Reality and fiction in US TV series: *Lost, CSI* and *The West Wing*. Narrative strategies and verosimilitude

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Resumen:

El objetivo de este artículo es presentar una metodología de análisis de las series de televisión, teniendo en cuenta el uso de la realidad y la ficción en la construcción narrativa de estas series, así como el uso de las estrategias de verosimilitud en las series con referentes del mundo real. Con la metodología elegida, el propósito es diferenciar entre el uso de realidad y ficción, por una parte, y el uso de la recurrencia temática, el mito y las referencias metatelevisivas, por otra. La metodología consiste en la edición del texto televisivo, ya que consideramos que las series dramáticas se pueden analizar como textos televisivos que son. El análisis empírico versa sobre tres series dramáticas estadounidenses: *Lost*, ABC: 2004-, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, CBS: 2000- y *The West Wing*, NBC: 1999-2006. Todas ellas pertenecen a la llamada era del drama en televisión, y cada una representa un subgénero distinto, aventuras y ciencia ficción, policíaco y forense, y político y de lugar de trabajo.

Palabras clave: Realidad; Ficción; Series Televisivas.

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to present a methodology of analysis of TV series, taking into account the use of reality and fiction in the narrative construction of these series, as well as the use of verosimilitude in 'real-world' series. With the methodology chosen, the purpose is to distinguish between the usage of reality and fiction, on one hand, and the usage of thematic recurrence, myth and metaTV references, on the other. The methodology consists of the edition of televisual text. For, inasmuch as we consider that drama series are a text, they can be edited. The empirical analysis deals with three US TV series: *Lost*, ABC: 2004-, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, CBS: 2000- and *The West Wing*, NBC: 1999-2006. They all belong to the drama's era, but each of them represents a specific subgenre: adventures and science-fiction, crime and forensic, and workplace and politics.

Key Word: Reality; Fiction; TV Series.

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1. Introduction

This paper deals with TV fiction analysis of US drama series. Nowadays the majority of US TV series belong to the third golden age of television fiction, also named by Longworth (2000-2002) the *drama era*. They belong to the must-see TV category, or quality TV (Jancovich and Lyons, 2003, p. 2-3) and, therefore, are not merely part of the TV flux (Williams, 1975), but are, instead, essential viewing (Jancovich and Lyons, 2003, p. 2-3). The first golden age of television fiction must be placed during 1948-1956, with anthological TV series like *Alfred Hitchcock presents* (CBS: 1955-1960, NBC: 1960-1962) and *The Twillight Zone* (CBS: 1959-1965). The second golden age, as stated by Thomson (1996), includes series like *Hill Street Blues* (NBC: 1981-1987), *ER* (NBC: 1994-), *Twin Peaks* (ABC: 1990-91), *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) and some comedy programs that were common in TV fiction in the eighties and nineties, such as *Frazer* and *Friends* (NBC: 1994-2004). And, finally, the third golden age is known by series like *24* (Fox: 2001-), *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC: 2005-), *Six Feet Under* (HBO: 2001-2005), *The Sopranos* (HBO: 1999-2007), *The West Wing*, NBC: 1999-2006, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, CBS: 2000-, *Lost*, ABC: 2004-, *Desperate Housewives*, ABC: 2004- and *House*, Fox: 2004-.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse intertextuality in televisual narrative, specifically in drama series, in order to identify the usage of reality and fiction and thematic recurrences from an interdisciplinary perspective covering narratology, literary theory, mythology, semiotics and anthropology and could be named *mediological intertextuality*, as it is constantly related to previous texts (Debray, 2000).

The analysis is focused on *Lost*, *CSI* and *The West Wing*, US series belonging to the drama era, which have a closed relationship between fact and fiction. Two of them, *CSI* and *The West Wing*, are workplace series. They are depicting the workplaces of forensic (*CSI*) and politics (*The West Wing*). Neither of them have a documentary intention, but a fictional purpose from a real world depiction.

Definition, serial audiovisual text

The serial audiovisual text is a trans-semiotic extension of the concept of 'text', which, without loosing its linguistic dimension –inherent to it– modifies itself with the media (audiovisual, multimedia, televisual) that constitutes its support (Rastier, 2001). It should be inscribed within the category of film text and televisual text, in the symbolic dimension, but must be distinguished from televisual flux, supertext and programme.

The serial audiovisual text shares televisual text features, especially intertextuality, but has certain relevant differences, especially in the open, unstable and particularly recurrent character of seriality.

The study of serial televisual text carried out in this research starts from the intertextual character of televisual textuality (Fiske, 1987: 15). To do this, we base our research on the concept of thematic recurrence, which is defined below:

Definition, thematic recurrence

Thematic recurrence consists of the fact that certain ingredients having a literary basis – or literary coincidence with a shared mythical origin– repeatedly appear in cultural production (Tous, 2004, 2008). Repetition is a *sine qua non* condition in cases of recurrence, but it is not enough. From repetition, we have figuration (of myth, archetype and theme), which then gives rise to recurrence. We distinguish between *primary figurations* such as myth, archetype and theme, and *secondary figurations* such as *loci, topoi,* motives, characters, situations, scenes, spaces and images. The definition includes a typology of recurrences: formal recurrence, structural recurrence, mythical recurrence and intertextual recurrence, which can be erudite or can have a less specialised transmission, on a cultural basis, metatelevisual, or mass-cultural. Metatelevisual references are characterized, as we will see in this paper, by containing the whole TV schedule. The different TV programs (series, contests, musical programs, cinema, publicity, information) are contained in fictional or non fictional programs which, as they belong to the metaTV era, are willing to contain the entire TV univers in themselves.

Thematic recurrence is a structural part of narrations and must be reinforced in serial production, as it is, by definition, open and unstable. *Mythos* continues to appear in audiovisual production, because it is a motor of creativity and because of its unifying function. Most stories have a clear anthropological reading, which explains that literary themes keep on reappearing and have updated so constantly, from a generating *mythos*. The study of thematic recurrences in television is important because it discovers the existence of a range of invariants and regularities that allow us to consider the maturity of televisual text.

Methodology

The theoretical and methodological approach uses different paradigms and authors, such as Guillén and Brunel (themathology), Propp, Barthes and Lévi-Strauss (structuralism, formalism), Duch, Duran (anthropology), Ginzburg, Dumézil (mythological comparison), Frye (literary criticism), Kristeva, Deleuze (deconstruccionism, poststructuralism).

In order to distinguish between fact and fiction in these series and demonstrate that thematic recurrence extends to televisual text and it is not inherent only to the ethnographic tale, we will:

1. Identify the invariable ingredients used in televisual texts (Calabrese 1989; Villanueva, 1991) and analyse these from a multidisciplinary perspective, using mythological comparativism (Lévi-Strauss, 1958; Ginzburg, 1989; Dumézil, 1970), Rastier's textual analysis and themathology (Brunel, Dabézies, 1992; Guillén, 1985 and 1998), myth in TV (Silverstone, 1981);
2. Identify homological structural features using semiotics, formalism (Eco, 1979, 1983, 1984; Calabrese, 1987; Greimas, 1979; Todorov; Propp, 1928) and narratology (Genette, 1982), in order to distinguish those features inherent to audiovisual narrative from thematic recurrence within the culture and in artistic production;
3. Distinguish features inherent to audiovisual narrative such as auto-referenciality, generic hybridisation and multigenericity, using academic televisual research (Creeber, 2001, 2004, 2006; Buonanno, 1999, 2005; Berciano, 1999; Lacalle, 1999, 2000, 2001; Imbert, 2003; Cascajosa, 2005, 2006).

One of the purposes of this methodology is to distinguish the intertwined use of reality and fiction. That is, at the same time we analyse thematic recurrence and the different kinds of references, we are analysing the use of reality, the depiction of reality carried by these series. The Drama Genre is characterized for being a fictional text with the purpose of depiction of reality in a trustworthy, plausible manner. Dramatic strategies used to obtain a credible product are the marks of belonging to this genre. We must refer to Jost's division of three main TV genres: fiction, reality and game (Jost, 2005, p. 55-58). TV series and other fictional products have a closer relationship with reality and fiction, than game. As it has been stated, *CSI* and *The West Wing* are 'real-world' series: they have an extratextual narrative logic (viewer's empiric world), and *Lost* has an intratextual

narrative logic, completely indifferent to the viewer's empiric world, because of the creation of an autonomous narrative (Lacalle, 1999, p. 267). All the series analysed in this paper belong to Searle's concept of fictive world (Searle, 1975), as they do not have a documentary purpose. These series are fictive products, as they are intended to be fictional both by the author and the reader. As happens with the verosimilitude contract (Greimas, 1982), the fictional purpose of the text is shared by both author and viewer.

As has been stated, genre is an unavoidable issue related to the distinction of reality and fiction. So, we must refer to the reinforcement of generic marks through the paradoxical use of generic hybridisation, in order to allow the viewer's recognition of several genres together within a single televisual product. As Wolf (1984) and Fiske (1987) observe, television is an instrument for showing genericness, and has placed the learning of different genres within the reach of its viewers. This knowledge leads to generic hybridisation, with other causes, which are:

a) Television itself has always been an hybrid and complex form of showing genres; for instance, *All in the family* (CBS: 1971-1979) is an example of drama in a sit-com;

b) the change from deductive, canonical paradigm (Aristotelian model) in the treatment of literary genres which, some centuries later, lead to the inductive paradigm (formalist model), that, instead of setting a model, analyses genres from the characteristics of texts, and, therefore, acknowledges the existence of hybridisation and creation of new genres (Wellek and Warren, 1979, p. 281-282);

c) Generic crisis: genre has been highlighted in its function of social institution (Newcomb, 1974; Neale, 1980; Altman, 1999). Generic hybridisation may imply a change in this point of view, as it can be related with the loss of representation of social items by emblems (Buck Morss, 1989);

d) Postmodernity or postcolonialism, which is a less problematic concept, has also its influence in such process: the contemporary fragmentary nature of stories, the disappearance of great, epic tales (Magris, 1984), and the social and cultural revision inherent to this paradigm (Lyotard, 1979).

To study thematic recurrences, we need to employ a double perspective: the diachronic (positivist, historical, deductive, retrospective comparatism) perspective, mainly used in analysing the generic specificity of each series (Ginzburg, Dumézil), and the mythopoetic (synchronic, anthropological and interpretative) point of view (Lévi-Strauss, Dabezies,

Jung, Rank). This latter consists of determining why certain themes keep on reappearing, what anthropological meaning can be attached to them, and whether they organize themselves into constellations, as stated by Durand (1979).

The Drama series studied allow us to talk about two important concepts in contemporary audiovisual production (that is, metaTV era[1]): auto-referenciality (the usage of metatelevisual intertextuality) and the hypervisibility of quotations, which must be connected to the concept of *ostranenie* (seeing the common in an uncommon light), from the Russian formalist Shklovsky, which consists of the emphasis and visibility of the means used to reach a literary text, and which is considered, by formalists, to be a feature inherent to maturity of such texts. This concept should be related to the drama series that have been analysed: in some senses, this paper also studies how television fiction is attaining its maturity (generic hybridisation, the uses of paleotelevisual features, hypervisibility of quotations, auto-referentiality).

So, metaTV references are placed in the level of expression (significant), and are characterized by the repetition and the stereotype. They can be parody, irony or cliché, and their function can be as references socially shared or following the TV schedule, organized as it comes:

- References To other series,
- References To the same series;
- References To musicals,
- References To contests;
- References To commercials;
- References To information;
- References To films;
- References To cartoons, comics
- References To History, politics
- References To Video games, Internet

On the other side, we do have thematic recurrence, which can be classified in:

a) Literary references,
b) Mythological references,
c) Thematic references,
d) Biblical and Religious references,

The importance of context and the system of industrial television production

The analysis is undertaken on the first season of each of the five series indicated. First seasons always state the series' most important features: they determine theme, topics, definition of characters and the overall structure of the series in question.

The first step in the research consists of analysing the context of the series' production and reception. We therefore begin the textual analysis once the contextual assessment has been undertaken. Irving and Harriet Deer considered that context was indispensable in the study of popular art. We highlight the applicability of their statement, even though their consideration was made in order to emphasise the artistic value of different cultural levels –"the values of art, like all else aesthetic, can only be analysed contextually" (Deer *apud* Newcomb, 1974, p. 20).

As we are discussing television, we cannot study it without reference to subsequent and other directly related items. Here are some examples of the analysis: a) a comprehensive description of the programme's audience; b) items related to the series' origin and production features (for instance, how Marc Cherry created *Desperate Housewives*: from his mother's idea and through the analysis of Alan Ball's *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) and some of Woody Allen's scripts (Starr Siebel, 2004); c) characters and actors; d) televisual typology (the increasing serialisation of drama series mainly through characters' feelings and lives, which go on and on from week to week, as seen in three episodic series, such as *The West Wing*, *CSI* and *House* (*CSI* and *House* are not only episodic, but procedural series). Generic hybridisation is also important as a feature inherent to the drama series. Some of the analysed series are examples of this: *Desperate Housewives* mixes thriller and soap-opera features and *House* mixes a detective procedural structure with hospital-drama topics; e) the awards each series has received; f) the series analysed use metatelevision features but also make use of certain paleotelevision and neotelevision features[2], recovering not only quality but also some other paleotelevision characteristics such as hierarchical perspective and educational purpose to communicate knowledge (Casetti-Odin, 1990, p. 10), *House* provides medical information, etc. Related to metatelevision features, we also refer to auto-referenciality, metatelevision intertextuality and generic hybridisation; g) in the same sense, attention has to be paid to the system of industrial television production in the US, a market based, from its very beginnings, on copy and recycling.

This production system is criticised by US executive producers but, at the same time, they continue using it. For instance, there have been projects (pitches) of *Lost* adaptations, Lost-like projects: "Lost in space', 'Lost under the sea', 'Lost' in every configuration you can imagine" (Frutkin, 2004: b). In this sense, it is very interesting a journalist quotation about the loss of creativity in TV fiction:

'ABC has brought a project with a Nip/Tuck-like feel set in the world of L.A. real estate agents, while CBS is developing a script about a crime scene cleanup crew with a feel similar to Six Feet Under (...) ABC is developing a "CSI"-like project with a "Silence of the Lambs" twist, while CBS is developing a medical drama where lawyers team with doctors in a Boston hospital' (Lisotta, 2004: b).

This kind of series creation and the generic crisis that can be observed in contemporary audiovisual production leads us to characterise these series as possible fiction "formats", since they can be copied. We propose certain concepts related to industrial constrictions, such as *hipertextual prosecution* (following Genette, 1982) –a film takes up a theme treated within a given series, such as *Déja vu* (Tony Scott, 2006) from *CSI*–; thematic synergies –in the increasing use of interactivity strategies from the networks, in order to complement the interactivity lacking in Herzian TV, there is a relevant usage of the same theme in different supports, genres and formats, such as those based on real cases (*CSI*), or the intertextual use of the Beatles' *Abbey Road* image to promote the seventh season of *CSI*, to give only two examples–; and internal-cloning structure, which can be applied mainly to *Desperate Housewives*, as the plot keeps on repeating themes in order to enlarge a series that has attained a success far beyond the producers' expectations. We call *hipertextual prosecution* the relation established between text B (hypertext) and text A (hypotext) (following Genette, 1982). It consists of a simple transformation, which affects the plot or the topic: we can find examples in serial or cinema's franchises such as *Law and order* (NBC: 1990-), *Law and Order. Special Victims Unit* (NBC: 1999-), *Law and Order. Criminal Intent* (NBC: 2001-) or the aforementioned *Déjà Vu* (Tony Scott, 2006), which is a continuity from *CSI*. *Déja Vu* synthesizes the main topics of the series and adds a thematic expansion (or *thematic hipertextual prossecution*) of the series to science fiction genre.

Therefore, it is essential to study industrial conditions in order to analyse the audiovisual text. These constrictions reinforce thematic and structural recurrence, instead of suppressing them, through the lack of originality that comes from the use of copy-cats, cloning, adaptations, spin-offs, etc.

'Lost': A case study

Lost uses multigenericity: each character is related to a specific genre through the *analepsis,* (Genette, 1982) or flash-backs used to explain their lives before the crash, their "past lives", during the first season of the series. In this sense, *Lost* is far more complex than *House*, as the former mixes generic hybridisation (survivor adventures on an island, terror, fantasy, conspiracy theories) and multigenericity. The large number of main characters in *Lost*, 14 (something that had not been seen since Bochco's *Hill Street Blues*, NBC: 1981-1987) is expensive in terms of production but facilitates a more complex plot and, also, its generic hybridation.

The maintenance of thematic recurrence with some given ingredients means that audiovisual production uses invariant motives that, in most cases, connect with certain myths, as can be seen in *Lost. Lost* uses several kinds of intertextuality (on a cultural basis, which can be literary or biblical, metatelevisual, or mass-cultural); and should be considered an exercise in the usage of recurrence. *Lost* employs the generic specificity (Ryan, 1979) of its main genre, survivors on an island –significant parallels to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); Jules Verne's *L'île mystérieuse* (1874-75)*,* and *L'École de Robinsons* (1882) have been found; and its cinema's latest version, *Cast away* (Zemeckis, 2000). This main genre is used as a connector of the several subgenres of the series.

Thematic recurrence goes beyond this, as we see in the following examples: *Lost* uses Dante's idea's of purgatory from *La Divina Commedia* (1321); the search for the white rabbit in Lewis Caroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'*s (1865); the boys' fight to decide where to live on the island in William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) (episode 1.5., "The white rabbit"); fear and personal transformation brought on by the jungle in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and a very large etcetera.

One of these series most important features is generic hybridation. The main genre, survivors on an island, is completed with other important genres such as Phantasy, Science Fiction and Survivor Realities. If we analyse the isomorphism of certain themes we can state the updating of myth (Ginzburg, 2003: 54), when it is not merely repetition. Our methodology, therefore, consists of seeing generic similarities in order to ascertain the generic specificity of the text. When we have studied the diachronic perspective, we can then investigate the use of myth, which can be applied in different forms (transmission or mythical recurrence), as Ginzburg both explains and uses (Ginzburg,

1989). We can identify certain invariants and then compare these with their use in other cultures (Russian folk-tales, Propp, 1928, 1940), attempt to determine their anthropological significance with the help of Durand's constellations of themes (1979) and analyse whether these are a case of erudite transmission or not.

It is important for this research to distinguish clearly between two uses of intertextuality or thematic recurrence, following Hjemslev (*apud* Eco, 1990) and Lacalle (2000):

> a) we can use mythical or thematic recurrence with the purpose of communication. As we will suggest below, it is in fact indispensable to use recurrence in order to communicate successfully. We must relate this category with the significance, and this must be related in turn with level of content, with the concept and with *mythos*.
>
> b) we can simply repeat themes. In this case we are producing the parody, cliché and televisual auto-referenciality that characterises contemporary audiovisual production. We must relate this category with significant, and this must be related with level of expression, form, and the perpetuation of myth through the ritual (Dumézil).

We study the contextual constrains, generic features, thematic recurrence, TV invariables in order to determine Diachronic perspective (genre) and the use of myth (Synchronic perspective). Myth is seen as an intertextual object (Lévi-Strauss, 1969), so, "Each version of the myth is true".

Related to fact and fiction, *Lost* is, as has been said, an adventures and science fiction series. We must come back to Jost (2005) division in three main TV genres (fiction, fact and game) and emphasize the use of these three main genres in J.J. Abrams' series. *Lost* establishes several games with its audience. First of all, an interactive game, The Lost Experience. Secondly, an astonishing use of intertextuality, which can be considered another game established between producers and viewers. The use of recurrences has the purpose of getting the audience recognizing them (and the pleasure of recognition). The kind of recurrences used determines to which kind of viewer the series is addressed, the "model reader" (Eco, 1986). Last but not least, the series uses the game as a TV genre: the plots of the second season can be related to *Truman's show* (Peter Weir, 1998), so, related to "reality-show theory". This series is completely coincident with nowadays viewer, the playful audience's concept (Fiske, 1987; Ang, 1990; Morley, 1998; Silverstone, 1999), and also what Jenkins calls the *Aca/Fan* (Jenkins, 2006: 4).

In *Lost*, references to reality are made through references to the tensions and conflicts originated in 9/11, trying to emphasize multiculturality and to avoid manicheisms. There are also plenty of references to the real world, outside the island, such as location references in the *analepsis*. Kings Cross, for instance, is the real prostitution and drugs neighbourhood in Sydney, and also where Jack's father body is found. Some other references to real world in *Lost* come from References to Information, References to Music and References to Sports. These references are not especially significant in number, compared with all the other references (mainly televisive and literary references). On the first season, the whole references to information belong to the tensions and conflicts originated in 9/11 and are closely related to one character, Sayid, who was a soldier and torturer of the Republican Guard. Through this character, the series depicts the conflict from both sides, deals with racism, prejudices and fear. The series also depicts the Arabian world: an Al-Qaeda cell, the life of the torturer,… It is depicted without manicheisms, and the purpose seems to be of a multicultural understanding. For instance, Shannon betrays Sayid at the airport, and they will fall in love during the first season.

It is a matter of fact that music has been increasingly important in TV, especially in metaTV (Holden *apud* Wallace, 2001, p. 41). References to music must be divided in some episode titles ("All the Best Cowboys Have Daddy Issues" and "House of the Rising Sun"), an intertextual case (*La mer* and *Finding Nemo*) and other references, the most important one being Drive Shaft band, which must be considered a reference to Oasis group (fights between the two brothers, sex, drugs, and the reference to the Oasis song *Rock'n Roll Star* via *You All Everybody*). There is only one reference to Sports in the first season, to the baseball team Red Sox, that for 86 years haven't been able to win the World Series Competition.

So, we can conclude that in *Lost's* firt season, game and fiction are the main genres, and reality is used only as an external support. Characters do have a life out from the island, as is seen in *analepsis* (and *prolepsis*, in the other seasons). The relationship between their real life and their lives in the island is, obviously, another game, which resolution is intertwined with the final resolution of the series, that is, the resolution of the *mac-guffin* (what the island is and what the characters are doing there).

'CSI'. A case study

Most of the TV series of the Third Golden Age are characterized by generic hybridation. Studying *CSI*, for instance, we can identify the different decades and genres of Crime, one of the most important genres in US TV series, along with Hospital Drama. *CSI* has been the world's most watched series, and has attained 40% of share in Spain[3], an excellent figure fact for a US drama series in Spain[4]. Related to paleoTV features recovered in these series, *CSI* provides information on forensic techniques.

This genre has some features that distinguish it as a TV genre. Crime drama has about 50 years of existence (so does hospital drama) and has traditionally been related to male audiences. The fifties and the sixties are determined by paternalism and manicheism (*Dragnet*); the sixties and seventies by *Adam-12*, *The FBI*, *Hawai 5.0*, *Ironside, The Mod Squad*. The seventies are called the "law and order" decade, because of series like *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC: 1975-1979) and *Law and Order* (BBC: 1978). In that decade, the objectives used to justify illegality, all of them in the context of the Cold War tension. The eighties' most important cop series are *Columbo* (NBC: 1968-2002), *Hill Street Blues* (NBC: 1981-1987) (one of the most revolutionary TV series, not only for cop series, but also medical ones like *St. Elsewhere*), and the controversial *LA Law* (NBC: 1986-1994). The nineties' is characterized by what we can call generic diversification, with series like *Law and order* (NBC: 1990-)[5] (law, crime); *Cagney and Lacey* (feminity); *Cop Rock* (1990-91) (musical); Reality-shows and the Forensic Genre, specially important with *CSI* and series alike (*Crossing Jordan, Bones, Criminal Minds, Cold Case*). *CSI* has got a mixture of features of these different cop series, being the most important one the introduction of a new genre (forensic), and death as a theme, seen as a non-taboo theme for first time in TV fiction with the program *Autopsy* (HBO, 1994-).

As has been stated, *CSI* belongs to the fictional world but it is depicting a real world, and it is not doing it with a documentary purpose. What are the ways to do it? First of all, accelerating the process. *CSI* has also been rewarded as a Sci-Fi series (Saturn Award 2004), mainly because the use of forensic techniques and methods is always related to what probably will be possible to do in the future, but still not nowadays. Everything is faster and better than in the real world –Zuiker has apologized for having to be so fast (Hernando, 2003, p. 66). We must keep in mind that *CSI* has been created after the O.J. Simpson case (which had several problems related with evidence) and it has made an important contribution to the interest for the discipline. That is, the series has been helpful at having new professionals in new areas of the real-world forensic job.

Besides, it is really interesting the use of special, chilling real cases. A forensic in the real world won't see, in all his or her professional career, as many 'interesting' cases as the *CSI* team in one night. Another important difference are the several jobs carried out by the forensics. Despite their specialization, they mix some activities which are not allowed to be mixed in the real practice of the profession. Those different strategies are what transform *CSI* in a fictional product: a) accordance to features of a fictional genre, crime drama; b) some alterations from this real life job in order to obtain spectacularization; c) use of thematic recurrence and myth; d) use of metatelevisual intertextuality; e) depiction of the main characters as heroes. References to the real world in *CSI* are References to Information and Music. There is one reference to Mike Tyson ("Friends and Lovers", 1.5) and one reference to Charles Manson, a serial killer who assassinated Roman Polanski's wife, Sharon Tate ("Blood Drop", 1.7). Like in the case of *Lost*, these are not the most important ones, being outnumbered by televisual references, literary references and what Tomaševskij calls "ever-lasting themes" (sex, death, violence, crime). This aspect of reality is the one which is depicted in a broader sense.

'The West Wing'. A Case Study

Some paleotelevision characteristics, such as hierarchical perspective and educational purpose to communicate knowledge (Casetti-Odin, 1990: 10) are recovered in these series, when explaining census topics, or how to vote (*The West Wing*, first season). Another paleotelevision feature recovered by some of these products is the distinction amongst cultural levels (*sublimis* or *gravis*, *mediocris* and *humilis*) and the revolutionary usage of high-brow[6] cultural items and structures. *The West Wing* (NBC: 1999-2006) is a mixture of workplace series and political subgenre as a social institution. Workplace series are common in TV fiction from the nineties onwards (*Ally McBeal, ER, Hill Street Blues, St. Elsewhere)*. This subgenre is really important for *The West Wing*'s creator and director, Aaron Sokin, who has been also director of two other workplace series: *Sports Night* (ABC, 1998-2000) and *Studio 60 On the Sunset Strip* (NBC, 2006-). *The West Wing* is effectively the continuation of a Democrat-run government, recovering US national pride through fiction, as shown by the similarities between reality and fiction (Patterson, 2006 [2005]). Related to characters and actors, it is important to know why Rob Lowe left *The West Wing* before Sorkin, and how this influenced the series and led to the creation of an oppositional fan movement, <http://www.dontsaveourshow.com>, in disagreement with John Wells' direction, which was considered more serialized than Sorkin's

The political subgenre had rarely appeared in TV fiction, but in comedy or, more especially, parody programs. Some of the most important cases being *Jack Paar Program* (NBC: 1962-1965), *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* (NBC: 1962-1973), *Super President* (NBC: 1967-1968) (cartoon), *Saturday Night Live, SNL* (NBC: 1975-), *Washington Behind Closed Doors* (1977), *Hail to the Chief* (CBS: 1985), *Mr. President* (Fox, 1987-1988) and *That's My Bush* (Comedy Central, 2001). The relationship between politics and entertainment has been an important feature of US media (Crawley, 2006). We have several examples: in cinema, portraying Lincoln (*The Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith, 1915), having fun about the Cold War (*Dr. Strangelove, Or How I Learned Stop Worrying About the Bomb and Love it*, Stanley Kubrick, 1964) or criticising the political power (*Absolute Power,* Clint Eastwood, 1997). As in *CSI* with cops'[genre], some of the most important features of the political genre are used in *The West Wing*, in this case to show a paternalist president, with more virtues than faults, that recovers the ideal of Lincoln, of a respected president, and, at the same time, a very different image from reality during George W. Bush first presidential period.

Some of the TV series born after *The West Wing* -- since it has been the first one in political drama genre – are related with war or terrorism (*24*, Fox: 2001-; *The E-Ring*, NBC: 2005-2006; *The Unit*, CBS, 2006-) and some other focusing more on the private life of the president (*Commander in Chief*, ABC: 2005-2006; *Jack & Bobby*, WB: 2004-2005). In all cases *The West Wing* must be considered their precedent as it focus both on terrorism, military attacks and private life of the president, beside its unrivalled treatment of politics. *The West Wing* depicts a real world (the insides of the White House) but showing it respectfully, with admiration and care.

The narrative strategy differs from *CSI* in the sense that it pretends not only creating a better (fictional) world, but it is part of the strategy to exaggerate comparison between the real and the fictional world. We must keep in mind the "Bartlet for president" campaign, the fact that the series was an unavoidable topic of conversation for people of certain status and, last but not least, the real White House program, on the air on January, 2002, *The Bush White House: Inside the Real West Wing*. This program was about George Bush's White House (the insides and the team) and was done as a reaction by the real presidency towards Sorkin's series. On April that year, on the third season of the series, it was broadcasted the episode "Documentary Special", a mixture of images from the former president from *The West Wing* (Clark, 2005: 236). The narrative strategies of *The West Wing* related to reality and fiction are similar to the ones used in

CSI in the following aspects: a) accordance to features of a fictional genre/ relationship with the genre itself; b) some alterations from this real life job in order to obtain spectacularization; c) use of thematic recurrence and myth, d) use of TV features (quality TV features and paleoTV/ neoTV/ metaTV features); e) depiction of the main characters as heroes (Bartlet's father figure, paternalism); f) marked contrast between reality and fiction.

References to the real world in *The West Wing* are references to US politics, International Politics and Current Issues in the US. Although there was a deliberated use of non contemporary music (The Jackal, Gilbert and Sullivan), the use of statistics and specific data was completely reliable and contemporary. The references to Politics and Current Issues in the US are significant in number. The several references can be divided into the following categories: a) practical information (the census, how to vote); b) knowledge and information (Bartlet reading *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*, by George Washington); c) historical references ("The White House Pro-Arm", 1.17); d) social withdrawal (racism, especially).

Conclusions

As it has been analysed in this paper, references of serial audiovisual texts, as follows from these three series analysis, can be divided into the following categories: metaTV references, literary references and references to reality. The different use of these references determines the kind of text and reader, since references are used for the sake and pleasure of viewer's recognition.

MetaTV references concern the use of several references aforementioned (Series, Contests, Music, Cinema, Advertisement,…) which are related to different TV programs. TV schedule is reproduced in several programs (fictional or not fictional), consistent to the metaTV era, which is characterized by autoreferenciality and hybridisation, among other features. Literary and cultural references (Biblical, Scholars, Mythological, Thematic) have always been an ingredient of occidental cultural tradition. Due to the changes TV has experienced in this new era of metaTV, these are not the most important references, but they remain as a strong narrative topic. In fact, its survival is not at stake because it has been placed on new interactive platforms, as Internet. So, thematic recurrence is a topic of interest to be studied in audiovisual production. In the cases analysed in this paper, there is the myth of progress, such as Prometheus, that underlie *CSI* and *Lost*. The biblical reference to Jesus and Marie-Madeleine is reproduced in *CSI*

(Nick and the prostitute) and *The West Wing* (Sam and Laurie). The father figure is referred to in *Lost* (Jack) and *The West Wing* (Bartlet) and the sacrificial princess is a recurrence used in *CSI* (Claire) and *Lost* (Sara). The doppelgänger appears in *Lost*, and the antithetical pair of comedians (Lord Marbury and Leo) appears in *The West Wing*.

The scheme which is deduced from the analysis has several points of coincidence in the three series: a) adaptation to the features of a fictional genre; b) alterations from the real life job in order to obtain spectacularization; c) use of thematic recurrence and myth; d) use of metatelevisual intertextuality; e) depiction of the main characters as heroes. Reality is used with several different means in these series. It has a concrete purpose in *CSI*: it is created to give prestige to a professional discipline, forensics. It is also used with a purpose in *The West Wing*: to discredit Bush government. In *Lost* it is used with a playful use, consistent to the playful character of the series (playing with fact and fiction, time and space). In the metaTV era, reality can be used as was done in the paleoTV, from a hierarchichal perspective and with ideological purposes, but it is also used to play with the viewer.

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Notas

[1] The three main eras of TV history until nowadays are: paleoTV, neoTV and metaTV. See Eco (1983), Casetti-Odin (1990), Olson Scott (1987, 1990), Carlon (2005, 2006), Imbert (2005, 2007) and Missika (2006).

[2] These three concepts, which we use in this research as heuristic tags, have been defined and used by Eco (1983), Casetti and Odin (1990), Olson Scott (1987 and 1989) and Carlón (2005).

[3] *Formulatv*. <http://www.formulatv.com>, June 2007.

[4] In 2002-2003, *CSI* (25.6% of share) was almost equal to that of the most famous reality show in Spain, *Gran hermano* [Big Brother] (29.5% of share) (GECA, 2004: 18-19). *CSI* is breaking records for certain national and non-national series audience data pertaining to the 1996-2007 period.

[5] Named with the same title as 70's series.

[6] MacDonald and Shils (1969).