The American postdramatic television series: the art of poetry and the composition of chaos

How to understand the script of the best American television series

Miguel Ángel Orosa [CV] [iD] [ ] Professor at the School of Social Communication.
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (Sede Ibarra, Ecuador) – maorosa1@pucesi.edu.ec

Mónica López Golán [CV] [iD] [ ] Professor at the School of Social
Communication. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (Sede Ibarra, Ecuador)
– moLópez@pucesi.edu.ec

Carmelo Márquez-Domínguez [iD] [ ] Professor at the School of Social Communication.
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ibarra, Ecuador) – camarquez@pucesi.edu.ec

Yalitza Therly Ramos Gil [iD] [ ] Professor at the School of Social
Communication. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (Sede Ibarra, Ecuador) – ytramos@pucesi.edu.ec

Abstract
Introduction: The magnitude of the (post)*dramatic* changes that have been taking place in American audiovisual fiction only happen every several hundred years. The goal of this research work is to highlight the *features* of the change occurring within the organisational (post)dramatic realm of American serial television. **Discussion:** The transition from an essentially "dramatic" model to a *postdramatic composition/parataxis* urges us to analyse the new *organisation* of American television series and their main features. **Results**: The fundamental changes of this new constellation are significant in the *organisational* realm of (post)drama; the *sense* of the *composition* yields its preponderance to *juxtaposition;* and *composition* and *parataxis* try to venture the order of chaos by giving more importance to dramatic *communication* and *tension*. **Methods:** The study is based on the comparative analysis of contemporary American post-drama and its conceptual deconstruction based on the dramatic model (and its precedents in the Spanish Baroque).

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. Methods. 3. Discussion. What is drama? 4. Discussion. History of American postdramatic serial television. 5. Results: characteristics of the American serial TV postdrama. 6. Conclusions. 7. References.

Translation by **CA Martínez-Arcos**
(PhD in Communication, University of London)

1. Introduction

The death of the neoclassical *dramatic* model within fictional television series, particularly in the United States of America, is nothing but a manifestation of the effects of *postdrama* in television, which is already affecting the conception of cinematography, as proved by some of the most outstanding contemporary film productions. Theatrical *postdrama*, which began in the 1970s in Europe and Latin America, began to exert its influence on American television fiction at the beginning of this century and continues to do so to this day, in the conception of cinema as spectacle, and as a script to be complemented or developed in the production of this type of art.

To understand the dimensions and importance of this change, it is important to anticipate that this type of new perspective only occurs every several hundred years, which makes it a research subject of great importance. The purpose of this article is to highlight the characteristics of the change within the organisational *(post)dramatic* realm of American television series.

The transition from an essentially *dramatic* model to a *postdramatic composition/parataxis* in the best known and most acclaimed American television series in recent years urges us to analyse the state of the television fiction *postdrama* of our time.

2. Methods

To highlight the dimensions of this change, the article offers a brief analysis of the main *characteristics* of *drama*, understood as a "canonical" worldview (a western common dramatic space), then analyses the history and origin of *postdrama*. As we shall see, the origins of *postdrama* do not have as much to do with the architectures of previous American television series, as with *postdramatic* theatre, which has influenced the new American "model".

Afterwards, the article examines the fundamental characteristics of the television fiction postdrama that emerged in America, as a methodological system, out of the five large areas that characterised the dramatic model of the Western tradition: *plot, dramatic organisation, dramatic tension, narrative dramatic elements* and *formal-technical organisation*.

This aims to show how the changes that characterise the new American view originate in the area of *(post)dramatic organisation*, primarily. The *dramatic tension* and everything related to the *formal-technical organisation* influences the new "model", but not as new techniques for television fiction, but rather in relation to the importance granted to these dimensions in the new television spectacle.

Finally, the article examines and summarises the results and draws some conclusions. The scarcity and, in some cases, inaccuracy of the literature, due to the tremendous novelty of the subject, is highlighted wherever it is necessary for the development of this work. As we will see, one author has dedicated his best efforts to the subject matter that concerns us, albeit from a quite different perspective.

All the studies, articles and publications listed in the references section show a deep interest in the subject matter of our study, and even make some *narrative* references that, without a doubt, explain the tools and modes of the narrative under study (serial TV series). However, in our view, the literature does not offer a passionate, exclusive, and essentially *dramatic* analysis of the phenomenon that concerns us, so the development of our study has no alternative but to perform the relevant analyses from an absolutely personal perspective and with unintentionally original arguments.

The international literature, also very interesting, will be very helpful to examine historic, sectoral, industrial, sociological and anthropological issues, and even narrative structure of the series under study. Yet, we have not found in-depth drama analyses related to our subject matter, but only very basic studies. In other words, we have not discovered works that offer purely and exclusively dramatic-organisational analyses of American serial television phenomenon that we are now addressing as a manifestation of postdrama.

Therefore, using this model of drama (western common dramatic space), we will analyse the postdramatic phenomena on American serial fiction television, addressing and taking into account the deconstruction of the dramatic perspective demanded by the new *postdramatic* paradigm, which is not a closed system or paradigm, but rather an open question to a multitude of initiatives and inspirations. However, it is true that the phenomenon of the American serial postdrama is more conservative or less experimental than the tendency in theatre, for example, and it is, thus, more distanced from the dramatic practices typical of the western classic tradition.

3. Discussion. What is drama?

The nature and body of *drama*, our conception, our expectations, what we feel, think, hope, wonder and know about *drama* and as a result of *drama*; in short, what we Westerners call and understand by *drama*, its definition, the *dramatic canon*, is not only a set of considerations, theoretical aspects or abstract philosophies about the dramatic realm and its essence.

The *dramatic canonical*, as a whole, consists of a range of tangible physical dimensions in the form of bones, muscles, tissues, organs and cells that will be described throughout this work whenever applicable and only in relation to their *canonical* respects. Here, it is necessary to remark that *the canonical* is not be understood as a series of excellent works that we consider to be representative of Western theatre and drama, but as an essential and specific space, scope or body that it is there, visible and tangible, and comes to embody our vision and determination about anything dramatic, which is constituted, in addition, by a range of dimensions and physical variables, which will be analysed later.

However, before doing so we must mention that the sources that inform our philosophy and conception of that manifestation we call *drama* are fundamentally the works of dramatists, including the film and television writers of our time. Moreover, in second place, we are guided by literary theory and theorists, the philosophy and history of drama, dramatic aesthetics and, very decisively, but always after the works of the aforementioned authors, by our own life experiences, our aspirations and our ways of seeing life, our expectations and feelings about that thing that we call drama. It is clear that those *variables* that compose the dramatic canon are utensils, tools that support a concept or philosophy about *drama*, but this does not mean that those elements are always used in the same way.

The canonical is the existence of such tools, the sum of all dimensions and variables that compose this dramatic area or space. These tools are used whenever we deem appropriate depending on the characteristics of each specific case and situation. For example, we are going to present the *canonical model* that we have developed (the existence of the exposition, conflict, and resolution stages of *drama*, i.e. the philosophy according to which a character comes to life, then strives to

achieve a goal and, at the end, succeeds or fails in achieving his goal is a canonical dramatic dimension in the West) but this is not to say, it seems clear, that these stages cannot follow the dramatic course and action the authors deem appropriate. Yet, the canonical, based on the definition given here, will be the existence of this philosophy, of these common conceptions that are characteristic of Western *drama*, of these incarnations that are manifested in canonical-dramatic variables and dimensions, which will be analysed here.

With regards to the model of the *traditional dramatic canon* that will be used throughout this work, we have in the first place the common aspects, historically speaking, concerning the *plot* of dramatic works. All Western dramas are about *something*, and have a coherent *story* or *plot*, technically speaking, with certain organisation of the events of the story.

To begin with, the fable, as it is called by Aristotle in *Poetics*, is defined by García Yebra in the following manner:

"Fable" should be understood here, and always in Poetry, as an "argument", i.e., the set of events or essential moments of the action imitated in the poem (1974, 243).

 With regards to the dramatic *plot*, understood as a story line, it is important to note what Alonso de Santos explains:

... it can be defined as a series of events arranged in the most convenient way by the playwright to achieve the desired effect of the action. Thanks to it, fiction acquires a meaning [...] To create a plot is, therefore, to introduce a certain order in the material provided by our imagination, based on the Aristotelian principle that the plot is the soul of the drama, and that such plot is not imitation of life, but of the action. The essence of the drama will be formed, therefore, not by normal and everyday events of life played on stage, but by elements that are brought into conflict and give rise to an action, which in turn, due to their nature, provoke an emotional response in the character - and the spectator-. […] Throughout the history of theatre, there has been a constant debate in the assessment of the plot within a play. I am one of those who believe that it is one of the main elements of the theatrical structure [...]. It is important to note that the term plot adds something peculiar in comparison to other synonyms that are sometimes used interchangeably, to speak of the same content in dramatic works, such as argument and story, even a fable. A tale, or a narration, also have an argument, but this does not necessarily involve a struggle between opposites, a clash between forces, an entwined internal arrangement which is necessary to be solved afterwards - i.e. it must be "unravelled" - to reach the end (1998, p. 7; see also 2002, p. 102).

Along the same line, the Spanish playwright Fermín Cabal, when talking about the play, says that it involves "a selection of the most significant events [...]. Therefore, (the plot) does not imitate life, but a meaningful action, a condensation of the elements of that experience as the (author) has experienced them" (1986, p. 95). Likewise, Seymour Chatman, when speaking of term *plot* (*mythos*), also points out:

Its order of presentation need not be the same as that of the natural logic of the story. Its function is to emphasize or de-emphasize certain story-events, to interpret some and to leave others to inference, to show or to tell, to comment or to remain silent, to focus on this or that aspect of an event or character. The author "can arrange the incidents in a story in a great many ways. He can treat some in detail and barely mention or even omit others, as Sophocles omits everything that happened to Oedipus before the plague in Thebes. He can observe chronological sequence, ha can distort it, he can use messengers or flashbacks, and so forth. Each arrangement produces a different plot, and a great many plots can be made from the same story" (1986, p. 43).

Second, the common Western dramatic "space" has exclusively and essentially canonical aspects concerning the *dramatic organisation* and structure, whether in its external dimension (division into

blocks, acts, episodes, days...), its middle dimension (the instrumentation of the diverse *themes* around which the dramatic work and *action* revolve) or its deepest dimension (the different *dramatic movements*: exposition, conflict, and resolution). This can be seen in any contemporary manual, like Syd Field's, whose first chapter presents the paradigm of the dramatic structure and speaks of a first act or *beginning*, a second act or *confrontation* and a third act or *resolution* (1994, pp. 13-15); and Blacker's (1993), whose first chapter is dedicated to the *conflict*, part of chapter 2 is dedicated to the *resolution*, while the chapter 4 is dedicated to *exposition*. To give another example, as there are many more, García Barrientos refers to this same classification, alluding very particularly to the *crux* and the *ending* in tragedy (2001, p.261).

Third, the common dramatic space has the constituent elements of the *dramatic tension*, which we will also call poetic techniques. We refer to those variables that are used to maintain interest and attention on the work. This organisational dimension has become an essential element in *(post)dramatic* construction with the consequent detriment of the traditional *formal* aspects, which have been moved to a second place. In this regard, see Orosa (2012, p. 71 and subsequent pages).

Fourth, the *western dramatic canon* contains those issues relating to the *narrative techniques* that are integrated into the dramatic construction process, that is, its creative course. This type of elements does not have to appear always in an intensive way in a theatrical (or dramatic) work with especially organisational pretentions. See the explanations relative to this point in Orosa (2012, p. 103 and subsequent pages).

And, finally, the Western common space has the *formal and technical* dimensions that are characteristic of the dramatic creation in its most abstract dimension and its deeper substrate. This aspect has been the subject of special attention throughout our history, the Western dramatic history, and, without losing artistic importance, today it is also a second-class dimension in comparison to the aspects related to the *dramatic tension*. The explanations of Pérez Benito (1995) on the formal space are very interesting in this regard.

These five dimensions and their different variables constitute the fundamental tools of construction of what we call dramatic fiction in the West, either in theatre, cinema or television. It is this panorama and vision, precisely, what is called into question and falls into absolute disuse in theatre after the 1990s; in television fiction, after the emergence of the American serial television model, which was born in the third Millennium; and in the more avant-garde film demonstrations, as regularly shown in certain products of American cinema.

Thus, when defining American postdramatic serial television, that is, the fundamental characteristics of the postdramatic "model" generated by television fiction series in the United States of America, we will see how the changes introduced by the new view or *paradigm* are fundamentally reproduced the second area (2), dedicated to the *dramatic organisation*.

The aforementioned changes also affect the use and abuse of the *dramatic tension* in terms of *communication* based on attention or interest and the postponement to a second place of the importance given to the *formal techniques* in television postdramatic series, in contrast to the enormous prestige they enjoyed in the past dramatic conception, in order to organise the universe of the dramatic play and their harmonic conquest of beauty.

4. Discussion. History of American postdramatic serial television

If we look at the organisational history or the architectural framework of American serial television, we will find some of the features of the new postdramatic "model" (in fact, it is not a closed model or a defined and finished trend) in some productions from past periods; or we will see how specific trends or evolutionary signs seem to form, from our perspective, a path necessarily heading to the

paradigm of our days. Perhaps, on the other hand, all of this is just an intellectual illusion that does not always correspond with reality.

There is no doubt, that is true, that the history of American serial television shows certain tendency to dramatic enrichment and complexity. Although this direction, taken for granted, might as well be denied by the simple and readily observable fact that in the early years of television, in the first golden age, the so-called *dramatic anthology* was richer and more complex than the production of not only the 1960s but also the 1970s.

In the same way, and in a different theme, we could guess that mostly from the 1980s onwards there is an evolution towards a looser, less corseted, less neo-classical narrative, although not necessarily freer because, many times, these attempts were accompanied by an embrace of compositional techniques of narrative origin whose moulds and formal walls, which were sometimes too rigid and visible, do not cease to make us feel some constriction in developments. This occurs despite the fact that this tendency also converges, in one way or another, with the notes of contemporary postdrama.

We believe that a more acceptable and clear claim is that the so-called *hybridisation* between fiction and reality, for example, or the fusion of narrative-dramatic genres and techniques or the de-structuring of the characters that we encounter throughout this process are very remarkable precedents of what is happening today in American serial television postdrama (or postdrama in general).

In addition, from the late 1970s there is also a visible trend and a dramatic effort to draw the attention of the public through the use of different narrative patterns, already crossed or alternated; and the increasingly important presence of the *spectacular discourse*, to the point that today does not exist a (post)dramatic television text that is not also a text of spectacular signification.

While all this might accommodate nuances after observing how all these *centrifugal* modes are compensated by rigid structures that tend towards tighter unity (which is not very typical of postdrama). In addition, in the 1990s, to cite another example, we will see how dramatic discourse tend towards greater quotas of functional freedom and towards the complete eradication of structural *dramatic* issues.

In short, it is also true that these gestures, strokes, trends and facts that we could find in the historical past of serial television, even if marking a vague evolution or anticipation of what happened later, do not necessarily anticipate the emergence of the *new (post)dramatic model,* the object of our study, and much less of the new paradigm, which is not present, neither essentially nor partially, in the television series produced before the year 2000 -and neither in some of the contemporary television series.

The essence of the *new paradigm*, as mentioned, is reflected on the strong desire for liberation, the desire to find "dramatic" discourses and verisimilitude without resorting to structures of the past, clichés, and ultimately to the corseting typical of degenerated cultures. The essence is rather found in the contempt of classicism and the suspicion of modernity. There are no themes, frontiers, ideologies, or factions. It is to break the chains and to seek formal drive, the aesthetic-dramatic *gana*, what works each time because it is what the moment and the surprise dictates. Thus, it is obvious that the process leads to a strong route of organisational rupture and fragmentation because, as mentioned, the formal composition is not enough to give meaning or unity to a work of fiction. We must use the *dramatic tension* to prevent fictional works from breaking into a thousand pieces.

If this historic process has indeed the peculiarities that we have just mentioned, it seems to us that the essence and history of the current open model, without artifices of any kind, will be found more (and beyond the influences that the postdramatic theatre of the 20th century might have on it) in the golden age of the Spanish and Castilian culture, in the Spanish Baroque, than in the history of American

serial television. For this reason, the disdain from the perspective of this age, Spain's Golden Century, towards anything classic shows us the way to overcome the dramatic, the conventional elements that might be contained in classicism.

Therefore, in this subsection, we will try to show through Lope de Vega's 1619 *Fuente Ovejuna*, how this work contains many of the features of the new American model and, above all, the spirit that drives and enables the free and anticlassical construction of the new paradigm of serial television.

And this not because American screenwriters or playwrights necessarily know the Spanish golden age, which they could, but because the impulses and dramatic needs of both ages and places lead to solutions and styles with similar characteristics. Thus, we are going to analyse the work of Lope de Vega, without aiming to be exhaustive, and without following a specially organised method; We are just going to take a look and make a few brief comments on those aspects that call our attention, from a structural and comparative point of view, in line with the reading of this work.

At the very beginning of the dramatic work, we found -without realising it- the first surprises. The Maestre de Calatrava and Commander Fernán Gómez, speak of the succession of Enrique IV and the convenience to lay siege on Ciudad Real. In other words, right after the very first verses the goal is stated: laying siege on a city, which favours or will favour the interests of some of the characters that have been introduced. This fact immediately rises the first questions.

Where are these characters' first lexemes? Where are the first clear traces of their identity? How are they like? What is their nature? In our view, they are not clearly present. They seem to have a true heroic hint, but this is insufficient and somewhat equivocal. Are the Maestre and the Commander part of the same force, either agonist or antagonist? Or, on the contrary, are they on different sides? Because this is not clear. In other words, there appears to be some intrigue about the nature of these characters and about their functions and roles within the story.

Moreover, a goal is immediately stated to try to locate the action: laying siege on Ciudad Real. This would lead us to think, perhaps, that these characters could be protagonists and that is the main goal and theme of the story. However, we know that this is not the case, they are the protagonists of the first action nor this tis the first theme of the story. In other words, we face certain intrigue about the themes of the story, its protagonists and the constitution of these characters -let alone the hierarchy of the themes of this story. Isn't this an essentialist feature of the contemporary American postdrama?

In the third scene, set in Fuente Ovejuna square, two women appear and then they are introduced as Pascuala and Laurencia. It is clear, obviously, that a dramatic change has occurred, but we do not know why or where will it lead us. They are two young girls from the village; one of them, Laurencia, is speaking evil of the Commander, of his love affairs, and her distrust of him.

We do not have clear ideas, for now. We hardly understand this, but we do know something: there is certain intrigue, a labyrinthine game with regards to the dramatic action, and a fairly radical confusion in the dramatic levels. For example, how can a woman from the village even think about relating herself to a noble man in this period of history, and, of course, at the time of the drama?

Some will say that this is not what the story implies, that what Laurencia is saying is that since there is no possibility of a serious relationship, she does not want to maintain a relationship with the Commander. And this the case, to a large extent; but from the following verses it can be deduced that there is a certain defiance, that something has occurred, that Laurencia was a bit interested in the Commander, and that perhaps she believed that in her situation things could be different, and that the Commander – whom she calls by his first name; Fernando! - has let her down. Otherwise, why is Laurencia sad and spiteful, if she had everything so clear from the start? Or is it that this is a

relationship with no future? Why do Pascuala believes that Laurencia's story was going to cause her more grief and that this (being lied, misled and then dumped by a man) can happen to everyone?

On the other hand, we could also ask ourselves what kind of subject is this, the one that just appeared? Do we have a new theme, or not? Or are they just simply two women who are antagonists or perhaps the goal of the Commander, in a secondary sentimental theme?

The clues given by classic works like this suggest that the last guess is the real answer: that there is a heroic theme in which the Commander is the protagonist and that his sentimental affairs are presented as part of a secondary theme (note the implicit hypertexts related with classic works, which are typical of serial television series). However, this interpretation could not be farther away from reality, as we will see. Isn't this blend of confusion, intrigue and dramatic levels, an anti-classic and labyrinthine game, very similar to what is offered by contemporary American serial television postdrama?

So far, everything seems very unstructured, very out of place, so we do not know where we are going. However, everything appears to work perfectly, at least for now. We then reach the tenth scene, at the end of the resolution of the first act, in a field close to Fuente Ovejuna.

Laurencia and Frondoso are present and in the next scene, the eleventh, the Commander appears and tries to rape Laurencia. Allow us to pause to express a quick thought. We said: "the Commander appears and tries to rape Laurencia" and almost automatically want to say instead: he will try to rape Laurencia. This tendency to hypertexts, which we note again, is also very typical of the American serial television.

It is more than likely that Lope did not known Shakespeare's 1594 text, although he might have known it, given that the Spanish text dates back to 1619. However, there is a certain link in terms of themes and works between the "classic" works which, in our case, with greater or lesser motivation and cause, justify this comment and the following: if Shakespeare extols the virtue of the aristocracy, Lope -in his (post)modern and, otherwise, anti-classic line- does the same with the people. In other words, in this work that we have been discussing, the great playwright Lope de Vega does not cease to turn comedy, what was considered comedy then, into tragedy; it is a fusion and transformation of genres in the contemporary style of the American postdrama.

Along this line, Lope continues to disguise a villain as a noble, a hero, an epic character; and a noble into a villain: and not only based on the attitude and nature of the character of the Commander who, despite being what it is, could have remained flat, mythical; instead, what results so interesting is the way the author outlines and composes the same character of this cacique. He reveals the character progressively, little by little -like the *new* American *postdrama* -in an unstructured, broken, manner, one prism here and another over there- and even gives it certain evolution or change before our eyes.

Lope has a very free and strange way of composing this character! It is so (post)modern! It seems as if this author finds all rules to be absolutely indifferent. He only seems to focus on what he need at any given moment. He does not even turn the Commander into an unredeemed, heroic, flat evil. Instead, the Commander is only a small and sick evil, almost in need of a psychiatrist. And on the other hand, we have the people.

This conversion of the people so that it competes on equal terms with the Commander and the Kings of Spain, in a moment of transformation and surprising rupture, is really original and postmodern. The American TV series sometimes also include popular characters covered in heroism, even in their literary constitution. For example, Michael Scofield, in *Prison Break*, and Ryan Atwood, in *The OC*. But it is possible that Lope's work goes beyond that when the people goes from showing a heroic behaviour and constitution to embodying the very idea of heroism, seeing the problem from a somewhat platonic point of view, which have a very modern tone, curiously. The same can be said of

the rupture of the *unity of action* presented in this work, which fits observation in relation to the characters and the *new* American *postdrama*.

In line with this comment, it is worth noting that Frondoso becomes the protagonist of the main theme of the story: the heroic and popular justice against evil, that is, disgrace and spoliation. This occurs when the theme, which is amazing, has not even has appeared clearly. Such a theme will not emerge until the last scene of the second act and the first scene of the third act, while Frondoso appears earlier as the protagonist of an *action* that has not born yet! But when the theme emerges, Frondoso, at certain times and scenes, is replaced as the protagonist by the people. The *unity of action* is somewhat broken -in the style of the *new postdrama*- and, surprisingly, this works, and Lope does not hesitate, there is no doubt about it.

Returning to our earlier discourse, we insist on the fact that both scenes, ten and eleven, put an end to the first of the acts. If at this time we wondered what is the *theme* or themes of the story, we would find it difficult to answer this question. Perhaps the answer, in view of the plot or the whole first act, would revolve around the siege on Ciudad Real by the Maestre or the Commander's loving persecution of the spiteful Laurencia, which are not the themes of the story. Isn't it very current and made in the style of our object of study, the *new* American serial postdrama television *model*?

As mentioned, the tenth scene, at the end of the resolution of the first act, is set in a field just outside and close to Fuente Ovejuna. Laurencia and Frondoso are present and in the next scene, the eleventh, the Commander tries to rape Laurencia. At the beginning of the tenth scene, Laurencia tells Frondoso that due to his constant interventions near her and his excessive closeness to her, people are murmuring and she is beginning to get tired and has to ask him to let her alone because she is not interested in his company. She even seems to make fun of him.

As mentioned, Laurencia seems to have thought, perhaps, that when the Commander approached her, he would be different with her -unlike with other women- that he would take her "seriously", and that he would change. This occurs to us in view of the mild drizzle of sadness and disappointment that is manifested, in our view, in the third scene, in the conversation with Pascuala, when she says she saw the Commander again with other women, as we mentioned above.

In addition, this possible interpretation on the *dramatic situation* of Laurencia would be supported, also in our view, by the dialogue in the same third scene between her and Pascuala and, then, in the fourth scene, with Pascuala, Mengo, Barrildo and Frondoso, in which Laurencia, in a strong tone of defiance, despises men and says men must not be trusted, that love does not exist and all of those things that are said, very lightly, when someone has been recently rejected.

It is true that Laurencia, an honest woman, of age and experience and, perhaps, can make these kinds of statements: that all men want the same thing, etc. However, Laurencia's bitterness and despise, we insist, suggests that there has been a recent encounter and disappointment. And we could ask ourselves, what is this all about? Why clarifying Laurencia's *dramatic situation*? For what purpose?

We mentioned this because it is precisely in this situation and trance when it becomes important to understand and imagine how Laurencia reaches this point in which she is on the verge of opening a major theme in the story, the theme of love. It seems that Laurencia is an honest, special, proud and somewhat ambitious woman who does not fall for just any man. Frondoso, for his part, seems to be a good, virtuous man who dresses well and looks good, according to what Laurencia says in the tenth scene. He wants to conquer Laurencia, who is feeling disappointed, cheated on, and not open for relationships. It is only in the course of the *action*, when Frondoso shows that he clearly is the real hero, that Laurencia, the new heroine, begins to open her heart to him and to see the horrible truth about the Commander. But all this is already suggested in the second act, which is unusual and anti-

classic; that is, we reach the second act with one of the themes, love, which has not been born nor addressed hitherto. Meanwhile, the first theme, the people against the tyranny, has not even appeared.

And what does this have to do with Ciudad Real and the Kings of Spain? Are they another two loose themes in the framework of the story? The thematic situation is rather dark and labyrinthine, not to mention the hierarchy of the themes, their priority and order of reading, which is unknown at this point. And what about the confusion of the dramatic scenes and the roles of the characters? The Commander is present and mixed with the people at various levels.

So, the Commander seems to be the protagonist of one theme, but as the situation is explained he seems to be the antagonistic in the love theme and in the main theme of the story. This means that even the functions of the characters are subject to change and intrigue. Doesn't it resemble the mode of construction of the *new postdramatic American serial television*?

If this was not enough, at this point we could also ask ourselves how does the theme of love start, which is only intuitively suggested as such hitherto. Taking a look back to the plot we can see that Frondoso's approaches and flattery, which Laurencia complains about and are echoed in the tenth scene, have not appeared in previous scenes.

At this moment we noticed how Lope de Vega burst into the theme of love, narratively and externally, by narrating a conflict that took place and never occurred on the scene, after denying the possibility of the existence of love and showing Laurencia's avoidance of love affairs. In other words, in a brief narrative segment and after a climatic context about love, there is an anti-climax period that favours the theme of love, without more ado, generating all kinds of sentimental projections and expectations, with the intention of seducing the public and making it cry.

Moreover, leaving the entire plot, even the very birth of the themes, for the second and third act, seeking to make understandable the story which is going to translate into huge intensity and maximum voltage. Isn't this desire to seduce the public and generate sentimental projections in the destructuring of the classic tools, by managing wisely the *dramatic composition* and *tension*, also typical of the contemporary American model?

Nonetheless, the eleventh scene, with the Commander's intent to commit rape, starts to introduce this surprising inversion between comedy and tragedy, between heroes and villains, between characters of all kinds, the destructuring and intrigue of roles and functions, and Frondoso -later the people- emerges as a mythical popular hero and certainly outrageous in the postdramatic call to success of the *current* American model.

And isn't this monstrous destructuring process a precursor of what is happening in the new and postdramatic paradigm of the American model? In our view, this is the basis and essence of the new paradigm: the formal and constructive impulse and gana, the absolute formal, structural and compositional freedom, the destructuring and the new use of the *dramatic* tools and elements guided solely and exclusively by the need of the moment and the inspiration of the author, without other limits than the formal origin and the skilled reliance on the *dramatic tension*.

Compositional techniques are, in addition, relegated to the background and the spectacle we witness gives an appearance of juxtaposition of themes and developments distanced from the liturgies and contemplation of a *postdrama* that, however, does not reach the limits of the irrational given that the public also has a voice and vote in the expensive production of the contemporary American serial TV series. But in the theatrical *postdrama*, sometimes the authors also impose these limits.

5. Results: characteristics of the American serial TV postdrama

In order to focus on the analysis of the characteristics of the *serial TV postdrama*, we will analyse the *plot*, *dramatic organisation*, *narrative*, and *technical-formal aspects* as well as the characteristic aspects of the *dramatic tension*, based on the *dramatic model* proposed in section 3.

 This section addresses, firstly, the canonical dimensions of drama -the *plot*, characteristic of the *dramatic tension*, *narrative* and *technical-formal dimensions*- which are hardly altered or modified by the *new postdramatic and serial TV model*. As we will see, the roles and functions of the tools that are used in these dimensions, as well as their elements and variables, are in no way altered within these areas of the *common dramatic space* (we refer to the world of serial TV postdrama) and this function remains, to put it in some way, the same as in a neo-classical environment.

In other words, the exercise or application of the tools that are used in the field of serial TV postdrama to build the *argument*, the *dramatic tension*, the *narrative organisations* and the *formal techniques*, if used (and depending on how they are used), would be similar to the use made in the process of adapting drama to the purposes of serial TV postdrama and in the field of the post-dramatic culture. This is already a significant outcome of our research process.

What does vary within these dimensions (*plot*, *dramatic tension*, *narrative organisations* and *formal techniques)* is the importance or significance of their presence in the organisation of the *postdrama* (and this is another result). For example, the *formal dimension*, even if it is present in the *new postdrama*, shall be, logically, much less important than the *dramatic tension*, because in the *new* postdramatic *model* the latter becomes a priority. However, the use of these dimensions is still very similar, if we make use of them, to the use given in the period characteristic of what we call *drama*.

In other words, this section analyses, fundamentally, what concerns the *dramatic organisation* of the *canon* (the second of the segments *of the common dramatic space*), that is, the *order* of *chaos* in the dramatic field, which is where all the relevant changes that affect and cause this *new model of postdramatic and serial TV* occur.

It is not, therefore, in the field of the construction of the *storylines* where the *new* American *model* particularly shows its effects. The dimension devoted to the *dramatic tension* neither varies, let's say, in the use of historical elements that articulate these aspects, namely, *conflict* and *activation*.

What does would change regarding the *dramatic tension*, is that it becomes a key variable when organising dramatic works. Neither the aspects derived from a possible *narrative organisation* offer changes in what refers to their application to the contemporary postdrama. Their tools continue to be used in a similar way, as we have mentioned. And, finally, with regards to the *technical* or *formal dimension* the use of its elements neither differs from the use given throughout history, so that even this last dimension neither shows significant changes in the new *American serial TV postdrama*.

 The *new model or perspective* introduces its variants precisely in the field of the *dramatic or postdramatic organisation* to generate the new *postdrama*. We refer to aspects such as the design of any dramatic *action* in its relation to the *themes* of the dramatic work and its articulation and development, the fundamental dramatic enclaves, their philosophy, the conception of *characters* and their dramatic *functions*, the ways of illustrating and developing the dramatic *contexts*, the philosophy that underlies them, the destruction of preconceived functionalisms or structuralisms, whose most relevant aspects are going to be examined here.

With regards, therefore, to the changes, modifications or features that take place in the field of the *American serial TV postdrama*, we want to point out, without aiming to be exhaustive, the points (given that is not a closed model) that would come to characterise a specific *poetry* within the serial TV postdrama that emerged in the United States of America:

- changes related to the *number of themes* and *the hierarchy* or relevance given to them throughout the story
- trends in the *thematic or structural plot* and progressive revelations or *mutations* in the themes and dramatic situations
- emergence throughout the dramatic work of *new themes* that are unrelated to the ones introduced so far
- variations in relation to the *functions* or forces of which the characters are part
- *obliquity* in the presentation of themes
- *fragmentation*
- *fusion* of genres
- *hybridisation* of real and fantastic worlds
- *permanent change* and *agitation*, creative freedom, *destructuring of the classic functions* and the key dramatic elements
- *compositional ruptures* that are integrated by the forces of *dramatic tension* (tendency to parataxis)
- *freedom of conflict*, which is transformed into a simple tension
- spectacle linked to verisimilitude
- frequent sentimental projections
- intense use of narrative techniques
- *momentum and formal or* dramatic *gana*, instead of planned functions or structural adjustments.
- constant turmoil and use of the *technical-formal tempo*.
- *dramatic instability*: themes, action, plot (ambiguity, instinct)
- *asynchronies* in the development of themes and dramatic action
- *merging of* all kinds of dramatic situations and categories
- high *elasticity of the dramatic values* and, particularly, of conflict
- *rupture of the three units* and the action
- *ambiguous constitutions and changes in characters,* situations, drama tools, elements and variables
- *dramatic architecture* linked to the communication and *tension of story*, more than to the formal or technical buildings of perfect or artistic character.

Let's see some of these features. In this regard Cascajosa (2007), Sarrazac (2010), Cornago (2014), Alcántara Mejía (2015), Carlson (2015) and López-Antuñano (2017) are illustrative. These are, among others, the fundamental and first notes of the *new postdramatic American model*, whose most important changes will be analysed taking as an example episode 12 of the first season of *Prison Break* and many other important and famous American TV series.

5.1. From five to seven themes, if not more. Unveiling themes as the story progresses. Tendency to the organisational thematic labyrinth

One of the problems we may find when beginning to analyse a dramatic work of the new *American postdramatic model*, for starters, would be the identification of the themes that are part of the script, among other reasons, because they are always in motion, i.e., they are not static, they are subject to a permanent change and since they are many and participate over and over again in fusions and mixtures, changes and mutations of all kinds, it is not easy to establish with absolute clarity and certainty what these themes are, to follow their traces and predict their exact outcome; a process that is quite simple to undertake in a classic dramatic work.

The truth is that this way of proceeding in the postdrama, in this postdramatic paradigm, is quite dynamic and original in many respects and its characteristics in the field of audiovisual fiction can be analysed in Orosa (2012, pp 131-320).

Taking *Prison Break* as an example: starting in episode 11 of the first season to enter into our object of analysis, episode 12, *End of the Tunnel*. At the end of the 11th episode, in our view, the themes would be as follows:

- Michael Scofield and everything related to the escape
- The storyline concerning the Afro-American inmate who claims to be in Iraq and is a member of the break out team, the Fox River Eight, and everything related to his family
- The Company in general and its conspiracies and conversations
- The specific theme of the dissident spy of The Company
- Veronica, the lawyer and Lincoln's partner, and her relationship with the dissident spy, The Company and other matters related to Lincoln
- Everything about Lincoln Barrows as a dramatic action plot
- The affairs of the prisoners linked to the Fox River Eight
- The confrontation between Abruzzi and Theodor Duback

The following are, in our view, the themes derived from the treatment of *Prison Break*'s episode 11, which lasts about 45 minutes. If we look at episode 12, which we are analysing, some of these themes remain, in general terms, but others change, namely:

- Abruzzi and his transfer to the hospital
- The love theme between Doctor Sarah Tancredi and Michael Scofield
- The members of the Fox River Eight want to escape already
- The kidnapping and isolation of Lincoln, the dramatic action plot
- Michael and their strategies to escape, never without Lincoln Barrows
- Veronica, the lawyer and Lincoln's partner, and her legal strategy to get him out of prison
- The Afro-American member of the escape group and his escape, his family and its support to escape from jail

And what happens, in our opinion, is that we are witnessing a genuine *fragmentation* and dismemberment of themes that, in previous models, used to be united by *dramatic forces* and the *roles* of characters, by *formal-compositional* needs or by many other reasons or motifs that now cease to exist or disappear.

It is as if Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1974. pp. 217-289), for example, told the story of this hero, in episodes, capitulating all the fables about him and drawing a new myth for each of the characters of this story and, in this way, making a serial, breaking down the various *agonist* forces. And, then, Horatio or the gravediggers, Yorick himself, the dead King's jester, or the guardians had their respective roles and plots; and the same for each of the characters of the *antagonistic* forces; or Fortimbras, the young Norwegian crown Prince, who would also had his own themes and storylines within the story.

It is clear that all this thematic fragmentation, considered in itself and without taking into account other features of the new paradigm, already would be enough to generate a good maze within contemporary postdrama, and also a good challenge, no doubt, in order to its unifying composition and synthesis in the story (if any).

However, as noted at the beginning of this subsection, this *labyrinthine organisation* does not pose the only problem in relation to the matter we are discussing, namely: the *number* of (post)dramatic

themes, with their corresponding development within in a story of the *new model*; but also what we call their *unveiling*, that is, their recognition.

The term *unveiling*, somewhat philosophical as well as poetic, is quite appropriate for this situation because in the viewing of these works one faces many new situations at the same time, all of them changing, dynamic, ambiguous, in constant motion, with fusions of themes and issues, or different characters, to which we are introduced not necessarily in a clear or direct way, in the classic-dramatic style, but through multiple points of access and through twisted stays that generate a sense of novelty and lack of identity in the permanently-surprised spectator; and they are often provisions of such calibre that make the spectator wonder again and again what he is watching and how he got there.

We could ask ourselves: What is it about? What kind of theme or subject is before us? This question is solved only gradually, so many times, until we manage to identify the specific dramatic *theme*, separating it, clearly, from other variables or elements of the action that are logically adhered to it.

5.2. Unveiling and change in the hierarchy of themes, depending on the dramatic context

Normally, referring to previous historic-dramatic periods or periods dominated by a neo-classical philosophy, the themes of a dramatic work tend to be several and not to all them tend to be given the same relevance; a priority or clear priority of themes was established, an order of relevance, so that the *action* flows between primary themes and secondary themes, which used to serve as pauses from the main themes or became moments of low *dramatic tension* during the development of the *action*, always emphasising the climax of the major themes.

In the case of the new *postdramatic model* things do not develop in the same way. Themes, as mentioned, are abundant in this paradigm, from five to seven and even more, and there is still a trend, though small, to the operation of a certain *hierarchy*, a certain priority of themes, although sometimes this disappears and the story develops with highly *non-hierarchical* spaces in which the themes tend to acquire, all of them, similar importance.

The strategy and attitude regarding this matter within the scope of the new *postdramatic model* is based on a particular philosophy: make the present moment the decisive and truly important one. In other words, the new model does not seek secondary or tertiary themes which, at first sight, act as minor themes or as a break of relief from the main theme.

On the contrary, as we have just said, there is a tendency to make the present moment to capture the viewer's attention completely. Therefore, and as we have mentioned, there can be spaces or contexts in which *hierarchy* disappears to give similar importance to all the themes or also - given a *hierarchy*- to produce one or several changes in this thematic hierarchy as the development of the story requires it or depending on different dramatic contexts.

Added to this is the fact, as mentioned in the previous subsection, that such thematic hierarchy has, on many occasions, be unveiled; that is, the *hierarchy* does not necessarily have to be shown clearly at every moment of the story. It may be the case that once that we have revealed the order of importance of the themes, at a given moment, it changes immediately or temporarily cancels all kinds of priority themes, as indicated.

As we will understand, aside from the importance given to the present time in the (post)dramatic work, this philosophy that we have been referring to - and its strategy in relation to the *hierarchy or priority of themes*- does not cease to generate an important organisational intrigue, which must be taken into account and played with when writing and organising the work.

These characteristics can be identified in the TV series *24*, where the pilot episode and its *thematic hierarchies* constantly go through situations of ambiguity and change. At the beginning of the series, the focus is, quickly, on the first theme, the black Senator and candidate to the Presidency of the United States, David Palmer. However, such prelatic pre-eminence is soon passed onto the family of Jack Bauer, the CTU official responsible for ensuring the safety of Palmer. David Palmer then shares his pre-eminence with her daughter Kim and the Senator.

Already at the end of the first act, the series yields its thematic interest to a matter of espionage within CTU, associated with agent Mason and Jack Bauer; then back again to Palmer and Kim, who is already kidnapped by terrorists. Later, the protagonist role returns to Mason, then to Mandi, a terrorist woman who activates a bomb on a flying American airplane, and at the end of this episode the *thematic hierarchy* ends up in the hands of Kim, who has been kidnapped.

This is *hierarchical game* of the *new American postdramatic model,* which we have tried to explain in the clearest and most practical way in the previous lines.

5.3. Fragmentation of themes and dismemberment from their masses of force

It could be said that the *dramatic action*, the *plot* performed by the actors and presented as something that happens or is happening in nuances of *conflict* and with a *dramatic goal or action plot*, not as a narrative or story of something that happened (the latter would be narrative techniques), is guided or headed by a *protagonist* character, i.e., the one who leads the fight to reach the desired place.

The *fight* for what? we might wonder. Without any doubt, a fight to reach a goal, the *dramatic action plot*, would be the answer. And in this *struggle* the *protagonist* is helped or aided by other characters that would form part of the *agonist* forces or masses, which we usually call *deuteragonist*.

On the other hand, there will always be a certain character or dramatic situation that opposes the achievement of that *goal* by the *protagonist*, i.e. the so-called *antagonist* character; and those who follow it will form a mass or dramatic force around it that is usually known as *deuterantagonist*. All this is well known and very simple. They are basic forces that we see repeatedly on scene and as part of our conception of *drama*.

What happens in the *new postdramatic model*, in contrast to the classic model and even other previous or different paradigms- is that these basic dramatic forces, even if they exist, are fragmented into each one of their components, which come to independent life, and many times end up forming or constituting their own autonomous themes, all while acting as dramatic forces with their corresponding categories.

Here it is important to use once again Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an example to highlight, in practical terms, what we are saying: if in *Hamlet* the *protagonist* and the so called *deuteragonists* (whose *dramatic mass* is constituted, in the field of characters, by Horatio, some soldiers and sentries - Marcellus, Bernardo, Francisco-, the ghost of Hamlet's father, the comedians and the gravediggers or, why not, Ophelia herself) were fragmented into each of their components and the life and dramatic affairs of each of them were developed, their chapters and episodes within a serial, while continuing to act their role (their function as deuteragonist and, in the case of Ophelia, the protagonist role), would shape the development of their own storylines with a clearly independent style.

The same could be said of the *antagonist mass* in this work -the King, the Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, etc.- and other parts of different dramatic range and sign. Let's see now how this happens in *Prison Break,* the television series. This work has an *agonist* force -protagonist plus deuteragonist- composed, primarily, by Michael Scofield, the *protagonist*, who commits a crime to enter the prison and get his brother Lincoln Barrows out, which is the *dramatic action plot*. Lincoln

is the victim of the evil conspiracies of certain politicians linked to The Company, an essentially *antagonist* entity.

Michael is joined by several prisoners -the Fox River Eight-, who are a *deuteragonist* force, in his effort to escape from the prison and free his brother, Lincoln Barrows, which would be constituted by Abruzzi, Theodor Duback, Sucre and some more.

Another important character in Michael's orbit is Doctor Sara Tancredi, the main character in their discreet and platonic love story. Veronica, lawyer and Lincoln's partner, will also be linked to the *deuteragonist* forces in her efforts to free Barrows, Michael's brother. The most important *antagonist* force is The Company and within it, its spies. Having said that, let's see the thematic and independent character of the lives and themes that each of these characters dramatically maintain.

For its part, the Fox River Eight -the *deuteragonist* group- the group of prisoners who want to break out of prison. It is clear that this group of inmates -dismembered from the agonist mass that depends on Michael Scofield- is independent and always has its own storylines, in the 12th chapter of the first season. In fact, in this episode this group does not only have its own theme and autonomous life, but even acquires, as *deuteragonist*, an *antagonist* touch in some and even many moments. For instance, the members of this team know that Michael is not willing to escape without his brother Lincoln, but also know that it is impossible to get Lincoln out of his solitary confinement and thus oppose Michael's plan to rescue his brother to achieve their own dramatic goals.

In this episode, the Fox River Eight is in constant confrontation with Michael and works outside of the prison to prepare their escape independently from the life and theme of Michael, who focuses on thinking and executing the plan to free Lincoln. Therefore, and this is what we wanted to show, the *deuteragonist* group, the Fox River Eight, has its own theme in the series, independently from the theme of the protagonist character. And having an independent theme is, for the Fox River Eight, having its own *action* and *dramatic goals*, as it is the case here.

The goal of the Fox River Eight, in this episode, is to execute the escape plan, aside from Michael's goal: freeing up Lincoln. Later, both forces and characters will share a goal, but for now the Fox River Eight has its own theme apart from Michael's, as a protagonist. All this confirms that the Fox River Eight is dismembered from the *agonist* forces and becomes its own autonomous theme, which is the thesis formulated in this episode.

5.4. Mutating themes. Obliquity in the presentation of themes. Discontinuous, non-parallel development of themes, asynchronies in the action

 This section focuses on the mutating nature and substance of themes. In other words, to put it in reality, a given theme in a context of *exposition*, for example, would also have a given substance, it would be "one thing"; in a context of *confrontation*, it would be "something else", that is, it would have another specific substance; and in a context of *resolution* it would be a third thing, its essence would differ from the essence that characterised it in the exposition or conflict contexts, or it would be a combination of both with some new element, in its multiple possible combinations. Moreover, it is clear that these constant changes can and tend to be accompanied, as mentioned, by tertiary or quaternary themes of various kinds.

With regards to the *oblique mutations*, it should be noted that this term refers to different situations, within the *new model*. It can mean that the link from one theme to another is not direct or clear, and instead the new theme is introduced in an indirect, oblique way, by another related theme. In relation to this first interpretation, the term can also mean that the *mutating theme* can become so intertwined with other related themes that are introduced in an indirect way, so this theme turns into other themes and ends up in new and substantially different settings. A third interpretation of the term would have to do with a thematic situation from which multiple simultaneous dramatic actions derive, at a given

time and in a moment of subdivision, and then merge into a single theme -or only two remain alive, for example. Conversely, it refers to a situation in which the dramatic *action* starts with several themes that are opened at the same time, are linked to each other, and are resolved in the development of one clear and unique theme.

In short, the combinations can be many. The point is that the *freedom* of development and formation of themes is one of the features of the *new model*; and in its multiple combinations and scenarios comes to configure a new way in the treatment of the themes which is part of the essence of the new and current dramatic and serial fiction TV model in America.

Forgetting for a second this matter, we want to note that this new treatment of themes, and also their development and possible combinations, opens a new and contemporary episode in the book of the current narrative organisations, on which nothing has been written.

It is clear that, with so many and varied situations, it is normal that the development of themes over time is not synchronous at all or, at least, does not run similarly or adjusted to the different *contexts*. In contrast, the imbalances or *asynchronies*, in the development of the different dramatic *actions*, are obvious and even understandable given the large number of themes and the enormous possibilities of change or *mutation* in their substance, as we have also indicated.

For example, the pilot episode of *The Sopranos*, the TV series, is very enlightening about the aforementioned indirect or *oblique* forms to enter into *new themes* that are emerging throughout this postdramatic American TV series. In the last movement of the *resolution*, the theme of the family of Tony Soprano is introduced from another theme, the conspiracy Tony's uncle against his nephew, in the field of "business". Instead of introducing the theme of the family from the previous scene and theme, namely, the discussion between Tony and his nephew Cristopher about being a screenwriter in Hollywood, the series, which ends the episode with the theme of the family, presents Tony's uncle asking permission to Tony's mother to conspire against her own son. The new theme, the family, is introduced when Tony's mother and uncle go to Tony's son's birthday party, through some family members who are immersed in a different theme that has just been presented. This is a good example of how the *new postdramatic* American serial TV *model* often introduces the themes that lie ahead in an indirect or *oblique* way.

5.5. Final thoughts on the postdramatic shift vs. the classical paradigm

The result, possibly expected, in the postdramatic American model is permanent change, the eternal substitution of situations, characters, ways, objectives, struggles, goals and, therefore, dramatic categories so that the structural suspense and puzzle are the organisational and labyrinthine creative constant within this new *postdrama*.

Hence the use of so many themes at the same time, that the viewer must guess slowly; hence the use and change of ambiguous hierarchies that move over time as life does. For this reason there is a constant fragmentation and dismemberment of themes from his forces of origin, the substantial mutation of themes mutation and their oblique presentations, the constant changes of roles and functions of the characters, the creation of a new concept of second act (which is essential to western drama), the fusions of genres and, why not, of different worlds (real and fantastic), and many other innovations that invite us to do what we feel is more suitable in a concrete circumstance that can open the doors to the seduction of the ever-present viewer.

It is obvious that this enormous freedom, as much as we want to take (and which screenwriters surely end up appropriating it), leads to the *postdrama* in the American serial paradigm to an architecture that would be chaotic, and perhaps non-artistic, if it did not mediate some kind of compositional or at least juxtapositional unifying element. Moreover, the old art, so dear of

technical, i.e. formal, architecture ends up realising the inadequacy of this instrument -the merely technical one- to give cohesion to this labyrinthine, disorganised and centrifugal tendency.

In its structure everything is intrigue, ruptures, inadequacies and lack of unifying crutches or adhesives to go from here to there. The new writer, while continuing to use the old *technical* structures, has to develop a new instrument that gives some kind of union to such *nonsense* and this instrument is going to be as historical and traditional as it is communicative: the *dramatic tension*, the old Greek organisation in terms of attentive interest that Aristotle so wisely tried to describe and develop in his ancient *Poetics*.

So, as we have said, this old instrument is at the service of the attention and interest of the viewer, so that the drama does not go off course or lose *tension* in its development, becomes now, in the hands of new creators, the new and fundamental tool of *composition* and *synthesis* within the dramatic work. Its use and elements continue to be the usual and traditional, those that all the great playwrights have used throughout history -canonically speaking. However, now the dramatic tension comes to exceed in importance to the *technical* or *formal* organisation, which was once an instrument of prestige and first order in the production of *drama*.

As we have insisted, without ceasing to exist, the *form* transfers its privileges and supremacy to the *dramatic tension* to give unity to the centrifugal force and compositional rupture that ends up becoming *parataxis*. Perhaps this slight change of hierarchy in the creative compositional priorities indicates that the American serial TV (post)drama of our time bets a little more on *communication* and seduction, on capturing the attention of a more intelligent and educated audience and perhaps bets a little less on *creation* of artistic structures that are beautiful but would die before coming to life if the interest of the audience disappears. Paradoxically, today the audience is measured more in a one-by-one basis (in terms of subscribers of a cable channel) than in thousands and millions of spectators who are capable of watching an ad that is explosive (in multi-million dollar terms) for an old mainstream network in an outdated concept of what it was, but no longer will be, the new and current TV.

6. Conclusions

We have made reference, first, to the contextualisation of the *classical dramatic canon* or common western dramatic space, which is challenged by the *American serial TV postdrama*. We have outlined their fundamental stages, which serve as a point of reference to analyse (methodologically) what has happened in the framework of this *serial TV postdrama* (and guides us in the study on the order of chaos). The fundamental changes of the *serial TV postdrama* under analysis do not take place in the field of the plot tools, nor in the *dramatic tension*, nor within the *narrative elements* within the framework of the drama, nor in the techniques of *formal* organisation.

With regards to the conclusions of the first part -the stage we call *drama-,* we must say that the fundamental changes introduced by the *American postdrama*, which was characterised in the second part of this work, only occur in the area of *dramatic organisation*.

If in a land like *drama* nothing happens without the past or tradition, the *new model* (in its essential aspects: impulse, *gana*, contempt and the di-categorisation of classicism) would be a wandering star whose fundamental attributes cannot be glimpsed in the bosom of the old trends, we are referring here to the field of *drama* in the context of fiction television.

Precisely, the characteristics of the new model, the formal freedom, the constant change, the dissolution of the classical categories and, above all, the technical and instinctive impulse of the moment, would bring this paradigm, this new *postdramatic twist*, closer to the theatrical peculiarities of the Spanish golden age, a phenomenon that we have tried to describe through the analysis of

Fuente Ovejuna, written by the immortal dramatist Lope de Vega, and its comparison with contemporary American TV series.

Since no changes were detected in the aforementioned dimensions (the *plot*, *dramatic tension*, the *narrative* aspects of drama or in the *technical* organisation), we proceeded to analyse the dimension of drama essentially related to the most intimate categories and formulations, i.e. the *dramatic organisation* (also mentioned in the *canon*), primarily its variables related with the development of the *(dramatic) action*, the *themes* and *dramatic contexts*, namely, exposition, conflict and resolution. We realised that it was precisely in this dimension where significant and relevant changes were introduced by the *new American serial TV postdrama*.

Thus, the final section of this article has been devoted to the analysis of the essential and most important characteristics of this *new model*. First, we highlighted the large number of themes (generally, never less than five) that are usually developed within this paradigm, which is truly significant, and the fact that their identification is not clear from the first moment, but that such actions are revealed progressively, as if it were a structural plot or puzzle.

In addition, historically, themes tend to have a *hierarchy* or priority of importance, so that one action would be relevant and others, the secondary or minor actions, would be less relevant. This does not happen in the *new model*, whose *hierarchy* is often confusing, is revealed little by little, or changes constantly depending on the dramatic *context* in which we find ourselves and the needs of development of the varied themes or circumstances that characterise *(post)dramatic serial TV*.

On the other hand, while classic drama displayed categories that were already functional and related to the characters or key dramatic anchors, the *new model* breaks with such criteria and proceeds, among other things, to *fragmentation* and dismemberment of the different actions and thematic motifs. Moreover, while themes used to be united by the same forces, either of the characters or their functions and of dramatic roles in struggle, now new themes and new dramatic storylines are constituted and many of them emerge independently where the classic model only had a comprehensive technical whole.

New *(post)dramatic themes* do not only characterise or differentiate the *new model* due to their number, ambiguity, rupture of hierarchies and dismemberment of categories and functions, but also acquire a literally chameleonic character and mutate constantly in their substance and nature, or appear suddenly, in an oblique, unexpected way. Thus, while we hardly note it, we are back on a theme that was abandoned long ago and, at that moment, we are not sure how we got there.

Dramatic *asynchrony* is another constant that has been analytically detected in the *new postdrama model*: different actions are developed in an unparalleled way, not only in time, and the contexts (exposition, conflict and resolution) are not capable of moulding a moderately synchronous action for so many themes and their development.

The nature of *characters* changes a thousand times. They reinvent themselves, but also break into a thousand pieces; deconstructed, they also change of functional roles whenever they want. Thus, in the same action, they go from being *agonists* to *antagonists*, the *dramatic goal, deuteragonist*, and back to *protagonists*, but now of a different theme whose origin we do not know, similar to what happens to the man of our time.

The *conflict*, the second act, characteristic of western societies (because there is no West if there is no struggle or suffering before reaching any site), changes in some way and sometimes in its nature and becomes a *burden* of textural character, an epidermal agitation, more than a physical confrontation with a *objective* that, intellectually and emotionally, we should strive to achieve.

Fusion of genres and mixtures of all kinds where the reality, literally, returns to save fiction, or where fiction becomes absolute reality. In short, amidst so much change and the trend to the structural and organisational plot, amidst so much danger of collapse and centrifugal forces, as mentioned, the *dramatic tension,* as expressed by the Greek Aristotle in *Poetics*, returns to save the theatre and redirects us to the labyrinthine monster of the *new model* through the passageways of a feigned sanity. Thus, contemporary *postdrama*, *parataxis*, the original creation, the new and dramatic revolution seem, once again, debtors of the freshest of traditions, Greece. The American screenwriter, who is not foolish in any way, reads Sophocles at night and learns from *Oedipus* -and from *Lope*-, after a long day devoted to writing *True Blood*, the mockumentary about vampires in America and their struggle for equal rights, *Ugly Betty*, *Lost*, *24*, *The Sopranos*, *Prison Break* and *The OC*. All of these TV series are as popular as the dramatic works of the great artists, dramatists and playwrights, used to be throughout the history of Western drama.

7. References

Aristóteles (1974). *Poética*, ed. trilingüe de Valentín García Yebra, Madrid, Gredos.

Alcántara M, José R. (2015): "Del teatro posdramático al drama posteatral", Investigación teatral, Vol.4, Nº 7-8.

Alonso de Santos, José L. (1998): *La escritura dramática*, Madrid, Castalia.

Alonso de Santos, José L. (2002): "La estructura dramática", *Las puertas del drama*, 10, pp. 4-9.

Blacker, Irwin R. (1993): *Guía del escritor de cine y televisión*, Navarra, Eunsa.

Cabal, Fermín (1986): "Historia y evolución de la estructura dramática", *Primer acto*, 215, pp. 92-99.

Carlson, M. (2015): "Postdramatic Theatre and Postdramatic Performance", *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença*, vol.5 no.3.

Cascajosa V. C (2006a): "No es televisión, es HBO: La búsqueda de la diferencia como indicador de calidad en los dramas del canal HBO", *Zer*, pp. 23-33. www.dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2238742.

Cascajosa V. C (2006b): "El espejo deformado: Una propuesta de análisis del reciclaje en la ficción audiovisual norteamericana.", *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 61/II época, pp. 1-17. www.ull.es/publicaciones/latina/200605cascajosa.pdf .

Cascajosa V. C (2007): ""Reality Bites". De cómo la telerrealidad ayudó a salvar la ficción", *Trípodos*, 21, pp. 97-102. www.dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2381547

Chatman, S. (1986): *Story and discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Cornell, Cornell University Press.

Cornago, Óscar. "Teatro postdramático: Las resistencias de la representación". Artea. Investigación y creación escénica [en línea, sin paginación]. Recuperado noviembre 15, 2014 de: www.arte-a.org

Field, S. (1994): *El libro del guion*, Madrid, Plot.

Field, S. (2001): *El manual del guionista*, Madrid, Plot.

García B, José L. (2001): *Cómo se comenta una obra de teatro*, Madrid, Síntesis.

In treatment, Fox (2009): *Primera temporada [Capítulo primero]*.

López-Antuñano, José G. (2017): La escena del siglo XXI, Madrid, Asociación de Directores de Escena de España.

López-Antuñano, José G. (2010): "Tendencias en el teatro europeo Actual", Teatrología, pp. 184-201.

Orosa, Miguel A. (2012): *El cambio dramático en el modelo teleserial norteamericano*, Saarbrücken, Publicia.

Pérez B, E. (1995): *Aproximación al espacio formal: un ensayo de epistemología estética*, tesis doctoral, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid.

Sarrazac Jean P (2010): "El drama no será representado", Teatrología, pp. 92-103.

Shakespeare, W. (1974): *Hamlet*, en *Obra Completa*, trad. Luis Astrana Marin, Madrid, Aguilar, pp. 217-289.

Vega, Lope De. (1991): *Fuente Ovejuna*, ed. Francisco López Estrada, Madrid, Castalia.

7.1. TV series
HBO (1998). Sex and the City, Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
HBO/Warner (1999.) The Sopranos, Season 1 (pilot episode), USA.
HBO (2001). Six feet under, Season 1 (pilot episode), USA.
Fox (2001). 24, Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
Warner (2003). The O.C., Season 1 (pilot episode), USA.
Fox (2005). Prison Break, Season 1 (episode 12), USA.
ABC/Buena Vista-Touchstone (2005). Lost, Season 1 (pilot episode, part 1), USA.
ABC/Buena Vista-Touchstone (2005). Lost, Season 1 (pilot episode, part 2), USA.
HBO (2007). Mad Men, Season 1 (pilot episode), USA.
Buena Vista-Touchstone (2008). *Ugly Betty,* Season 1 (pilot episode), USA.
HBO/Warner (2009). *True Blood,* Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
Fox (2009). In treatment, Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
HBO (2011). Boardwalk Empire, Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
HBO (2011). Game of Thrones, Season 1 (episode 1), USA.
HBO (2017). Game of Thrones, Season 7, USA.
Netflix (2017). House of Cards, Season 5, USA.

_____

VER DATOS EN VERSION EN ESPAÑOL