

Docudramas on digital television: Journalism, simulation and lies

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Abstract

The classic docudramas were created from a combination of reality, simulation and fiction. In modern television, some of these programmes try to attract viewers by having them take part in the development of the story by means of any process that has some degree of interactivity. In this way, telephone calls, text messages, e-mails or the possibilities of digital terrestrial television (DTT) have become mechanisms to both enrich the stories and capture audience. Productions of this type continue to veer away from authentic events of journalistic interest, and the showy component is given greater weight than the interests of the informative features. When one resorts thematically to dramatic situations, the temptation to invent information increases and the format becomes distanced from the rigor and precision required by journalism. Any invented actions can be presented as authentic situations by technological innovations like virtual reality. Nevertheless, the problem lies not in the machines or in the software, but in how they are used, and there are, in fact, professionals who use them to increase the quality of their work.

Key words: Docudrama, documentary, journalism, genres, television, DTT, virtual reality, technology, ethics

1. Introduction

Genres and formats occupy an increasingly difficult position to define between the universal (in the case on which this text focuses: audiovisual communication) and the particular (a singular story within this expressive system (Cano Alonso, 1999)). The classical formulas provide contextual indicators as to the origins of the stories and add guidelines for interpreting them (Lázaro Carreter, 1986). Despite this, the timeless value of the notion of genre in classical poetics was shattered years ago (Martínez Muñoz, 1989).

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Within contemporary culture, which is characterised by the contamination between forms and the proliferation of hybrids, we can often find audiovisual works which have absorbed properties from diverse models (Pastoriza, 1997). Fiction feeds off of history, biographies are dramatised and journalism borrows elements from fiction until coming full circle¹. Besides the existence of pure genres, the current situation (especially on television) has witnessed the appearance of mixed formulas² such as the “false documentary” which reflect complex patterns and complicate the development of any taxonomy (Monterde, 2004).

The forerunners of docudramas³, productions that pair fragments of reality with portions of reconstructions or simulations, date from the early days in the history of audiovisual information, as shown by the newsreel *The March of Time*, which premiered in the United States in 1935⁴. Initially, there were spaces of this kind on television which exalted both common folk and prominent personages whose family members and friends paid tribute to them with a string of memories and human-interest curiosities⁵. Likewise, (presumably) informative shows could be found on risqué events into which they shamelessly pried in order to extract the darkest secrets. Tabloid-like productions which subjected real events to a dramatic treatment (performed by the actual people involved or by actors) became quite common in the 1970s⁶. In 1973, the American channel PBS launched *An American Family* (Ruoff, 1996: 270-296), a series in which a production team recorded the daily lives of the Loud family in Santa Ana, California, for six months. The peak moments in this document included when Mrs. Loud requested a divorce from her husband and when the couple's elder son, Lance, revealed his homosexuality.

Two decades later, the popular acceptance of this format was so widespread that the channels openly competed for them. Even today, docudramas and reality shows continue to show many of the peculiar features we have just listed: they examine real, up-to-date events (ultimately, informative contents), but they approach them in such a way that substantially disfigures these purported news stories (Frau-Meigs, 2006). Just like political censure or economic pressure, inappropriate use of the new technologies (Digital Terrestrial Television [DTT], Internet, etc.) can augment these deviations from reality (Holmes and Jeremyn, 2004), as we shall see below.

2. Objectives and methods

The overarching objective of this study is to analyse the validity and properties of the hybrid format of the docudrama, or documentary drama, especially in

¹ This is discussed in further detail in Rosenthal and Corner (2005).

² For a richer approach, see Baudrillard (1984).

³ The name and its meanings are taken from Maqua (1992).

⁴ This series was studied with a plethora of examples in Fielding (1978).

⁵ Within this vein, a recommendable source worth consulting is Úbeda Carulla (1993).

⁶ This approach is updated in Díaz Arias (2006).

programmes with a clear news or journalistic mission, in the era of digital television⁷. This objective will be approached as follows:

- By studying the repercussions that certain technological innovations have had on this kind of production, from their origins in film to DTT today: improvements in technical equipment, increase in narrative agility (Bandrés, García Avilés, Pérez and Pérez, 2000), inclusion of virtual reality in the narration, participation by the public in the news story, etc. (Bucy and Gregson, 2001).
- Through fieldwork, which consists of commentaries on erroneous or improper examples (both technically and ethically or deontologically) and appropriate cases (because of their balance between the journalistic base and the enactment as a complement)⁸.

To accomplish this, we have had to enrich the bibliography which supports the underpinnings of the format (Bell, 1997; Plantinga, 1997) with a series of audiovisual and multimedia productions with which we can professionally reinforce, shade or debate everything set forth qualitatively in the theoretical sphere⁹.

3. Conceptual delimitation

Simulations often enter into conflict with the reliability attributed to journalists, since they stumble upon the authenticity of genuinely informative contents¹⁰. Modern television (regardless of whether it is analogical or digital) penetrates into hidden-away corners to reveal all sorts of stories and behaviours¹¹. This procedure is hard-pressed to generate surprises any more among either professionals or the audience¹².

Despite this, some of these deeds have been deliberately provoked in order to be televised, while others are simulations of certain situations (a murder, a workplace accident, a birth, etc.) in *free version*. The risk (ethical, deontological) run when manipulating these *realities* is that the audience may decode as neutral news what in reality is nothing more than a performance (Matelski, 1992). At first, broadcasters and viewers accepted these hybrid formats because they were conceived as productions closer to performance than to journalism (González Requena, 1988). However, today they have stopped

⁷ This approach falls within the lines posited by Aufderheide (2005) and Dovey and Dungey (1985).

⁸ The theoretical framework can be found in Sáez (1999).

⁹ A similar combination is applied in Nyre (2006).

¹⁰ Our point of departure is the contrast established between Rosen and Merrit (1994) on the one hand and by Alberich (2004) on the other.

¹¹ Some of the directors' strategies in both film and television are described in Beattie (2004).

¹² For example, in 2007 five Spanish physicians participated in the recording of *RamBam*, a docudrama in the guise of a series directed and produced by Hervé Hachuel for Televisión Española (TVE) which took place in such a delicate place as a hospital in Israel.

paying this tribute to the percentage of fiction they include and have begun to be part of the larger news family, at least as distant relatives (Fiske and Hartley, 1994).

Therefore, at this point we should define two major audiovisual units around which the analyses and reflections in this study revolve: news shows and fiction productions. We believe that this division is still valid even though, as Jaime Barroso García notes, their validity is grounded upon the denial of genre, as if television's very existence depended on "the capacity to hybridise, to become contaminated, to fuse matters and substances from traditionally distinct expression (*infotainment, dramadoc, factions, dramedies*, etc) in evolved combinations" (Barroso García, 1996: 193).

– News. Programmes that describe the current events of general interest according to the journalistic formats currently in use: news, reports, interviews, etc. (Tuchman, 1983). This modality encompasses television formulas like news programmes, breaking news, weekly magazines, news magazines, debates, the weather, etc.¹³

– Fiction. Dialogued or dramatised reconstructions and enactments performed by actors that re-create historical deeds or actions that are the product of an author's imagination. Fiction can be divided into sub-genres or formats according to how the subject matter is dealt with (from tragedy to humour), the narrative structure and the kind of production (Bens and Samaele, 2001). Therefore, television features dramatic fiction, comic or light fiction, telefilms and more fictitious sub-genres. Just like in the news, the new technological devices (mobile telephones, DTT, etc.) facilitate audience participation in the development of some of these stories (Thornburn and Jenkins, 2003).

The incorporation of virtual reality into the commentaries on the weather or the staging of most news programmes today may have ushered in a new relationship between the news, fiction and performance (Postigo Gómez, 2000). However, this innovation cannot be considered equivalent to the reconstruction of deeds or the replacement of stages or processes which were impossible to record by mere hypotheses of what probably happened, especially when the author is not certain that the events being told happened in this way. The exaggerated manipulation of elements drawn from journalism (interviews, archival images, etc.) to trick the audience is equally if not more serious.

In 1998, the English newspaper *The Guardian* discovered that a promising journalist from Carlton Television, Marc de Beaufort, had lied in a couple of purportedly exclusive documentaries. The newspaper denounced the fact that in the first production an actor whose face was never seen had replaced a Colombian drug trafficker. According to *The Guardian*, in the second production the writer manipulated material supplied by the Cuban state channel so that what appeared to be public statements by Fidel Castro actually came from a face-to-face interview with the dictator. The conversation with the

¹³ Within this section, the complements offered by Golding and Elliot (1979), Gans (1980), Gomis (1989) and Rodrigo (1989) are indispensable.

supposed criminal concealed a lie, an invention behind the guise of news. In contrast, Castro's words were true; the trick was in the presentation, since the words were not obtained as the audience was told they were.

4. The trap of the realistic

Audiovisual treatment that hovers between reality and fiction is very common in historical films¹⁴. Still, in films of this genre the viewers know in advance that many of the details in the story they are watching are pure invention. They tend to feature realistic scenes, not real ones. In contrast, when we speak about journalism, informative rigour always calls for the authenticity of the event, even though it may not seem realistic a priori. This is why the news has traditionally discarded reconstructions grounded upon fictitious elements, so that when a news item or report wants to point out what might have happened (hypothetically) in a current event, it solicits the vantage point of witnesses, experts and the like¹⁵. What is more, there are other techniques (interviews, for example, as we shall see below) that make it possible to achieve the same end¹⁶. It is true that right now we could adduce that the differences between the two methods are minimal. Still, in view of this argument we would have to repeat that the conjectures upon which reconstructions and simulations are based are made by journalists (whose aims are quite different), while in the second formula, the opinions are expressed by qualified subjects since they were involved in the deeds or are experts in the subject.

Productions that re-create newsworthy events show the most important actions through any resource that the authors deem acceptable, even though they may then exceed the tenets of journalism (Jacobs, 1979). In view of the authenticity that the news should guarantee, on these occasions the true-to-life sense that *varnishes* the stories with a sense of reality is considered sufficient. By radicalising the line of this discourse, we should stress that there are individuals (it would not be fair to call them journalists) who have taken these tactics to unacceptable extremes, such as those who have invented scandalous reports to be sold on the television (Sistiaga, 2005: 164).

This is the worst representation of sensationalism: the deeds are invented, but to keep up the appearance of news, the journalistic technique of the report or the documentary is respected (Langer, 2000). To ensure that the product devised can be easily sold, the authors examine issues of keen social interest such as the trafficking in drugs, children and refugees or political controversies. When the programmes are revealed to be hoaxes, the mistrust should encompass their producers as well as the channel that broadcast them for not having checked the authenticity of the stories.

After 24 years at the helm of the CBS news programme *60 Minutes*, veteran anchor Dan Rather resigned in 2005 because of a false news item which

¹⁴ The classic quote by Barnouw (1974) is inexcusable. One example recently broadcast on television is the film *Luther* (2007), aired by the Catalan public television station, TV3, in 2007. It is a biographic drama by director Eric Till based on several moments in the life of Martin Luther, in which Joseph Fiennes plays the role of this decisive figure in the history of religions.

¹⁵ Regarding techniques in the digital era, Baker (2006) is recommended reading.

¹⁶ More details in Manning (2001) and in Grabe, Shuhua and Lang (2000).

stated that the President of the United States, George W. Bush, at that time a candidate for re-election against Democrat John Kerry, had benefited from contacts with the upper military echelons to shorten his military service in Texas. Four other professionals in the channel's news services, three of them in senior positions, also had to leave their jobs. An irregularity of this calibre precipitated the end of the career of such a prestigious journalist as Rather. To some extent, we should recognise that his resignation (and that of his colleagues) was an exception in a business in which others would have insisted on remaining in their jobs. The outcome of the case was used to penalise him both internally and externally, that is, both in his company and professional association and in the public sphere.

The (tentative) conclusion of all that has been discussed so far would be that whenever the promoters of a news programme use simulations, reconstructions and the like, they must clearly state this, and if errors are committed, they must accept the consequences.

Fiction sometimes resorts to journalistic forms to develop a story¹⁷. Likewise, years ago the news genres started to dress up their contents with a tabloid dimension. That is, many of the classic boundaries have already been erased, and it is unquestionable that mixed formats have huge advantages. Thus, *The Road to Guantanamo*¹⁸ (2006) directed by Michael Winterbottom in conjunction with Matt Whitecross is an example of political cinema that denounces the inhuman conditions in which the prisoners at Guantanamo were subjected by alternating live testimony by the real characters with reconstructions. The producers do not clarify when they are reproducing the opinions of the victims and when they are using actors to re-enact the experiences they suffered from before being arrested and during their stint in prison. One might think that Winterbottom and Whitecross are appealing to the viewers' visual culture so that they understand each passage in their film in the most appropriate way possible. What is evident is that in this production the clear-cut distinction between reality and re-enactment is sacrificed for the sake of narrative coherence. However, these strange alloys and/or blends (Ortega, 2005), which are valid in the realm of creation, should not be used to confuse the audience which only seeks to be informed.

5. Fiction as temptation

There are vast differences between intentionally erroneous inventions and material that has been gotten from honest journalistic effort¹⁹. Nor can anyone can dispute that the recent events featuring celebrities spurred by satirical programmes (like *Aquí hay tomate* on Tele 5 or *¿Dónde estás, corazón?* on Antena 3 TV) have nothing to do with the (apparent) deception experienced by many of the listeners on the radio version of Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* back in 1938 (Coch, 2002).

¹⁷ In the Catalan film *El taxista ful* (2006) by Jo Sol, a story in the guise of a documentary was used to showcase an invented character. There are many similar examples.

¹⁸ The winner of a Silver Bear at the 2006 Berlin Film Festival.

¹⁹ To check this, all you have to do is look at Waugh's compilation (1984).

One production by El Mundo Televisión and broadcast on Tele 5 in 2001 revealed *La gran mentida del cor* (loosely translated as *The Great Lie of Tabloid Journalism*), the title of the documentary on this lucrative business. In this world unto itself, celebrities and aspiring celebrities invent sentimental idylls and ruptures and construct lies on accidents and other misfortunes to get paid by the media which cover them (especially gossip magazines and television programmes). Bearing in mind that without the media's attention this spectacle would not even exist, the responsibility for this corruption of the journalistic endeavour should at least be shared between both parties.

Yet paradoxically, the same strategies that are condemned in the realm of gossip journalism are relativised when they enter the realm of more prestigious journalism (war correspondents, prominent investigators, etc.). The error is extremely serious, since the deception that materialises in celebrity chronicles does not compromise human lives, only bank accounts, while the second kind of deception can even influence the way a war proceeds. In 1998, the media magnate Ted Turner and four CNN executives were forced to apologise for a false report on the use of nerve gas against deserters in the Vietnam War. The former Iraq correspondent with the satellite channel Sky News James Forlong went so far as to commit suicide in the United Kingdom in 2003 after a scandal over a fraudulent journalistic piece on the war against the United States. These two examples are similar to that of Dan Rather. Just like in that case, which was equally extraordinary, honour led the perpetrators of both scandals to admit their guilt. Forlong's unquestionably extreme reaction highlights the importance and transcendence of mistakes in this profession.

Therefore, when reporters are faced with a complex problem, they should deal with it rigorously. If they feel keen curiosity about information they do not know, they should look it up carefully, not invent it (Micó, 2007: 157-166). Just to cite one case of good professional practice, all we have to do is recall a documentary series broadcast by the digital channel Canal de Historia, *Ciudades bajo tierra*, which in 2007 revealed to Spanish viewers the underground wonders of the major cities in the world (Paris, Budapest, Berlin, etc.). Through digital animation, the first episode, which was devoted to Naples, re-created how buildings were made in the ancient Roman empire and the techniques used by the engineers of that period. What is more, the programme also aired the opinions of architects and historians as a way of contextualising the buildings and their artistic and social influence.

Technological advances in virtual reality should be harnessed to enrich stories devised in accordance with the fundamental principles required by journalism, with truth, correctness and neutrality above all. They cannot be used to fill in the gaps in the news story that the media professionals have been unable to decipher. In any event, professionals have the possibility to reconstruct them based on proof; however, this proof should be powerful and not merely hints without any strength of validity. The dialogues that appear in *Hiroshima*, a documentary written and directed by Paul Wilmshurst in 2005 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the fatal bombing, were not fictitious; rather they came from reliable sources. What is more, the latest special-effects technology was used to re-create the flight of the Enola Gay, the bombing mechanism, the explosions and the destruction as realistically as possible. In this case, the director proceeded properly. He reproduced these past episodes as faithfully as possible to what happened in reality. Through exhaustive research,

he had crucial data, complementary information and secondary details to bring conversations that were already a part of history to life and to guide the technicians who made the computer-generated images of the military attack. After it premiered on BBC, TVE's channel La Primera also broadcast the film.

Despite the many varied advantages of interactive television (from DTT to Internet television), there are also some dangers. Due to the need to boost the appeal of journalistic pieces, reporters may fall into the temptation to push past the boundaries of reality and enter into speculation (Ellis, 2000). In 2006, Chile's Televisión Nacional broadcast the documentary by director Fernando Luchinger entitled *Mayo 1879* on the naval combat of Iquique, on whose bay the important Peruvian port of Tarapacá was located, a centre for exporting saltpetre. In the late 19th century, there was a skirmish there between a Peruvian warship and a Chilean corvette, which ended up sinking after four hours of battle. Instead of merely enlisting the expert advice of historians, the director also used three-dimensional digital simulation to reconstruct the events. Still, there was presumably a lack of truthfulness in certain aspects of the combat, and he was criticised for this. Indeed, digital technology enables us to present certain invented events as if they were authentic, yet we must still stress that journalists must inform themselves with neither digressions nor hypotheses.

6. Modalities and combinations

After mentioning some of the risks of simulations and reconstructions in audiovisual information, the time has come to examine the most important aspects of the hybrid format of the docudrama or dramatic documentary on digital television. First of all, the hosts of these programmes are not always journalists with professional careers that endorse their seriousness and rigour. In the constant quest for the showy, the media have recruited popular individuals (who perhaps did work in journalism in the past but have gradually succumbed to “tele-indignity”)²⁰ to appear before the cameras as conductors, interviewers and even reporters (from Jordi González on Tele 5 to Pocholo Martínez Bordiu on La Sexta). The channels' executives do not even bother to conceal the fact that the most important qualities to them are the subject's ability to fascinate the audience; that is, they are not so much interested in their profile as journalists as in their ability to attract audience²¹. A team of anonymous journalists who remain hidden in the shadows of the celebrity are the ones in charge of planning and developing the programme.

Regardless of the formula chosen, the reporters tend to start with real events and experiences, but they add onto them treatments that highlight the more attention-grabbing details of the story. The experiences of the victims include the full gamut from grief to hope, from love to hatred. These contents have historically occupied privileged spaces in the tabloid section of the press²², and when they took the leap to television they occupied the time of numerous

²⁰ This is a highly graphic term coined in Ruiz (2007).

²¹ The managing director of Tele 5, Paolo Vasile, has made this clear on more than one occasion: Verte. “Emma García vuelve el 7 de octubre a Telecinco”. [Electronic document]. Available at: <http://www.vertele.com/noticias/detail.php?id=16531> > [Retrieved: 14 October 2007].

²² To learn more details about this area, see Herrero Aguado (2003).

docudramas and reality shows like *Gente* (TVE), *Está pasando* (Tele 5) and *Madrid Directo* (Telemadrid).

The format has diversified over time and now appears in multiple variations, some of them quite entertaining²³. In any event, their common features persist, including references to personal situations (or situations that affect a group of subjects) as a way to probe their emotions. This effort is conducted from a perspective that interleaves the news aspect with the spectacle derived from the fictitious component²⁴.

Without abandoning this modality, the importance of another kind of production mainly rests upon the idea of documenting a thesis using archive material or excerpts from works of fiction. This concept is quite old; for example, John Grierson used it back in his 1930 film *Conquest*, with scenes from *The Covered Wagon* (1923)²⁵, as if they were real. Even bolder was the technique used by Andrew Thorndike in *Urlaub auf Sylt* (1957). Heinz Reinefarth appears in the film on an island in the North Sea, specifically in the city of Westerland, where he serves as mayor. He seems relaxed, enjoying a calm luxury, but later, thanks to archival notes and old photographs, the viewer discovers that the main character was a brutal Nazi officer in charge of the executions in Warsaw²⁶.

Other methods used in this format are the in-depth interview and a kind of story halfway between the standard documentary and the investigative report. There are narrations that could be considered “testimonials” given that their characters explain the events directly, in front of the camera, and the journalists or scriptwriters limit themselves to organising the raw material while adhering to the events as accurately as possible²⁷.

Investigations should also be taken into account: the authors pursue their inquiry into a case based on a series of clues. The reporters look for sources, relate data and discover what truly happened (Rolland, 2006); the resulting reconstructions are more rigorous than in any other variation. *La noche temática* on TVE's channel La 2 broadcast three documentaries of this kind in 2007 to commemorate the launch of the first artificial satellite in history, Sputnik, an invention with which the Russians outdid the Americans, who in 1957 aimed to celebrate International Geophysical Year in the same way. The pattern followed is reminiscent of the mechanics of *Hiroshima*, one of the productions analysed in this article. A base of proven information legitimises the development of the more complex and technically sophisticated re-creations

²³ For example, in 2007 TV3 premiered the *docu-reality* show *La masia de 1907*, in which two families competed in a setting from the early 20th century. The show had already been a hit with audiences in Galician public television, and prior to that it had also been broadcast in countries like the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand under the title of *History House*.

²⁴ For example, the docudrama *United 93* (2006) by Paul Greengrass dramatically recounts the last hours of the passengers on one of the 9/11 airplane at the pace of a thriller.

²⁵ One of the best studies on this author is Hardy (1979).

²⁶ Such ideological documentaries, like *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and *Sicko* (2007), both by Michael Moore, follow this formula, albeit with a heavier hand.

²⁷ Another useful example: in Spain in 2007, the digital channel Odisea the documentary *Muhammand Yunus, el banquer dels pobres*, which portrayed the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner and analysed his actions.

without the fear of violating the truth. While the initial inquiry is rigorous and meticulous, the subsequent dramatisation is so faithful that it could (almost) enter the realm of journalism.

Re-creations to retell events the way they were believed to have happened, even if full certainty is not there, include an element of higher fiction. In fact, they are closer to drama than to documentaries in the two meanings of “dramatic” that can be applied in this context: an expressive formula encompassing works meant to be performed, and a display of painful actions and situations. These works show one of the possible versions of what happened, with either the people who actually experienced them or actors²⁸.

When the successive technological advances are placed at the service of classic news models, truly interesting findings result, without this meaning that overly complicated formulas must be reached. It should be known that the engine behind some quality journalistic investigations, such as the ones on the programme *Línea 900*, which TVE’s La 2 channel stopped broadcasting in November 2007 after 17 years on air, were denunciations, grievances, testimonies or contributions that citizens sent in through an answering machine or an email address. Other shows (popular news, news magazines, magazines, reality shows, etc.) draw from the same mechanisms that allow for direct audience participation through telephone calls, messages, emails and the like. One of them is *La aventura del s@ber*, whose professionals have been making educational television on TVE (specifically on La 2) for 15 years. The programme opened on the Internet in 2007 to make audience participation more accessible and to encourage its use at schools. Since then, the viewers of *La aventura del s@ber*, co-produced by the Ministry of Education, can ask questions in real time via email. What is more, on its website they can browse a library containing the show’s archives.

Going even further, on the 21st of January 2007 the Catalan public television programme *30 minuts* broadcast a documentary entitled *Guernica, pintura de guerra* (Guernica, War Painting) directed by Santiago Torres and Ramon Vallès, which could be considered exemplary because of the interactive applications it offered and its advanced conception of what is called “media convergence”²⁹. During the broadcast, TV3 viewers were able to see extra content on DTT, on the channel’s website and on Media Center, a Windows software application designed for interactive digital entertainment on the television screen. The additional information presented included a range of documents, the full interviews conducted for the show, biographies, an iconographic analysis of Picasso’s painting, a question-and-answer game and another game in which viewers could paint over “Guernica”.

7. Conclusions

Modern dramatic documentaries continue to draw simultaneously from the peculiar features of reality, simulation and fiction. However, now their authors

²⁸ Once again we should mention here the pioneering newsreel *The March of Time*.

²⁹ All the interactive possibilities exploited in this production had already been defined by the Grup de Recerca en Imatge, So i Síntesi (Research Group in Image, Sound and Synthesis – GRISS) (2006).

make more effort than ever to get the viewers involved and to turn them into accomplices and participants. Indeed, the television audience in the digital age can join the story through suggestions sent in writing and via telephone calls, mobile phone messages, emails and other channels. The productions are always based on a real event, news item or something that could be turned into news, but the narration and its audiovisual treatment owe as much to the news as to fictional stories. What is more, many of the subjects that the docudramas began to cover in the 1980s have become part of the news cycle, which also focuses on information from a titillating perspective to win or simply to keep the audience (Buonanno, 1999). The priority in the choice is determined by *extreme* human situations, even if they have to be reconstructed³⁰. For the time being, journalists do not invent information, although they do heighten interest in the most sensational events to the extreme of presenting them as the most representative phenomena of modern-day society³¹.

There are still professionals interested in investigating the causes and consequences of the cases³², but the majority invest more time in presenting the events in a vulgar fashion. It is clear that technological innovations are not the problem, yet nor are they the solution³³. We have seen that the journalists who want to use them to continue to trigger outcry, both artificial and gratuitous, can easily do so. In contrast, those who aim to improve their work responsibly and rigorously find technology to be the perfect ally (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). Still, both of them limit themselves to following the pathway laid down by the direction of their enterprises³⁴.

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³⁰ Tele 5 and Antena 3 TV do so in their daily news shows.

³¹ The vision presented in Quesada (2007) is very insightful.

³² As Carles Porta did, first in a report for the programme *30 minuts* (TV3) and later with the book *Tor. Tretze cases i tres morts* (2005). Incidentally, this brave journalistic venture served as the inspiration for a film plot.

³³ As Mauro Wolf (1994) has said.

³⁴ In the past this was already revealed by Seiter (1999).

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