).

If one takes the subject he addresses as important, as this reviewer does, then his calls for more effective regulation (using the existing bodies and existing law) and industry restraint (which seems to be lacking at present) appear inadequate. Even Wu himself admits that calling for self-regulation could be considered as “hopelessly naïve” (p. 313). Given the history he recounts, whereby inventors have been swindled out of both intellectual credit as well as financial riches, with inventions consigned to a backroom until an empire falls (see p. 106 for a mention of the invention of the magnetic tape recorder in the 1930s, an eminently useful yet unexploited technology as it was considered a threat to telephone usage, and pp. 129-135 for the regulatory delays advanced by NBC regarding FM radio, including the tragic decision of its inventor to take his own life), his call for industrial restraint (though backed up with modern day examples of such) seem overly optimistic. Moreover, the style of writing and summary nature of much of the history recounted by the book leaves Wu open to the criticism that he, at the very least, provides an inadequate record of the political economy to make the argument he does, or errs in his emphasis on one or another actor or event. For instance, his only passing mention of events outside the US and lack of mention of the introduction of cell phones and only passing mention of the fax machine merely serve to underline that not all communications technologies are examined equally.

That said, the book is an eminently readable introduction to the rise and fall of multiple U.S. communications empires and their regulation, posing and providing an answer to perhaps a key question of our time – why are they important and under what principles should such industries operate and be regulated? That he answers these questions with clarity, which regulators, politicians, and industry leaders have so far failed to do even after President Obama campaigned prominently on the issue of “net neutrality”, suggests that the book’s final chapter may be a record of what might have been rather than what will be. Only time will tell whether policymakers and industry will heed Wu’s call.

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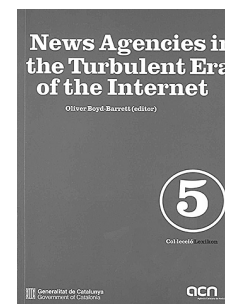
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BY MARÍA JOSÉ PÉREZ DEL POZO

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News models to overcome technological and economic challenges

News agencies have been the focus of numerous studies since the mid-1970s, although not so much from a professional perspective as from a political interpretation: their hierarchical, oligopolistic structure, the world expansion linked to the development of capitalism, their already pioneering nature as a global medium in the 19th century, their relationship with states or influence on decisions regarding client media's news agendas have largely been the focus of attention.

The academic and research career of the Irish professor, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, editor of the book reviewed here, has been related to studies of international communication and particularly to the first thorough studies of international news agencies. His work is a splendid multidisciplinary contribution in which his analysis of the media provides us with a precise portrayal of other political, economic and cultural aspects of international society.

This new book provides an interesting, critical view of the current state of agencies, although it has an evident geographical imbalance: eight chapters (out of a total of fourteen) are dedicated to European agencies, almost all of them very well-known and with a lot of literature available on them, while Latin America (Brazil?) and Africa (why not include PANA Press?) are not represented at all in the study. There are fifteen international specialists and professionals who analyse, together with Boyd-Barrett, the agencies' search for solutions given the crisis in their business model. The book does not have a defined structure in spite of its length; the chapters come after one another without any logic that allows them to be grouped geographically or into similar or opposing agencies, nor to explore similar solutions to the crisis they are facing.

In chapter 1, Boyd-Barrett reviews the overall evolutionary trends of agencies over the last ten years and analyses the many varied reasons why they have managed to survive, from direct sales to individual consumers as a new source of revenue to the continuation of state aid, including the great devel-

opment of multimedia services and their enterprising and pioneering nature in searching out highly specialised market segments. Nevertheless, in spite of the agencies' capacity to adapt to all crises and to emulate their new environments, the author puts forward the threats, fundamentally economic, they will have to face in a near future that combines great potential with equally great professional and economic uncertainties: the possible divide between users and agencies, the interdependence of old and new agencies in the BRIC countries (an acronym for the emerging countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China), the analysis and self-criticism concerning how effective they are in giving a voice to new social groups and how to get the most out of their historical brand image are just some of the issues these media will have to tackle over the next ten years.

In chapter 2, lecturer and journalist Anna Nogué analyses the ten years of the Catalan News Agency (ACN), which has not suffered from the adaptation problems of other agencies as it was set up in the midst of the digital era with a public service mission.

In chapter 3, Camille Laville, a lecturer at Nice University, reviews the history of the French news agency Agence France Presse (AFP) which, although the agency has had an international vocation since it was established (the old Havas), its francophone coverage and economic dependence on the state have helped it to retain a strong historical component of national identity.

In the next chapter, Marco Tortora, with training and experience in economic geography, presents an original point of view by analysing the news industry in Italy, comparing the different strategies adopted to tackle the crisis, on the one hand by a national agency such as ANSA and, on the other, by two international media, namely Associated Press (AP) and *The Washington Post*. Uncertainty is the common denominator for these three agencies.

Chapters 5 and 6 abandon the European scene to tackle, firstly, the parallels and occasional differences between the Australian Associated Press (AAP) and the New Zealand Press

Association (NZPA). In his analysis, Gavin Ellis, a New Zealand journalist, includes the effect of the small national market on the two media, as well as the ownership structure of both. Secondly, Canadian Patrick White, with professional experience in various media, presents the Canadian agency scenario, where the historic Canadian Press must take on the new services that have appeared in the last few years. Returning to Europe, Jürgen Wilke, a lecturer at Mainz University, ends this first half of the book with an analysis of the German news market, dynamic and competitive, in which Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA) stands out in terms of volume of clients, technical and human resources and its diversification of content and resources.

In chapter 8 Ignacio Muro, Director of the EFE agency until 2005, proposes more balanced news coverage which abandons the national perspective and interests in favour of a more global, transnational view, looking for wider cultural identities. EFE's experience in Latin America and intranational space (pg. 173), which is seen as regional space, forms the basis of the author's proposal.

Alternative agencies are also present in the book with Stijn Joye's review of the Inter Press Service and its journalism for global change, a well-established project dating back to the 1970s, together with others such as the pool of non-aligned agencies, also mentioned by Joye (Pérez del Pozo 1994).

Chapters 10 and 11 deal with two models of genuinely national agencies. In the first, journalists Jonas Batista and Susana Ribeiro make a laudable effort to gather data and analyse the Portuguese agency LUSA, probably the least well-known of the European agencies and the most traditional today in terms of its business model as a medium for the media. Compared with the Portuguese case, the British Press Association, analysed by renowned author Chris Paterson, reveals its chameleon-like nature in the fight to control the market and exploit content.

The last three chapters are dedicated to news models and agencies from emerging countries (India, Russia and China) whose development, although these agencies have not been recently set up, is quite illustrative insofar as it runs parallel to the political and economic changes happening in their countries. Here we also feel the book's lack of other geographical scenarios.

In his review of the complex history of India's agencies, the specialist K. M. Shrivastava highlights their limitations (even the PTI, which has the greatest international presence) to bring about, even today, Nehru's dream of a large international agency for his country.

In chapter 13, lecturers I. Vartanova and T. Frolova study the complex media system in Russia, an instrument used to transform the previous regime. In spite of the complexity of the subject in question, the authors provide a systematic, clear explanation of how the old, propaganda-based structures evolved towards the new news institutions that had to overcome the contradiction between what is global and what is local (pg.

265), finally describing the huge impact the economic crisis is having on the media industry.

The researcher from Westminster University, Xin Xin, is the author of the last chapter, dedicated to the Chinese agency Xinhua and its new commercial operations, such as "Xinhua 08", which might serve as an example for agencies from similar political and economic systems, as well as the dual informative and propaganda function carried out systematically by the agency. Although it's true that this Chinese agency is one of the most interesting systems today, the author deserves equal merit for composing a chapter that, like the agency, defies the classic concepts used to study this medium, such as the distinction between national and international agencies or agencies' role as "wholesalers" or "retailers" (pp. 287-288), concepts that do not correspond to the new functions of this medium in a global society.

In short, the crisis caused by the internet for the business model of news agencies is affecting the quality and credibility of international information from all media. It seems that free access en masse to content, far from facilitating more specialised, critical knowledge, is helping to standardise and globalise opinions and trivialise content. Agencies' professionalism and the value they add to information is their brand image, which they must revalue with regard to their clients, be they media, non-media or individuals. Their raw material is delicate; it creates knowledge, destroys prejudices and brings cultures together through their specific traits, not by globalising them.

In conclusion, the book provides researchers, academics and professionals with up-to-date, useful knowledge on the most well-known agencies, as well as being a guide for others who are sailing in the uncertain waters of global news that combine the challenge of technological development with a harsh economic crisis.

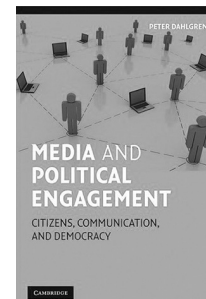
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BY VIKTORIJA CAR

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A new way to achieve public political engagement without blaming the media

Peter Dahlgren's *Media and political engagement: citizens, communication, and democracy* is definitely not a kind of self-help book giving a list of tips on how politicians should use the media or how the media can help citizens to become more politically engaged. Rather than giving the answers, the author actually poses many new questions.

Peter Dahlgren is professor emeritus of Media and Communication Studies at Lund University in Sweden. Much of his work pivots around notions of the media and communication, the public sphere and democratic nature of late modern society. He is author or editor of a respectable number of books, including *Television and the Public Sphere* (1995), *Television Across Europe* (2000), *Young Citizens and New Media: Learning for Democratic Participation* (2007) and *Young People, ICTs and Democracy* (2010), and, for sure, one of the most cited authors in the field of media and communication.

The first decade of the twenty-first century is widely held to be the most challenging for media development. The rise of the internet, and its communicational dimension, has changed the pre-existing one-way media information flow and the nature of political engagement. The development of online media has definitely changed the dynamics of how citizens use the media to advance the democratic project and the possibilities for larger media-driven social and political engagement on the part of citizens. This book questions the media's ambivalent relationship to citizenship and democracy and addresses political engagement and disengagement and the media's role in this regard, as situated within the tension between the ideals and present realities of democracy.

The book opens with an introductory chapter and afterwards is divided into 8 sections. The first chapter, *Democracy in Difficult Times*, is an overview of the factors contributing to the contemporary difficulties of democracy, emphasizing the specific problems of declines in political participation or engagement. John Keane (2009) agrees that democracy is

about far more than periodic elections; but while he celebrates the 'monitory democracy' and the power of citizens, Dahlgren stresses that long-term trends in Western democracies show declines in voter turnout, party loyalty and trust in government (p. 12), accompanied by citizens, especially younger ones, consistently being berated for their lack of civic responsibility, inadequate levels of political knowledge and unwillingness to get involved in current affairs.

There are many reasons why citizens choose not to engage in politics. According to Dahlgren, it is everyday economic realities in their more drastic forms that can inhibit democratic participation in direct and material ways: unemployment, economic insecurity, low wages, declining social services, growing class rifts and ecological threats. In the era of neoliberal global capitalism, the traditional tensions between market logics and democratic principles become more acute. The governments of nation-states have less manoeuvrability; real societal power drifts increasingly to the private corporate sector and thereby real societal power resides beyond democratic accountability. In turn, the formal political arena has become constricted, offering fewer opportunities for meaningful participation and thereby engendering disengagement.

The second chapter, entitled *Media Alterations*, opens a discussion about media and democracy from the point of the role of the media in the public sphere. Journalism is traditionally seen as contributing to defining the public agenda and offering public means to provide citizens with information, ideas and debates about current affairs, which help facilitate informed opinion and participation in democratic politics (see more in Schudson, 2008). However, this traditional journalism has reached a historical turning point as, on a global level, there is massive growth in media outlets, the intensifying of conglomerate structures in media industries and the increasing globalization of media organizations, practices and flows. Dahlgren sees audience evolution as a central element in the changing conditions of journalism (p. 44). The distinction between 'informed elites' and 'entertained majorities' is on the increase, supported not least by media economics, as access to deeper

information and knowledge beyond the popular media becomes more a significant economic factor. Yet it should be emphasized that access to news does not in itself promote participation. This is because many citizens perceive as too remote the possibility of making some meaningful political connection to the prevailing forms of democracy.

In the third chapter, *Citizens and Agency*, the author presents the idea of citizenship not only as a formal, legal set of rights and obligations but also treats it as a mode of social enactment; in other words, as civic agency. Civic identities emerge through experiences in both the public and private spheres of life. According to Dahlgren, the emergence of civic identity and civic agency prepare the way for the interrogation of democratic involvement as it becomes realized in terms of engagement, participation and motivation. These are the topics the author explores and argues in the next, central chapter, *Engagement, Deliberation, and Performance*. Engagement, as subjective involvement, can be seen as a prerequisite, a starting point for participation which, in turn, usually takes communicative forms (p. 80-81). In democratic participation, voting is just one mode while deliberation is heralded as the fundamental way for citizens to participate in democracy. Moreover, deliberation, in its formal guise, is highly related to specific situations, notably when decisions are about to be made. The concept of deliberative rationality and its problematic assumptions about equal footing in regard to social power and communicative competence limit its usefulness as a model for general civic participation. Instead, Dahlgren proposes that we treat civic talk in a broader manner, allowing for how political topics may even unexpectedly emerge in everyday conversation and how initially private topics can move to the public, political realm. He therefore develops an analytic framework to help analyze and understand civic identities in Chapter 5, *Civic Cultures: An Analytic Frame*. His model of civic cultures comprises six dimensions: knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices and identities. The model is normative in the sense that it suggests these features need to be present for participation to emerge and for democracy to function.

How television's media logics, especially visuals, invite engagement through pleasure and how this has set up a force field within television news is examined by, the next chapter, *Television and Popular Public Spheres*. Through its popular programming, television offers many opportunities for audiences to 'work through' a vast array of issues in regard to basic values and social visions in many areas. Dahlgren stresses that, at a fundamental level, what is at stake in the public sphere perspective is the question of where the political resides, where social conflict is articulated and processed and how it is positioned against that which is deemed non-political. While popular television can hardly be described as a source for progressive social inspiration and ideological boundaries are seldom clearly ruptured, over time one can see important shifts taking place in popular perceptions.

Unlike Hassan (2004: 100), who criticizes the ICT revolu-

tion, in the last two chapters of this book Dahlgren claims that the new ICTs are contributing to a reconfiguration of political life, though it is still unclear if this will be sufficient to reconstruct democracy. These developments signal altered modes of participation and newer notions of what constitutes politics and the political. However, the internet does not offer a 'speedy technological cure to the ills of democracy' (p. 152). At the same time, it has contributed dramatically to how political communication gets done, as well as to the ways in which participation can take place. Dahlgren charts some of the uses and implications of the internet in three illustrative contexts: journalism, EU NGOs, and the alter-globalization movement. Analytically, the internet, and the media generally, not only play a decisive role in shaping participation but also, from the perspective of civic cultures, offer empirical starting points for illuminating the civic dynamics of democracy.

One of the distinctive traits of this book is the fact it treats citizenship as a strategic concept that is central to an analysis of the media, identity and difference, participation and engagement, empowerment and the public interest. It offers a convincing and original model of civic culture, articulating the multiple cultural and social roots of political participation. Even though a reader may see this book as an abstract theory of media, it presents an excellent view of the role of media in the complex process of political engagement. It helps, both analytically and empirically, to study the factors that can shape civic agency, a concept of citizenship which Peter Dahlgren defines not only as a formal, legal set of rights and obligations but also as a mode of social enactment. This book thereby helps to study the impacts on citizen engagement and participation in democracy.

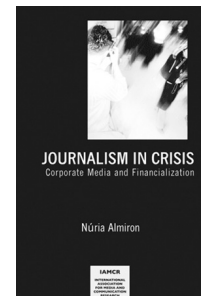
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BY FERNANDO QUIRÓS

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Communication, power and journalism

This book by Professor Núria Almiron at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona follows the investigative tradition into the economic policy of communication and analyses how power, especially financial power, takes over the information discourse. The author therefore makes an in-depth critical analysis of capitalism which enables her, within this context, to subsequently conduct a specific study into the dynamics of company concentration. She stresses the *financialization* process, i.e., the process through which financial capital has gained significant control of the transnational information industry since the early 1980s. This control is greater today in the communication sector than in other industrial activities. The converging areas of finance and information are controlled oligopolitically by the interrelated interests of a small number of transnational banks and transnational information companies. The author takes this idea from Bouquillion, Miège and Morizet (2006) and expands on it by including aspects such as bank debt with credits and loans; the use of new financial instruments for recapitalisation and indebtedness through bank securities; the penetration by global actors from the financial world into the property structure, such as the large US investment funds, and the presence of managers related to the financial sector on communication groups' boards of directors as shareholding representatives or as independents. This *financialization* process involves new risks compared with previous stages of capitalist development (Almiron 2007:15-17).

Taking this premise as its starting point, the book is divided into four chapters which begin by contextualising the general process of capitalist concentration during the period of globalisation. It then goes on to focus on the study of the *financialization* of information and cultural industries during the first decade of the twenty-first century. It then explains, with specific data, this process in the world's leading media companies and ends with a brilliant conclusion that analyses the risks involved in this financial invasion for today's journalism. In short, we have here an outstanding update on the previous

work by Miège (2006) and Mosco (1996), which, without losing sight of the founders' texts, enables us to study the *financialization* of communication companies. Clearly, the primary sources here are Garnham (1979, 1990), Smythe (1957, 1977), Mattelart (1976), Herman and McChesney (1997) and in Spain, Bustamante and Zallo (1988), Bustamante (2002, 2003), Miguel (2005) and Quirós (1998, 2006).

By way of contrast, the author compares this with the views of Professor Manuel Castells. In *The Network Society*, Castells presented the new society associated with a new development model, the informational model or *informationalism*, which is in turn defined by the restructuring of the capitalist system of the twentieth century based on the fact that the source of productivity lies with technologies that foster the generation of knowledge. According to Castells, knowledge becomes, in turn, a source of productivity, thanks to improved information processing and the possibility that symbolic communication creates for the generation of collective cultures and identities. In his extensive trilogy, Castells, an old-school radical Marxist, moves towards a clear display of *McLuhanism*: there are no hierarchies, there is no asymmetry, communication is not related to power

In *Communication power* (2009), Castells claims to have discovered precisely these relationships between economic power and the communication sector. I use the word claim because this book is another reinvention of the wheel by Professor Castells. To hold the view that the media has now been transformed into the arena where power strategies are deployed is simply pretentious. From the time when Adorno first talked about the *culture industry* right up to the present-day (Almiron, for example), entire generations of researchers have concerned themselves with this key idea. However, he ignores them and, to make his chapter two (the only useful one in that it provides information) fit with his theory of the network society, he employs a new concept: *mass self-communication* which, always according to Castells, has modified power relations. Simply put, it is the same as Eco said about McLuhan: reading such things is a *cogito interruptus*.

Castells does not take into consideration the privatisation of the telecommunications industry which fostered the construction of networks, accompanied by deregulation processes which have led to company concentration. What he has least taken into account in this process is development and informational pluralism: in short, the bedrock of democracy has been weakened.

Informationalism, which Castells suggests as a *cure-all*, highlights the instrumental nature of information as communication via networks. However, the move from post-industrial to "informational" capitalism, due to the mushrooming of ICTs, is based on the generation and processing of information as symbolic goods assimilated into "productivity". Castells confuses the *information society* with the "new economy" and does not realise that new information and communication technologies (ICTs) do not foster *demassification* but rather favour and increase *massification*.

The work carried out by Almiron stops us from placing any value on that of Castells. We are not playing a new game with new rules that have nothing to do with what went before. Neither has there been any break with history, nor any shock to civilisation. We are not living in a post-industrial society that has nothing to do with the industrial age. Rather, we are in a new phase of capitalism as it moves from its monopolist phase to one of global *financiarization*, maintaining and strengthening the very power mechanisms of the capitalist system. Consequently, the fallacy of the liberating power of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is covered in all its facets as the author reveals how not only do they not neutralise the concentration of financial power but actually encourage it.

With regard to another now classic work, namely the one written by two acclaimed political communication experts, Hallin and Mancini (2004), the book by Almiron restores the balance. Although the work by Hallin and Mancini covers a lot of ground and is extremely interesting, it only establishes the relationship between the media system and the political system, citing the economic determinant of the past, which severely limits the scope of the study. Almiron's book repositions the economy and its current derivatives as a fundamental, albeit not unique, element for understanding contemporary media systems.

To sum up, this book is useful in terms of the information it provides, is serious in its theoretical approach and outstanding in its methodology, thorough in its analysis and brilliant in its conclusions. This book augurs great achievements by Professor Almiron, whose teaching and research career is still in its early years. The prologue by McChesney and its publication by the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR/AIECS/AIERI) clearly illustrate our claims.

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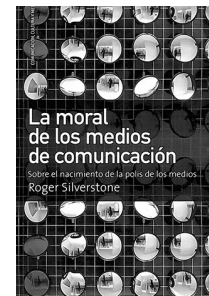
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A philosophical approach to the role of the media in global society

If we were looking for an inescapable concept in communication research and thought over the last twenty years, we would surely agree about the relevance of the idea of Habermas's public sphere (Habermas 2005). From studies into communication policies (see, for example, Feintuck and Varney 2006) to studies into football and the media (see Sandvoss 2003), the concept of the public sphere has been crucial in the field of communication studies, whether as an ideal for the development of media practices and policies that lead societies to be more inclusive, participative and democratic, or as an "ideal type" against which real-world experiences can be compared in order to assess them (Bennett and Entman 2001).

However, the success of this concept in the field of media studies has not led to a consensus regarding the very concept of public sphere and its relationship to the media (see, for example, Dahlgren 2001). In fact, Habermas's work is particularly vague on this aspect, apart from stating that "today, the press, radio and television are the media of the public sphere" (Habermas 1974, 49). Also, despite its success, the concept of the public sphere has not always been without its critics. Different perspectives (communitarianism, feminism, etc.) have been used to express objections to this concept, all of which highlight the elitism, gender inequality, eurocentrism, state-nation dependency, tendency to remain static or typically modern, rationalist fixation that comes from the notion of public sphere. Discussion as to the fairness of these criticisms has also been questioned (for a discussion see Calhoun 1992), as it is not clear whether Habermas's work is simply a historical description or a normative theory (Dahlgren 2001).

La moral de los medios de comunicación is an explicit attempt (see Silverstone 2007, 34; Silverstone 2010, 60) to construct a new theory as to the role of the media in contemporary societies with a desire to overcome the criticism received by the concept of public sphere and to contribute to

reflections on the media in an ever complex, diverse and global context. *La moral de los medios de comunicación* is essentially a philosophical text in which Roger Silverstone (Birkenhead, 1945 - Oxford, 2006) discusses Habermas's concept, primarily in light of the thoughts of Hannah Arendt but also with influences from Edward Said, Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck, among others. The result of this dialogue is Silverstone's announcement of the birth of the mediapolis, "the media public space where, once again, contemporary political life unfolds, both on a national and global scale, and where the materiality of the world is constructed through public discussion and actions communicated (primarily) via the electronic media" (Silverstone 2010, 56; Silverstone 2007, 31). In Silverstone's view, the mediapolis has a dual nature, as it is simultaneously a descriptive and normative category.

There are those who will question what role morality plays in the mediapolis debate. For Silverstone, the relevance of reflecting on the morality of the media lies in its ability to:

"provide - with greater or lesser degrees of consistency, the frameworks (or frameworkworlds) for the appearance of the other that they, de facto, define the moral space within which the others appears to us, and at the same time invite (claim, constrain) an equivalent moral response from us, the audience, as a potential or actual citizen" (Silverstone 2010, 22; Silverstone 2007, 6)

The construction of the world offered by the media implicitly and explicitly contains the legitimisation of certain moral values (and the discredit of others). In the past, this transmission of values contributed to the linguistic unity and national cohesion of states. Contemporary societies, however, have become more complex and accelerated, even taking on characteristics that Bauman (2004) called "liquid modernity", where presence and interactions are increasingly mediated. Within this context, identity and difference are experienced through the media and therefore, not even reflections about the moral aspect of our societies can ignore the media, nor can the moral

values of a society be renegotiated without taking the media into account. The mediapolis would be a mediated space where not only would the political and moral differences and tensions in today's ever-diverse, cosmopolitan societies exposed to differences be represented, but a space where these tensions would be recreated and renegotiated.

The renegotiation of political and moral tensions present in contemporary societies require a rethink as to the passive role allocated to citizens, especially in relation to the content offered by the media. Our dependency on media content in our daily lives – says Silverstone (2007, 22; 2010, 43) – makes us responsible for this. Despite being a stimulating idea that transcends the passive conception of the spectator, the so-called *active audience*, people's journalism and debates about the right to communicate, Silverstone does not develop this as may have been wished and therefore runs the risk of it being transformed into a vague suggestion that ends up comparing citizen responsibility regarding media content with audience ratings, and supply and demand into a mechanism that regulates citizens' wishes.

Despite the title, *La moral de los medios de comunicación*, the book does not discuss the ethics of journalism and readers will not find therein an analysis of the appropriateness of publishing the cartoons of Mohammed in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*, of publishing tawdry affairs in our politicians' private lives or affairs that may endanger our national security. Perhaps because of the vagaries of the graphic design, the cover of the English version contains a title (*Media and Morality on the Rise of Mediapolis*) which, in my opinion, is a better reflection of the content of Silverstone's book: this is a book that reflects on morality and the media – and not on the morality of the media, as the Spanish translation of the book would have it – in contemporary societies. Despite the undeniable interest in Silverstone's philosophical reflections, and his concern with the media, this is a book which is focused more on discussing large narratives about morality, politics and the media than on analysing mediated discourses.

This posthumous work also constitutes a kind of intellectual testament left by Roger Silverstone, as it includes topics which the author had already explored and brought to light, such as the role of the media in everyday life, or the importance of communication policies. Roger Silverstone's sudden death in July 2006 was a great loss. Apart from the personal loss and the great void that has been left in the academic community, we will no longer be able to hear him reflect on the role of the new media – which are only touched on in the book – in the moral structuring of our societies. We have also lost his thoughts on the role that the media genres of entertainment, fiction or hybrid genres (such as infotainment) may play in constructing moral discourses about us and the other.

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ALSÍUS, S. (ed.) *The Ethical Values of Journalists. Field Research among Media Professionals in Catalonia*. Barcelona: Government of Catalonia, 2010. ISBN: 978-84-393-8346-8

BY ANASTASIIA GRYNKO

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Bridging the ethical norms and real-life practice in media

Media ethics usually focuses on claims concerning which values ought to drive good journalism (Plaisance & Deppa 2008). That is why ongoing discussions about journalism ethics often deal with moral principles, normative rules and codified obligations aimed at *improving* professional performance rather than *understanding* the values shared by practitioners. Writing about the existing literature on media ethics, Plaisance (2009) notes that ethical discussions are too often centred on normative standards and best practices. Meanwhile, the expanding volume of media ethics research is criticized for an apparent gap between theory and practice in the field (Starck 2001). Therefore, little attention is paid to the “*ethics of journalists*” - the ways in which deontological norms are perceived and exercised in everyday media practice; and even fewer works analyze ethics through systematic data-based research providing “the voices” of those who work in media. In fact, this “practical” component of journalism ethics constitutes an important point for both academic and professional discussions. It sheds light on the reasons behind the professional behaviour of journalists and provides in-depth understanding of *how* and *why* the world of media operates, as well as on how it *ought to work*.

The book *The Ethical Values of Journalists. Field Research among Media Professionals in Catalonia* manages to bring together the theory and practice of media ethics. Referring to the real-life experience of journalists, the authors seek to understand the “ethics of journalists” or how universal moral values are reflected in real-life experience. Based on a complex empirical study conducted in Catalonia, Salvador Alsíus (ed.) and a team of researchers study the shared values that shape and govern journalists’ behaviour. Particularly, the authors analyze how journalists link normative principles with professional decisions and explore “the attitudes and values that affect their professional activity” (p. 16).

The contributors to the book (Salvador Alsíus, Christopher Tulloch, Carles Singla, Mònica Figueras, Ruth Rodríguez, Francesc Salgado, Fabiola Alcalá and Marcel Mauri) have a strong academic background and solid research and practical experience in journalism. They were all involved in the research team. The volume is edited by Salvador Alsíus, PhD in Journalism, Head of Journalism at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, also working as a television journalist.

An original research methodology and advanced fieldwork make the findings, presented in the text, especially valuable. Starting from the content analysis of ethical codes and documents that regulate media ethics in Spain, the researchers complete an inventory of formalized norms that guide contemporary journalism. Generally, the book covers four fundamental principles (truth, justice, freedom and responsibility) that constitute the “backbone” of the profession and provide a well-organized deontological basis for further analysis of journalists’ attitudes. Then, the combination of qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey) research methods helps to obtain a complementary picture of the value system employed by journalists in practice. The study’s findings also provide rich demographic characteristics of the journalist community in Catalonia, providing a “snapshot” of people working in the field today. Taken as a whole, the text by Salvador Alsíus and his team of Catalan scholars contributes to the global work on media and media ethics that, according to Zelizer (2004), usually lodges in philosophy and sociology.

Connecting conceptual issues with the experience of Catalan practitioners, the book reveals a wide range of specific dilemmas that journalists face in their daily work, such as the trustworthiness of sources, manipulation of images, use of hidden cameras, stereotyping and discrimination of socially disadvantaged groups, independence from political forces and commercial pressures, dealing with press officers, accepting gifts and other rewards for coverage and many others. Looking at the ethics of media through the lenses of media practitioners, this work introduces provocative issues in journalism prac-

tice and obligations. In fact, it involves journalists within the global and interdisciplinary discussion on ethical issues and media regulation, bridging the normative and real-life dimensions of professional conduct.

The book by Salvador Alsius (ed.) and his team of scholars remains in line with a growing number of empirical and practice-oriented works that underline individual ethics, perceptions and interpretations of normative concepts together with the conceptualization of moral values widely covered by philosophers. These works become especially important within the changing professional conditions, new technologies and market developments that pose new ethical dilemmas for professionals and demand a constant rethinking of the ethical framework. Although media ethics has to do with standards, the media are made up of individuals and the ethical concerns of the mass media are the ethics of individuals (Merrill, Lee & Friedlander 1990). Donsbach (2004) concluded that most work by journalists is about perceptions, conclusions and judgments. Quinn (2007) also emphasized the importance of professionals' view of media ethics, which employs an internalized moral psychology of journalists. Finally, Coleman and Wilkins (2010) offer to link research with practitioners' experience, stressing the need for an in-depth understanding of journalists' ethical judgement and moral development.

Although the study presented in the book follows a specific time period and geographic coordinates, it contributes to the global discussion on journalistic professionalism and effective regulation. The authors note that "the media face similar problems all over the world", and Catalanian journalists who participated in the study experience similar difficulties and ask themselves the same questions as their colleagues from other countries. As Clifford Christians and Michael Traber (1997) once mentioned, there are so-called "universal values" that work across nations and in different regions of the world, and ethical values are mainly shaped irrespective of nationality. Therefore, referring to the experience and attitudes of journalists in Catalonia, this work provides rich details for an overall portrait of contemporary journalism. For scholars, students, researchers and professionals in journalism and related areas, *The Ethical Values of Journalists. Field Research among Media Professionals in Catalonia* contributes to an in-depth understanding of media practice in Spain and worldwide.

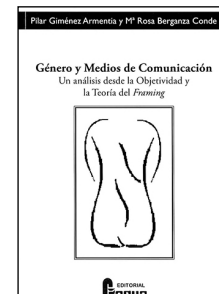
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GIMÉNEZ ARMENTIA, P.; BERGANZA CONDE, M. R. *Género y Medios de Comunicación. Un análisis desde la Objetividad y la Teoría del Framing*. Madrid: Fragua, 2009. 255 p. ISBN 978-84-7074-270-5

BY IOLANDA TORTAJADA

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Measuring objectivity

M. Rosa Berganza Conde is a professor of journalism at the Universidad Rey Juan and Pilar Giménez Armentia is a lecturer with the Universidad Francisco in Vitoria. Professor Berganza Conde supervised the thesis of Pilar Giménez Armentia entitled “Una aproximación a la teoría del framing: el tratamiento de la IV Conferencia de la Mujer de Naciones Unidas en la prensa española” (An approach to framing theory: Spanish press’ portrayal of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women) , presented in 2005.

From the very beginning, this book refers, in the title and subtitle, to four great terms or central concepts of current media studies: objectivity, framing, gender and, obviously, the media. There have been many books and articles, with more and more research papers devoted to these topics, and we do not need to expand on these within the confines of a review. That said, the problem is that the authors do not appear to place these studies within their work, nor their work within the overall panorama of these studies.

Giménez and Berganza analyse how the Spanish press treated the news item of the Fourth World Conference on Women, but they do not explain what interest this work may hold fifteen years on. They do not contextualise this UN conference held in Beijing, they do not place the contribution made by their study within the framework of other research into gender and the media, nor do they relate the case they are investigating to any subsequent feminist debate or concern. Nowhere in the text, in the appendices, or practically in the bibliography do we find any references to gender, despite the importance we should be able to deduce from the privileged position reserved for it in the title. In fact, in the introduction to the book the authors state that, in this work, they will be reflecting on “how information can and should adapt to reality” (p. 13) and that they will be doing so on the basis of the case mentioned above. Therefore, their main topic of analysis is *objectivity*.

The first of the theoretical chapters begins with a review of the functions of the media and a number of definitions of the news process. Following this, the authors tackle the question of objectivity, defending the theory of adaptation as their own: “If we view objectivity not only as a quality of what is real but as an attitude of the subject, the cognitive aim of which is the material object and the result of which is the formal object and [sic] we define this process as adaptation between the material object and the subject, we can [sic] then venture that objectivity is possible” (p. 49). However, in a chapter designed as a theoretical review of these questions, it would have been good not to have limited themselves to quoting secondary sources (i.e. works by authors that quote the primary contributions of other authors).

In Chapter Two, the authors attempt to develop a theoretical framework to help with understanding the frames involved in every communication process, as “despite not being able to identify the frame with the visible element of the format, this is a first-hand indication to ascertain how a specific medium or journalist focuses the information” (p. 57) and they then set out some of the debates concerning framing theory. According to Giménez and Berganza, accepting the link between conceptual meaning and the journalist (and/or the medium) does not mean denying that informational truth is connected to the truth of things, but “this relationship must be measured in terms of adaptation and not equation” (p. 64). What they then fail to explain in sufficient detail is what this adaptation consists of; in other words, how a researcher should proceed who wants to conduct an operational study into how far the different media focuses coincide with a given reality.

This work is one in which the desire to apply a descriptive analytical tool has been given priority over theoretical interest. This may explain some of the flaws of this second part. There is no hypothesis, for example. There is only one aim to the analysis: to study the focus of the Spanish press in relation to the conference using framing and adaptation theories. This relative lack of interest in prior theoretical debate is borne out in

the conclusions which the authors finally extract from the analysis: out of a total of ten, six are related to the content and news focus of the Fourth World Conference on Women, yet curiously we have no systemisation or definition of the framing carried out by the media studied. The authors stress that the topic was covered "extensively", that the left-wing media, as opposed to the right-wing media, were favourable to the Conference and that the treatment in general focused on controversy and polemic. However, unlike other framing studies, they do not provide us with the analytical categories, nor do they tell us whether these were created deductively or inductively. Making frames operational and measurable is a complicated task, as we can see from the studies that have been published to date from this perspective (e.g. Berns 2004, or Cheng et al 2009), but a the work of Giménez and Berganza needs to be a little more specific.

At the end of Chapter Three and in the conclusions reference is made (rather unjustified from a research design point of view) to interviews with women journalists who covered the Conference. The authors explain that "the most commonly-shared opinion by the women interviewed was that the sex of the person filing the report was a determining factor regarding the treatment of the Conference" (p. 141, p. 148). In addition, that the preferences of the journalists differed from those of the media for which they worked (which in the end imposed theirs) and that the professionals interviewed stated that they supplied objective information, even though they recognised that their own ideas and experiences may have been conditioning factors. These results, however, do not relate to the content analysis and are disconnected from the rest of the text.

In terms of its structure, this book all too readily betrays its original PhD thesis format. Basically, the book is divided into two chapters of theoretical introduction, a rather extensive chapter on the results and a few brief conclusions (5 pages). The appendices start on page 151 (and end on page 223). We should add that there are some problems with the editing. Despite there being two authors, one of the chapters is written in the first person singular ("I agree with Soria about that", "I feel it would be advisable to", etc.). The masculine is used to refer to the acclaimed female author, Gaye Tuchman (p. 54). Also, for example, on page 104 they even talk about feminist activists fighting "for the discrimination of women" or about "developing women". These expressions do not make it easy to understand the text in general but are hugely indicative of a certain lack of care or attention to the final structure of the work.

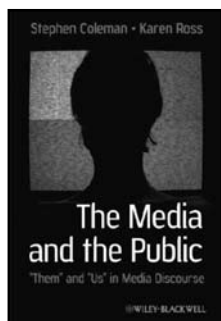
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Book review

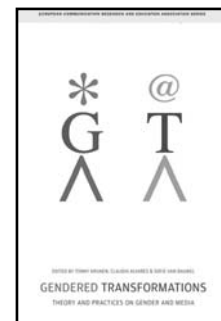
COLEMAN, S.; ROSS, K. *The Media and the Public: "Them" and "Us" in Media Discourse*. West Sussex [United Kingdom]: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 200 pages. ISBN: 978-1405160414



This volume provides a summary of the most recent research exploring the relationship between the media and their publics. The authors place the discourse between the media and the public and their relations within a historical context to show the origin of current public/political engagement. Coleman and Ross argue that there is no *a priori* public that is filmed or

recorded by the media; rather the public is invoked via mediation processes dominated by political, institutional, economic or cultural forces. On analysing the publics of the 21st century, the authors stress they are witnesses of themselves more than any other public in history, but this is a public that does not control its own image. By exploring citizen journalism, the free press, participation media, public online consultations and the blogosphere, the authors identify a series of more complete and wider-ranging public voices used by the media to talk about themselves. This volume is divided into six chapters. The first considers the different ways in which the public has been historically constructed as a group and as a social space. The authors then carry out an historical analysis associated with various theories of the public sphere. The next chapter analyses the media and the management of public voices through the selection of sources. The fourth chapter tackles alternative media, giving examples of the mediated self-representation of publics that are under-represented or vulnerable to the distortion of media images that fail to reflect their diversity and complexity. The fifth chapter questions simplistic claims that the digital media have transformed the elite's dominance of the dissemination of knowledge, allowing anyone to produce media. Finally, the last chapter reflects on the shift from an essentialist, universalist notion of public interest to a more pluralist conception of publics and their diverse interests.

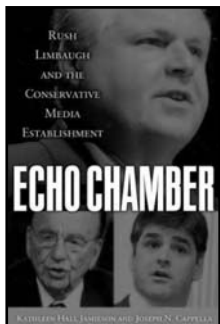
KRIJNEN, T.; ALVARES, C.; VAN BAWEL, S. (ed.) *Gendered Transformations: Theory and Practice on Gender and Media*. Bristol [United Kingdom]: Intellect Ltd., 2011. 239 pages. ISBN: 978-1-84150-366-0



This work is an initiative by a group of young media researchers, presenting a combination of classic themes concerning gender and the media analysed under new social and cultural conditions and with methodological innovations. Within a multimedia and inter-textual context, the chapters are based on questions such as socialisation, performativity and politics and there is an analysis of how certain media and the combination of media are structured within diachronic and synchronic contexts. In the first section, "Gendered Politics", Karen Ross considers the role played by gender in the selection of news sources, the use of female decision-makers, of elite commentators or members of the public. An article by Alvares critically analyses the results from a European Union research on the representation of women in two Portuguese newspapers. There is also an interesting article on gender analysis of mediated politics in Germany, asking whether the representation of women with top-level positions in the media has been positively altered in quantitative and qualitative terms as a result of the political success of Angela Merkel. In the second section, "Embodied Performativities", there is an article on the representation of homosexuality in three Hollywood productions of the 1960s. In this same section, another article by Goroshko and Zhigalina analyses political blogs as a crossroads between gender and culture online and suggests that culture and technologies have more impact on political blogs than the gender of the bloggers. Virtual networks are tackled in the article by Gader and Dumitrica on the creation and maintenance of virtual bodies in the three-dimensional world of *Second Life*. The last section, "Gendered Socializations", contains articles on how reality TV shows help to reflect and sustain gender differentiation in expressing emotion (male participants are shown focusing on achieving their goals while women are presented as centred on the "here and now"). Another article by Van Damme studies the gendered sexual discourse in American teen series. And, finally, we should also note the article by Torkkola and Ruoho which analyses gender equality in the journalistic profession within the Finnish context.

Available: <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/43593722/Gendered-Transformations-Theory-and-Practices-on-Gender-and-Media>>

JAMIESON, K. H.; CAPPELLA, J. N. *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 320 pages. ISBN: 978-0195398601

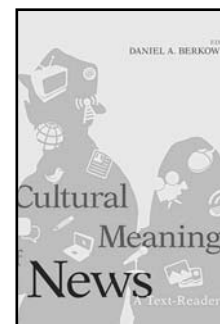


In this book, Jamieson and Cappella offer an incisive and critical analysis of the US conservative media conglomerate and its effect on the political sphere. The authors show how the number of conservative media has grown in recent years and how they operate with each other. The book analyses the period between 1994 and 2005 for the radio programme

The Rush Limbaugh Show (a daily three-hour programme during which its presenter, Rush Limbaugh, analyses the political scene from a conservative perspective); the Fox News channel (owned by Rupert Murdoch and which enjoys large audiences) and the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal* (conservative newspaper and one of the top-selling papers in the United States). Jamieson and Cappella therefore stress that Rush Limbaugh, Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal* have created a space where conservative sympathisers are protected from other sources of information and where highly negative views of the conservatives' political opponents are promoted. Over the last three decades, these three media have protected Reagan's conservative legacy and have isolated their audiences from the political *persuasion* of the Democrats and liberal media. The authors show how Limbaugh, *The Wall Street Journal* and the leading figures at Fox News think along similar lines and share common tactics in defending conservatism and attacking their opponents, primarily *The New York Times*, NBC, CBS, MSNBC and CNN. The three media undertake a reframing process which calls the audience to move towards the conservative media, held up as the only media to provide reliable information. The book also tackles the *hostile media phenomenon*, where viewers detect and offer examples where information supports an opposing ideology, while failing to detect the bias favoured by their own position. The book concludes with an analysis of the possible effects of the conservative media conglomerate and the impact of the partisan media on public deliberation and democracy: could this be a cause for concern or celebration of pluralism?

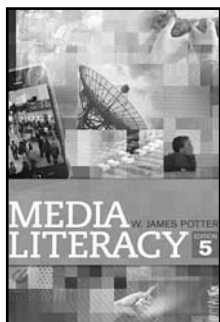
BERKOWITZ, D. A. (ed.) *Cultural Meaning of News: A Text-Reader*. Thousand Oaks [United States]: SAGE Publications, 2011. 432 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4129-6765-5

Daniel Berkowitz has edited this book which, from a cultural perspective, provides an analysis of news production and looks beyond what is termed the *sociology of news*, positioning itself in the wider world of *journalism studies*. The book is divided into six conceptual parts that present a series of original studies which apply qualitative analysis and construct the topics using



textual and ethnographic data. Part One contains three readings which offer a view of different questions regarding journalism and which establish how the cultural perspective differs from the journalistic perspective. Part Two, "Cultural Practice of Journalism", moves closer towards theory and analyses the work of journalists and the news they produce and shows how culture interacts with journalism at different levels. Part Three situates the news as a space where meaning is created, where the news appears as a creation resulting from the meanings that journalists share and uphold. The following part re-examines the idea that journalists carry out their work within a professional paradigm which dictates the rules of journalism. Part Five recovers the term *stories* applied to the news and reflects whether it is possible for news to be treated literally as a story. This part develops the idea that news items echoes within a culture thanks to the fact that they re-tell the stories from this culture in the way in which stories were traditionally told, complete with all the legendary figures and cultural values. The final part of the book, "News Collective Memory", looks at the concept of collective memory which helps journalists judge the magnitude of current events in view of how they unfolded in the past and influences the news-gathering process, while providing journalists with the necessary media to assess the "correct" presentation of their news. Finally, the epilogue moves beyond the readings that comprise the book and refers to issues that have not been discussed, as well as other implications for consideration at the crossroads between culture and news.

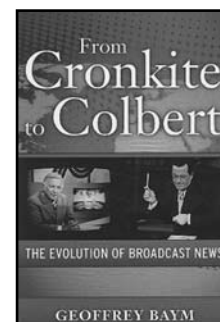
POTTER, W. J. *Media Literacy*. Thousand Oaks [United States]: SAGE Publications, 2011, 5th edition. 462 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4129-7945-0



The fifth edition of a classic book on media literacy studies presents updated content and is an essential text for introducing communication studies students to the literacy process in the media. James Potter divides the book into twenty-one chapters arranged into seven parts: an introduction to media literacy, audiences, industry, content, effects, regulation and how to improve

media literacy, which he terms the *springboard*. The book opens with an introduction that sets out the reasons why media literacy needs improving and a definition of this and of its three pillars (personal locus, knowledge structures and skills). Part Two presents three chapters that help build audience-based knowledge structures, focusing on the audience from an individual perspective and from the media industries' perspective. It also studies childhood as a special audience. Part Three analyses the development of media industries, their economic perspective and the current convergence of the sector. The following part contains five articles that focus on media content. This part covers questions such as what is reality, whether the news is a reflection or a construction of reality, the objectivity of journalism, entertainment content, advertising and the interactive media. The two articles in Part Five focus on the effects of the media: on the one hand exploring how these effects work on audiences and, on the other, defining what they are and how they act on the audience on a cognitive, attitudinal, emotional and physiological level. Part Six presents five questions that require our consideration when thinking about the media: media concentration (localism, efficiency, cross-ownership, control and deregulation); privacy (what it is, invasions of privacy, public opinion and regulations); piracy (what is considered piracy and legislation regarding this question); violence (definition and effects), and sport (the economic movement surrounding it and the influence of the media on sport). Finally, the book concludes with two chapters that deal with personal strategies for increasing levels of media literacy and different strategies for helping others.

BAYM, G. *From Cronkite to Colbert: The Evolution of Broadcast News*. Boulder [United States]: Paradigm Publishers, 2010. 197 pages. ISBN: 978-1-59451-553-8



This excellent book offers a historical look at the news in the United States from Walter Cronkite, CBS journalist during the 1960s, to Stephen Colbert (anchor of the satirical programme *The Colbert Report* on the Comedy Central channel). Baym takes a close look at the decomposition of "real" news and the rise in infotainment and analyses the paradigm shift undergone by information, a symptom and cause of one of the most extensive transformations in the media landscape. He begins the book by comparing the coverage of Watergate with that of the impeachment of Bill Clinton. While Watergate is presented as coverage that demands responsibility of power, the impeachment of Clinton is commodification coverage based on infotainment, competing for audience in a multichannel era. In addition, while the representation of Watergate reveals the modern search for realism and its attempt to present reality transparently and let the facts speak for themselves, the latter shows a post-modern indulgence in the use of real-world elements to create a television spectacle. Chapter Three looks at the language of news, starting with the choice of words within the conceptual frameworks used to explain national politics. The next two chapters examine the coverage of the 2004 presidential campaign and suggest that the re-election of George W. Bush marked a watershed in the evolution of TV news, heralding the collapse of authoritative news programmes and the start of news manipulation by a governing administration. However, this period is also seen as the start of the reinvention of the news with the appearance of alternative political information sources and the creation of news programmes designed to reach a much more defined and differentiated audience. Lastly, it examines the appearance of programmes which are not presented as news programmes and which reject the dominant conventions in the conventional creation of news. These are programmes that open up new spaces to the representation of politics and public issues and that also move television very easily towards the online world, expanding broadcasting and the relationship with the audience.

Other books of interest

JONES, A. *Losing the News: The Future of the News that Feeds Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 256 pages. ISBN: 978-0199754144

COULDRY, N. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism*. London: SAGE Publications, 2010. 184 pages. ISBN: 978-1-848-606623

ROBERTSON, A. *Mediated Cosmopolitanism: The World of Television News*. Cambridge [United Kingdom]: Polity Books, 2010. 186 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7456-4947

GRAY, J.; JONES, J.P.; THOMPSON, E. *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*. New York: NYU Press, 2009. 288 pages. ISBN: 978-0814731994

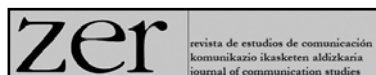
JONES, J. P. *Entertaining Politics: Satiric Television and Political Engagement*. Lanham [United States]: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009. 328 pages. ISBN: 978-0742565289

Journal review

ZER. Revista de Estudios de Comunicación

Universidad del País Vasco: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco. Vol. 15 (29), 2010.

ISSN: 1137-1102



In its issue 29, the communication studies journal of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication at the Universidad del País Vasco contains various articles of note. The article by Pablo Echart examines the main paths taken by American cinema in the last few years to renew romantic comedy (coarse comedy, retro comedy and alternative comedy). For his part, Manuel Garrido presents research on how violence is represented in the trailers of 23 animated films produced by Walt Disney Pictures and shows that this model of representation could have a harmful effect on minors, such as the learning of or lack of sensitivity towards violence. Continuing with childhood, Lucrezia Crescenzi studies the cognitive skills of child viewers based on a content analysis of four programmes broadcast before the watershed. Terese Mendiguren carries out a comparative analysis of the websites of local TV stations in the county of Gran Bilbao, revealing the relationship between the internet and local television. The research shows that not all websites take advantage of the technological resources offered by the internet to establish a direct relationship between channels and their audience, principally due to a lack of economic and human resources at some of these channels. Planells de la Maza analyses, in his article, the narrative transformations in adventure videogames between 1975 and 1998, and shows a shift from "player-character" to "narrator-character" via the appearance of graphic avatars. Other articles in the volume review the evolution of digital audiovisual technology (Galindo and Nó), the influence of hypertextuality on journalistic genres (Larrondo), the contributions of metajournalism to the study of the press and journalism within limited historical contexts (Meneses) and the application of framing theory to the evolution of different issues on the Spanish public agenda in the legislature of 2004-2008 (Rodríguez and Castromil). Finally, we should also note the interesting article by Huertas, Reguero and Sagarzazu that tackles the behaviour of the immigrant North African population in Catalonia regarding what is offered them in media and cultural terms.

Available online at:

<<http://www.ehu.es/zer/>>

Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación (CIC)

Univ. Complutense de Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Univ. Complutense de Madrid. Vol. 15, 2010.

ISSN: 1135-1791 / 1988-4001 (electronic)



Aimed at communication professionals and researchers, the last edition in 2010 of *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación* (CIC) offers us an assortment of articles on political communication. Of note are those by Rodríguez-Virgili, Sádaba and López-Hermida, providing a current perspective of what certain films and series might contribute to political communication. The article by Álvarez García examines the main variables to evaluate the effectiveness of political parties websites. Focusing on the election campaign of the 2008 general elections, the author highlights the growing importance of these new channels within political communication in Spain and stresses the great interest of parties in getting the email addresses of the largest possible number of voters. For his part, Rodríguez Vidales reflects on the series *The West Wing* as a treaty on institutional political communication. The field of study chosen by Valbuena de la Fuente are two series by the BBC (*Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*) and he analyses the importance of humour in political communication. Asunción Bernárdez tackles the media representation of political women, using photographs and pointing out the underlying values or anti-values. López-Galiacho analyses the outsourcing of RTVE's programmes to predominantly Catalan producers and the rise of Mediapro in the article "Catalan oligopoly in the Spanish media: a longitudinal study". Other articles offer an international perspective regarding the first one hundred days of Bulgaria's new government in the press (Dimitrina Jivkova), an analysis of the communicative style of Barack Obama (Paula Requeijo) and a study of the role of the journalist related to legal reporting restrictions (Manuel Cerdán). Finally, the volume concludes with an article by Noelle-Neumann explaining the fundamental proposals of her theory of the spiral of silence.

Available online at:

<http://revistas.ucm.es/portal/modulos.php?name=Revistas2_Ultimo&id=CIYC>

Telos. Cuadernos de Comunicación e Innovación

Madrid: Fundación Telefónica.

No. 85, 2010.

ISSN: 0213-084X



Given the new challenges posed by the digital society, the latest issue of the journal *Telos* focuses exclusively on fundamental rights on the internet. Coordinated by Paloma Llana, the volume analyses the internet's potential to improve and further human rights but also presents the risks and challenges posed by the internet's

most common practices and uses. Of note among the articles in this volume is the one by Celeste Gay, which serves as an introduction to the debate on the need to strike a balance between protecting copyright, citizens' rights and other public interests. From Autocontrol, Pérez de Bes analyses the legal implications of advertising on social networks, specifically the so-called social advertising, based on user behaviour. Meanwhile Natalia Martos reflects in her article on how to manage the participation of minors in social networks. Artemi Rallo, Director of the Data Protection Agency, dedicates his article to the interesting question of the right to remain anonymous and the protection of personal data. The article by Eloy Velasco, a High Court judge, explains how the rule of law can help to pursue new computer crimes while, at the same time, upholding all procedural guarantees. Javier Bustamante presents a new theme: the existence of a "fourth generation" of human rights, arising out of and asserted by the digital ecosystem itself as substantial in order to adapt all previous fundamental human rights to the new technologies and associated networks. The article by Alfonso López and Cristina Corredor studies the relationship between human rights and the internet and points out the risks and opportunities represented by the internet, offering information on the work by Amnesty International in defending human rights through the internet. Finally, we should also note the article by García Castillejo on the legislative modifications of Spanish broadcasting and the article by José María Álvarez and Juan Menor, which reflects on the economic uncertainties of broadcasting in a process of change and cannibalisation of the classic media.

Available online at:

<<http://sociedadinformacion.fundacion.telefonica.com/DYC/TELOS/>>

Journal of Mass Media Ethics

Oxford [United Kingdom]: Routledge.

Vol. 25 (4), 2010.

ISSN: 0890-0523 / 1532-7728 (electronic)

The last edition for 2010 of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* presents various issues regarding media ethics that were dealt with at a colloquium that took place at the Saint Louis University School of Law. This colloquium analysed the viability in the 21st century of codes of ethics, of ombudsmen, of news councils and public/civic journalism. The most noteworthy articles include the one



by Chad Painter and Louis Hodges, pointing out how the satirical comedy programme on American television *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* has become a guardian of journalistic ethics for the rest of the programmes and uses humour to alert the audience to journalistic excesses. Stephen J. A. Ward and Herman Wasserman provide an international perspective of how new technologies are changing the parameters of debate concerning journalistic ethics. The authors claim that the new media help to create *open media ethics* in which journalistic ethics are not merely the concern of media professionals but of all citizens. Mark Cenite and Yu Zhang propose recommendations to guide the publication of online comments from a Habermasian perspective on the discourse ethics developed by Glasser and Ettema. The authors also explore the limitations of this approach in countries where freedom of press is limited. Finally, Ginny Whitehouse deals with the need to expand ethical codes to reflect the changes in the digital era. The volume concludes with three book reviews. The first on how the right to communicate may entail moral demands that exceed human moral capacity (*Ethics and Evil in the Public Sphere: Media Universal Values and Global Development*); there is then a review of the book *Practicing Communication Ethics*, which tackles the need to develop personal ethical standards in human communication, as well as a volume on the role of journalists in representing violence (*Daring to Feel: Violence, the News Media and their Emotions*).

Central European Journal of Communication

Breslau [Poland]: University of Wrocław Press.

Vol. 3 (2), 2010.

ISSN 1899-5101



Published twice a year (spring and autumn) by the Polish Communication Association, the last issue of

2010 of the *Central European Journal of Communication* deals with the development of agenda-setting theory and the research carried out related to this theory from an East-West perspective. The volume benefits from the participation of one of the great theorists in this area, Maxwell McCombs, who, together with Donald Shaw, carried out an initial study by analysing agenda-setting in the US Presidential elections in 1968. Shaw also takes part in the volume with an article on how messages are mixed on the media to create a compatible community in the emerging papyrus society. The articles present studies applying agenda-setting in Spain, Poland, Turkey and Kosovo. Nowak and Riedel apply the interconnected theories of agenda-setting, priming and framing to carry out a comparative analysis of the media coverage of the Polish elections in 2005 and 2007. On the other hand, the article by Camaj shows the effects of the media on a country in transition, Kosovo, analysing the 2007 elections. The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Turkey is analysed in an article by Oncel and Karagoz. International news is covered in this edition in an article by Wanta and Mikusova. And the local media are also analysed in an article by Rocío Zamora, studying the representation of the candidates' attributes in the local media and the consequences on public perceptions. The new media are also covered in an article by Walczak, analysing the coverage on internet portals of the European Parliament elections in 2009 in Poland, while the article by Raquel Rodríguez focuses on the setting of the professional agenda of students in the classroom. The volume ends with an appendix by Erkan Yuksel, reviewing agenda-setting studies in Turkey.

Canadian Journal of Communication

Vancouver [Canada]: Canadian Journal of Communication Corporation. Vol. 35 (3), 2010.

ISSN 1499-6642

The objective of the Canadian Journal of Communication is to publish research with "a distinct Canadian flavour", either in the choice of the research theme or based on the legacy of this country's theory and research. Along these lines, this edition has different articles, all related to the communication system in Canada. The article by Dwayne Winseck examines in detail the economic health of the Canadian media and highlights the rise and fall of some conglomerates. The author claims that the transition to digital transmission and to new models of interaction has led to a financial crisis in the Canadian media industry. The essay by James Cairns on social deliberation offers an historical view of the media coverage of different legislatures in the province of Ontario, distinguishing between the "social celebration" that characterised coverage up to the 1940s and the "social deliberation" prevalent in today's coverage, where the press focuses more on discourse content. The article by Cross then examines the use of news sources in the TV coverage of the Canadian elections. Cross offers an analysis of news agents: political agents, experts, anonymous citizens and representatives of interest groups, and highlights the fact that the category of anonymous citizens (ordinary people) appears in the news with the same frequency as that of political leaders. The article by Giasson, Brin and Sauvageau is a detailed analysis of news content in which, to describe the overwhelming impact of the event as a story in news, the authors develop and examine the potential and limitations of the metaphor "media tsunami" as an alternative to the frequently used term "media hype". Finally, we should also note the article by Akiyama, which analyses the use of sound to monitor and control access to public spaces, focusing on mosquito technology, a resource that produces frequencies that can physically damage human hearing, used to control groups of young people congregating in public places in the United Kingdom.



Website review

Migracom

<<http://www.migracom.com>>

The Observatori i Grup de Recerca sobre Migració i Comunicació (Migracom) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona was founded in 1995 and, since then, has undertaken far-reaching research work. Its website contains information and bibliographies about the members of the Observatori, as well as information about publications and congresses regarding the portrayal of migration in the media. It also offers access to the research they prepare, including the annual reports into the treatment of information regarding immigration into Spain and more specific research, such as "Migrations, Discourses and Ideologies in a Globalised Society", "How the Media See Immigration and Convey Diversity" and "Visual Information and Immigration".

Observatorio de los Contenidos Audiovisuales (OCA)

<<http://campus.usal.es/~oca/>>

Launched in 2005, the Observatorio de los Contenidos Audiovisuales (OCA) is part of the Universidad de Salamanca. It functions as a research centre that carries out empirical studies and analysis of the content, uses and effects of media communication. Its website offers information about the OCA's different lines of research (research into consumption, the assessment of media intervention, transcultural research into media content, processes, uses and effects) and the techniques used (content analysis, experimental research, focus groups, etc.). Its website provides a list containing information about the funded research projects carried out by the Observatorio, as well as a list of communication journals with a link to access them.

Asociación Española de Comunicación Sanitaria (AECS)

<<http://www.aecs.es/>>

As it states on its website, the Asociación Española de Comunicación Sanitaria (AECS) is an initiative by health and communication science professionals who are interested in health communication techniques between public and private institutions, between professionals, the media and the general public, designed to facilitate the communication process in terms of health. The website provides information about the different sections (interpersonal communication, mass communication, corporate health communications), free access to articles published in the recently created *Revista Española de Comunicación en Salud* and to documents regarding health communication.

Observatorio para la Cibersociedad (OCS)

<<http://www.cibersociedad.net>>

The Observatorio para la Cibersociedad is a space for reflection, analysis and debate into cyberspace from the human and social sciences perspective. Its website provides access to the bibliographies of the people who collaborate with the Observatorio, a team comprising researchers from different research centres. It also provides information about the different congresses organised by the centre and other conferences and seminars, and a list of blogs related to cybersociety. An important aspect of the website is the free access to articles providing information, different opinions and current issues regarding the relationship between technology and society/culture, access to book reviews, to papers presented at the different editions of the OCS congress and a cybersociety archive which works as an e-library.

Media Education Association (MEA)

<<http://themea.org>>

The British Media Education Association is an association aimed at everyone who teaches about the media at any level of the 3-19 education system. Since September 2010, the Association has been offering visitors the chance to become free members via its website. As well as providing a forum for registered members, it offers them access to the journal published by the Association, *PoV*, and allows them to download articles from it. Users can also access information about conferences, congresses and events related to education in communication, as well as online news and resources from different research centres, both in the UK and other countries.

The Centre for Excellence in Media Practice (CEMP)

<<http://www.cemp.ac.uk/>>

Part of the Media School at Bournemouth University (United Kingdom), the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice (CEMP) has been functioning as a research and innovation centre since its creation in 2004. It has developed a set of online tools for use in education and the media industry. As well as offering information about the centre and its courses, the website provides access to tools such as AdReview, which allows users to download advertisements and make pertinent comments about them; Biblipedia, an online tool which allows users to keep track of their academic readings and manage their bibliographies; and Theory Trading Cards, is a fun way of introducing students to some of the leading cultural and media theories.

Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS)
<<http://www.cmcs.ceu.hu/home>>

Part of the Central European University with its headquarters in Budapest (Hungary), the CMCS is devoted to media and communication research. The Center's research and activities are aimed at media policies, the democratic potential of the media, the relationship between civil society and participation, the right to information and the complexities of the media and communication in transition. The Center's current lines of research – which can be consulted on the website – deal with issues such as privacy and human rights in Europe, the development of indicators for measuring the independence and efficiency of audiovisual regulatory bodies, and analysing the potential of the internet for promoting civic engagement and participation among young people.

Media Matters for America
<<http://mediamatters.org/>>

Media Matters for America is a web-based, not-for-profit research and information centre dedicated to supervising, analysing and correcting misinformation in the U.S. media. Launched in 2004, the centre monitors information published in the written and audiovisual media and on the internet. The website acts as a media custodian and notifies activists, journalists, authorities and the general public about instances of misinformation detected. One of the sections on the website details the research carried out by the centre, aimed primarily at denouncing the inflammatory words of certain conservative media programmes. It also provides access to a large amount of audiovisual material from American news and opinion programmes.

The Media Consortium
<<http://www.themediaconsortium.org/>>

Launched in 2006, The Media Consortium is a network of the United States' leading independent journalism organisations. Its website provides access to information about its members (New America Media, The Real News Network, The Women's Media Center, Democracy Now!, etc.), as well as information about the different projects carried out by the centre. These projects include the Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Program, which provide support and promote information creation. It also provides access to four websites created by The Media Consortium for the purpose of sharing information on different topics: the economy (The Audit), the environment (The Mulch), health (The Pulse) and immigration (The Diaspora). The website also provides reports which describe the information that appears in the media regarding a specific question.

Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS)
<<http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/research-published.html>>

Run by Monroe E. Price, the Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS) works with the Annenberg School (University of Pennsylvania, USA) and is a research centre for comparative studies into media law and policy. Research at the Center focuses on subjects such as media regulation, the media and democracy, public service and the role of the media in conflict environments. Its website provides access to collaborating centres (Central European University, Communication University of China, University of Oxford, Stanhope Centre), current projects (access to information, education and training; the media and civil society; the media and conflict; media law, policy and regulation; mobile technology), and to CGCS reports and publications.

Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA)
<<http://cima.ned.org/>>

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) is an initiative of America's National Endowment for Democracy, which provides information, builds networks, carries out research and highlights the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies around the world. Its website provides access to extensive information about media development and related questions such as community radio, the digital media, sustainability and media literacy. It also has a very interesting section that contains a whole raft of resources, including information about development profiles in the media in different countries and an extensive bibliography database containing books, reports, articles, papers and manuals relevant to the field of the media.

Civic Engagement Research Group
<http://www.civicsurvey.org/CERG_Welcome_1.html>

Located in California, the Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College carries out quantitative and qualitative research into youth civic engagement and the impact on them of the civic learning and participation opportunities offered by the digital media. Its website contains information about the projects run by the centre, including Youth & Participatory Politics, a project which analyses how youth participation in online networks is reshaping youth civic and political engagement in the public sphere. Another project that can be accessed is the Civic Implications of Kids' Participation with Digital Media, a quantitative analysis of how adolescent engagement with digital media relates to their knowledge, their commitments and civic and political activities.

Communication Space

<<http://thecomcommunicationspace.com/>>

Communication Space is an online network open to everyone interested in media studies, mass communication, journalism, the new media and interpersonal communication. Sponsored by SAGE, the aim of its website is for students and researchers to network and share research, resources and debates. The website contains a forum where registered members can debate different issues. It also contains information about congresses, publishing news, job and grant offers, access to blogs related to media, video and podcast analysis, and there is even a section about how to submit an article or be published in academic journals.

Acacia Initiative

<<http://www.idrc.ca/acacia/>>

Launched in 1997, Acacia Initiative works with African organisations to help African countries apply new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve major social and economic development. With this as its aim, the Initiative covers a wide range of research programmes and projects that focus on the appropriate new technologies to ensure improved governance. Its website, which is available in English and French, provides information about the different initiatives that are carried out, such as those concerning the impact of new information and communication technologies on cultural practices and democratic elections in Kenya and free digital access by African lawyers to legal documentation.

Project on Information Technology & Political Islam

<<http://www.pITPI.org/>>

The Project on Information, Technology and Political Islam is part of the Department of Communication at the University of Washington and investigates new information and communication technology infrastructure policies in Muslim societies, and the civic and political uses of digital media across the Muslim world. The website provides access to bibliography on information and communication technology (ICT) and the Islamic world, as well as a database about the dissemination and distribution of new ICT, the detention of bloggers and biographies of the most important political parties in the Islamic world. It also provides free access to articles published by members of the project and information about congresses and conferences on new technologies and the Islamic world.

Center for Future Civic Media

<<http://civic.mit.edu/>>

The Center for Future Civic Media works to create technical and social systems for sharing, prioritising, organising and acting on information. These include developing new technologies that support and foster civic media and political action; serving as an international resource for the study and analysis of civic media; and coordinating community-based test beds both in the United States and internationally. Its website provides access to international projects, as well as a set of tools created by the Center or other free-access communities. Users can also consult audiovisual material about talks, round tables and conferences on the civic media.

The News Literacy Project

<<http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/about/>>

Launched in 2008, The News Literacy Project is an innovative national educational programme in the United States that is mobilising journalists to help secondary school students sort fact from fiction in the digital age. The project's primary aim is to teach students to develop the critical thinking skills they need to become responsible media consumers. As a result, students learn how to distinguish verified information from opinion or gossip and are being encouraged to seek news and information that will make them well-informed citizens and voters. This website contains information about the programme, as well as featuring a directory of volunteer journalists, which enables teachers to select the person to visit their school.

Manuscript submissions guidelines

Presentation of the articles

The article must be presented in electronic support (PC and Word format preferred). Every page must be 30 lines approx. and **body size 12**. The maximum length is about **6.000 words**, notes and references not included. The cover sheet has to be provided only giving the title, the name of the author(s) and position, postal and e-mail addresses. The article has to include an **abstract of 90-100 words and five keywords**.

Articles will be accepted in Catalan, Spanish and English, the languages of diffusion of the journal.

Submission

Articles should be addressed at: quadernsdelcac@gencat.cat

Copyright clearance

Every author whose article has passed the blind review and has been accepted for publication must send to CAC a signed letter accepting the text publication by CAC in its journals and website (www.cac.cat) and confirming that the article is original, unpublished and is not assessed in other publications, being the author responsible of any reclaim due to the nonfulfilment of this warranty.

Letters should be addressed at:

Quaderns del CAC

Sancho d'Àvila, 25-129

08018 Barcelona

References and notes

The list of references and end notes has to be placed at the end of every article. References in the text must appear into brackets with the name of the author, the year of edition and the pages. (Name year, pages).

The model used for citing the bibliography must follow the criteria given by TERMCAT, which may be consulted at:

<<http://www.termcat.cat/docs/citaciobiblio.pdf>> [in Catalan]

• Books

LAST NAME; INITIAL/INSTITUTION. *Title*. Edition. Place of edition: Publisher, year. Volume. (Collection, number). ISBN number

• Articles in journals

LAST NAME; INITIAL. "Title of the article". Journal. Volume. (year), issue number, pages. ISSN (optional)

• Contributions to books

LAST NAME; INITIAL/INSTITUTION. "Title of the chapter". In: LAST NAME; INITIAL/INSTITUTION. *Title*. Edition. Place of edition: Publisher, year. Volume. (Collection, number). ISBN number

• Online documents

LAST NAME; INITIAL/INSTITUTION. *Title* [Online]. Edition/Version. Place of edition: Publisher, year.
<URL address>[Consulted: date]

Tables and figures

Tables and figures have to be provided with **short, descriptive titles** and also be numbered in Arabic numbers. All footnotes to tables and their source(s) should be placed under the tables. They must be inserted not as an image but in an **editable format** (e.g. in Excel). **Color** figures, tables and graphs are admitted and they all should have the **source** well identified.

Book reviews guidelines

1. The aim of the section 'Critical books review' is to review the most important new publications in the world of communication and particularly in the field of broadcasting.

2. Reviews must be original and previously unpublished.

3. Reviews must be adequate for readers to get a general idea of the content of the book under review, as well as providing a personal assessment of its interest. The review must therefore contain a description and analysis of the book, as well as some conclusions indicating its value and importance to readers.

4. The recommended length for reviews is around 1,000 words, not exceeding 1,300 words in any case.

5. Reviewed books must be contemporary, i.e. they must have been published during the last two full calendar years, although an earlier book may be included if duly justified.

6. The review must be given a title that summarises its content, with the bibliographical details and the author of the review below, including his or her position and the institution to which he or she belongs.

7. The model used for citing the bibliography must follow the criteria given by TERM CAT, which may be consulted at: <http://www.termcat.cat/docs/citaciobiblio.pdf> [in Catalan]

LAST NAME; INITIAL/INSTITUTION. *Title*. Edition. Place of edition: Publisher, year. Volume. (Collection, number). ISBN number

8. The author should be introduced briefly by commenting on his or her background or most recent work.

9. The most important part of the review is the summary and analysis of the content. Here it is necessary to explain the field in which the book is placed, the perspective adopted by the author, the goals the author sets him or herself and the fundamental thesis of the book and how it is developed.

10. The critical evaluation should be generally positive but negative comments can also be included, in both cases suitable arguments being required. Readers must be informed regarding the value, interest and usefulness of the book under

review. If relevant, other details can also be included, such as the use of sources, documentation, the bibliography used by the author, the book's formal presentation, etc.

11. Any possible references to text from the book under review must be written in inverted commas, with the page number afterwards, in brackets. "Quote" (p.XX)

12. Bibliographical references to third parties cited in the text of the book under review must use the following model: (Last name year, p. for page number)

13. Bibliographical references from other works quoted in the review must be contained in full at the end, using the same format as the initial bibliographical reference but excluding the ISBN.

14. The review must be sent digitally, in Word or Word RTF, to the following email address: critica.cac@gencat.cat

15. The book review editor will evaluate every submitted review, in order to approve its publication or ask for some modification for his definitive publication

16. Reviews may be written in Catalan, Spanish, English or French. However, they will be published on in English, Catalan and Spanish on the CAC website.

17. After a review has been accepted, the author must authorise the CAC to publish his or her review in any of its written publications and on its website, by means of a signed letter sent by postal service.

Letters should be addressed at:

Quaderns del CAC
Sancho d'Àvila, 25-129
08018 Barcelona

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