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# Television fiction and memory practices in Portugal and Spain (2000–2012): Some comparative reflections<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This article presents an overview of historical fiction broadcast in Spanish and Portuguese television over the last decade and analyses its main characteristics (narrative modes, patterns of representation, evocations of times and spaces, relations with current events and agendas), regarding these productions as examples of twenty-first-century media memory.*

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a healthy supply of historical fiction programmes in Spanish and Portuguese television in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Like other fiction genres, their aim is to entertain mass audiences, and they are frequently broadcast in prime-time slots in the schedules of both private and public television channels. Historical fiction re-creates characters, historical periods and settings by

## KEYWORDS

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1. This work is a result of the following projects: *Televisão e Memória: a ficção histórica em Portugal e Espanha (2000–2012)*; *Televisión y memoria. Estrategias de representación de la Guerra Civil y la*

*Transición* (HAR2010-20005, MICINN) and *Memorias en segundo grado: Posmemoria de la guerra civil y el franquismo en la España del siglo XXI* (2013LINE-01), Banco Santander and Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

2. We understand that under historical fiction, plots of fictional narrative take place in the past, regardless of the temporal distance between the story and the viewer or whether there are real characters and facts or not.

means of a wide variety of formats (e.g. series, miniseries and TV movies), which have the ability to translate references from the past into the present.

This article presents an overview of Spanish and Portuguese historical fiction. We analyse its main characteristics, focusing on productions broadcast in the last decade by national television networks, both public (Televisión Española, TVE and Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, RTP) and private (Antena 3 and Telecinco in Spain, and Televisão Independente, TVI and Sociedade Independente de Comunicação, SIC, in Portugal).

Historical fictions may be defined as generalist practices of media memory (Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg 2011). Their narratives are the result of management of the past *in* the media and *through* the media. Historical fiction contributes to constructions of the past, endowed with characters, events and situations that are potentially distant from the present. At the same time, historical fiction must be considered as a product strictly of the present, since it interprets the past in accordance with current agendas. Its content thus represents both ‘present pasts’ and ‘illusions of the past’ (Huysen 2000). This dialectic – past/present, history/television – represents the best approach to explaining the nature of historical fiction as memory practice.

One of the characteristics of historical fiction is its informative and simplistic tone. Its goal is certainly not an academic historiographical analysis; instead, it deploys certain dramatic keys, which may be perceived as historical, and makes them recognizable to a wide non-specialist audience. This aim requires the selection of specific topics and approaches that may stem from political interests such as commemorating events or personalities. In addition, television memory reflects topics that may give rise to controversy in the public sphere. The politics of memory tends to make use of history, channelling it towards such purposes as reporting unjust facts, recovering forgotten situations, rehabilitating victims, legitimating projects and educating the younger generation. These aims involve moral and educational outreach, approaching the past from the present and projecting it as a future value (Levy 2010).

Media memory is not only a mechanism that facilitates the construction of personal meaning, it is also a collection of shared cognitions. Media products are framed and conditioned by different systems of memory and oblivion (Connerton 2009). Texts in media are part of such a system, facilitating the existence of knowledge and providing meaning. In this sense, they form what Zerubavel termed ‘mnemonic socialization’ (Zerubavel 1996: 286–89), supplying, for example, identity through their representations of time and space. Zerubavel (1981) highlights various symbolic uses of temporality. The media facilitate the establishment of agendas, the reiteration of events and the fostering of standardization. These strategies attain significant social reach by institutionalizing points of view and giving expression to group feelings (Wegner et al, 1991).

The aim of this article is also to consider how historical fictions have in many cases shown the past as shared roots or as a shared national meeting point. These programmes have effectively suggested what is relevant and what is not, what should be remembered and what should fall into oblivion. Above all, the way in which they have raised the questions of *how*, *where* and *by whom* also deserves due recognition. Historical fiction, hence, re-creates national identity and drives (and reinforces) its differing inclusive dimensions (linguistic identity, environments, national characters, common values, idiosyncratic role models and so on).

The focus on the nation has been somewhat tempered by international co-production. A case in point is *El Ángel de Budapest* (2011), a TV movie

produced by TVE, the Spanish producer Boomerang and the Hungarian producer Film Team. In a similar vein, films such as *Equador* (2008), a Portuguese fictional movie shot in five different countries and produced by the private broadcaster TVI at a cost of almost six million euros, took on a more cosmopolitan slant. Another example of hybridization of the national frame is the Spanish serial *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (TVE 2005–2012), based on *Temps de silenci* (2001–2002) produced by the regional broadcaster TV3, which developed an autochthonous Catalan narrative. Not only the production of contemporary Iberian historical fiction but also the plots themselves incorporate international influences, especially from Latin American telenovelas and realist Anglo-Saxon soaps (Galán and Rueda 2013; Smith 2008).

Notwithstanding territorial proximity, there is very little to say about the thematic interaction between Spanish and Portuguese historical fiction series. One exception would be *A Raia dos medos* (2000), produced by public broadcaster RTP, which covered the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in the Guadiana Valley (Barrancos, Mourão, Campo Maior and Badajoz) and centred on cross-border exchanges, within a context of violence on both sides.

Another example of narrative confluence was the Portuguese adaptation of the Spanish series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVE 2001–2012), titled *Conta-me como foi* (RTP 2007–2011). Both productions focused on the decline of dictatorship and the political and sociological processes leading to democracy in the respective country. These series aimed at triggering emotional empathy in national audiences. However, their stories also interconnected with ample intertextual plots. *Cuéntame* was based on *The Wonder Years* (ABC 1988–1993) and, simultaneous to its Portuguese adaptation, was also broadcast in Italy (*Raccontami*, RAI 2006–2007).

The next two sections of this article consider the Spanish and Portuguese fictional genres separately. The issues addressed in both sections, however, are common: broadcasting schedules, core audience data and the overall distribution of productions by networks. Furthermore, the main time frames evoked and the respective strategies regarding national representation are explained. Finally, the concluding section puts forward a comparative reflection on these issues.

## HISTORICAL FICTION ON SPANISH TELEVISION

### ***Broadcasting schedules and core audience data***

Table 1 shows historical television fiction titles broadcast in Spain between 1999 and 2012. From a quantitative point of view, two phases can be distinguished: 1999–2007 and 2008–2012. In the former, only ten productions premiered, although this also represents a clearly transitional period with a combination of traditional practices and innovative production formulas.

In fact, between 1999 and 2007, the dramatic patterns characteristic of 1980s' historical fictions remained the norm. For example, programming featured adaptations of literary authors or applied production patterns with clear cinematic influences. These provide two characteristics of Spanish television fiction of the late twentieth century (Palacio 2005: 152–62). This also became a period featuring original programmes that would prove highly influential years later, such as *Cuéntame* and *Amar*. Both series became paradigms of proximity fiction (Buonanno 2006: 96–99; Straubhaar 1991), with scripts based on original plots and their focus on domestic relationships (family relationships, love, friendships and so on). In addition, their plots alluded to

| Title  | Year      | Channel   | Format          | Epoch                            |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>El secreto de la porcelana</i>            | 1999      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1760                          |
| <i>Cuéntame cómo pasó</i>                    | 2001–2012 | TVE1      | Seasonal series | 1968–1981                        |
| <i>El abuelo</i>                             | 2001      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1890                          |
| <i>Severo Ochoa</i>                          | 2001      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1920–1980                     |
| <i>Padre Coraje</i>                          | 2002      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | 1995                             |
| <i>Miguel Hernández. Viento del pueblo</i>   | 2002      | TVE1      | Series          | c. 1920–1940                     |
| <i>Los ochenta</i>                           | 2004      | Telecinco | Series          | 1980–1981                        |
| <i>Las cerezas del cementerio</i>            | 2005      | TVE1      | TV movie        | c. 1900–1910                     |
| <i>Vientos de agua</i>                       | 2005      | Telecinco | Series          | c. 1930–2005                     |
| <i>Arroz y tartan</i>                        | 2005      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1900                          |
| <i>Amar en tiempos revueltos</i>             | 2005–2012 | TVE1      | Seasonal series | 1936–1957                        |
| <i>20-N. Los últimos días de Franco</i>      | 2008      | Antena 3  | TV movie        | 1975                             |
| <i>48 horas</i>                              | 2008      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | 1996                             |
| <i>Días sin luz</i>                          | 2008      | Antena 3  | TV movie        | 2008                             |
| <i>El caso Wanninkhof</i>                    | 2008      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | 1999–2003                        |
| <i>Fago</i>                                  | 2008      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | 2007                             |
| <i>Flores para Belle</i>                     | 2008      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | 1939–1945                        |
| <i>La señora</i>                             | 2008–2010 | TVE1      | Seasonal series | 1923–1931                        |
| <i>Los Borgia</i>                            | 2008      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | fifteenth to sixteenth centuries |
| <i>Soy el solitario</i>                      | 2008      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | 2005–2007                        |
| <i>Águila roja</i>                           | 2009      | TVE1      | Seasonal series | seventeenth century              |
| <i>23-F. El día más difícil del Rey</i>      | 2009      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | 1981                             |
| <i>23-F. Historia de una traición</i>        | 2009      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | 1981                             |
| <i>El bloke. Coslada cero</i>                | 2009      | TVE1      | TV movie        | 2008                             |
| <i>El crimen de los Marqueses de Urquijo</i> | 2009      | TVE1      | TV movie        | 1980                             |
| <i>La chica de ayer</i>                      | 2009      | Antena 3  | Series          | 1977                             |
| <i>Lola</i>                                  | 2009      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | c. 1940–1960                     |
| <i>Marisol</i>                               | 2009      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | c. 1965–2000                     |
| <i>Paquirri</i>                              | 2009      | Telecinco | Miniseries      | c. 1970–1980                     |
| <i>¿Quién mató a Hipólito Roldán?</i>        | 2009      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1945                          |
| <i>Una bala para el Rey</i>                  | 2009      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | 1995                             |
| <i>Adolfo Suárez, el Presidente</i>          | 2010      | Antena 3  | Miniseries      | c. 1955–1981                     |
| <i>Alfonso, el Príncipe maldito</i>          | 2010      | Telecinco | Miniseries      | c. 1960–1990                     |
| <i>Alta traición</i>                         | 2010      | TVE1      | Miniseries      | c. 1945                          |
| <i>El asesino dentro del círculo</i>         | 2010      | TVE1      | TV movie        | 1995–1996                        |
| <i>El secuestro de Anabel</i>                | 2010      | TVE1      | TV movie        | 2005                             |
| <i>Felipe y Letizia, deber y querer</i>      | 2010      | Telecinco | Miniseries      | 2000–2004                        |
| <i>Hispania, la leyenda</i>                  | 2010      | Antena 3  | Seasonal series | first century BC                 |
| <i>La Duquesa (I y II)</i>                   | 2010–2011 | Telecinco | Miniseries      | 1930–1978                        |

|   |                   |                       |                 |                      |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <i>La Princesa de Eboli</i>               | 2010              | Antena 3              | Miniseries      | sixteenth century    |
| <i>Ojo por ojo</i>                        | 2010              | TVE1                  | Miniseries      | 1919                 |
| <i>Raphael, que sabe nadie</i>            | 2010              | Antena 3              | Miniseries      | c. 1960–2000         |
| <i>Serrallonga</i>                        | 2010 (2008)       | TVE1 (TV3)            | Miniseries      | seventeenth century  |
| <i>Tierra de lobos</i>                    | 2010–2012         | Telecinco             | Seasonal series | 1875                 |
| <i>Vuelo IL8714</i>                       | 2010              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | 2009                 |
| <i>11-M. Para que nadie lo olvide</i>     | 2011              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | 2004                 |
| <i>14 de abril. La República</i>          | 2011              | TVE1                  | Seasonal series | 1931–1932            |
| <i>Alakrana</i>                           | 2011              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | 2010                 |
| <i>Bandolera</i>                          | 2011–2012         | Antena 3              | Seasonal series | c. 1890              |
| <i>Clara Campoamor, la mujer olvidada</i> | 2011              | TVE1                  | TV movie        | 1931                 |
| <i>Crematorio</i>                         | 2012 (2011)       | La Sexta (Canal +)    | Series          | c. 1980–2010         |
| <i>El ángel de Budapest</i>               | 2011              | TVE1                  | TV movie        | 1944                 |
| <i>La Mari</i>                            | 2011 (2003, 2009) | TVE1 (TV3, Canal Sur) | Miniseries      | c. 1968–2003         |
| <i>El secreto de Puente Viejo</i>         | 2011–2012         | Antena 3              | Seasonal series | c. 1890–1900         |
| <i>Gran Hotel</i>                         | 2011–2012         | Antena 3              | Seasonal series | c. 1890–1900         |
| <i>Hoy quiero confesar</i>                | 2011              | Antena 3              | Miniseries      | c. 1975–2005         |
| <i>La muerte a escena</i>                 | 2011              | TVE1                  | Miniseries      | c. 1950              |
| <i>Los Quién</i>                          | 2011              | Antena 3              | Series          | 1980–1990            |
| <i>Operación Jaque</i>                    | 2011              | TVE1                  | Miniseries      | 2000–2010            |
| <i>Operación Malaya</i>                   | 2011              | TVE1                  | Miniseries      | 2008–2010            |
| <i>Plaza de España</i>                    | 2011              | TVE1                  | Series          | 1936                 |
| <i>Rocío Dúrcal, volver a verte</i>       | 2011              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | c. 1960–2005         |
| <i>Sofía</i>                              | 2011              | Antena 3              | Miniseries      | c. 1960–1975         |
| <i>Tita Cervera, la Baronesa</i>          | 2011              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | c. 1965–2010         |
| <i>Tarancón, el quinto mandamiento</i>    | 2011 (2010)       | TVE1 (Canal 9)        | Miniseries      | 1936–1978            |
| <i>Carmina</i>                            | 2012              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | c. 1970–2000         |
| <i>Mi gitana</i>                          | 2012              | Telecinco             | Miniseries      | c. 1970–2010         |
| <i>Toledo, cruce de destinos</i>          | 2012              | Antena 3              | Seasonal series | twenty-first century |

Source: *Televisión y memoria. Estrategias de representación de la Guerra Civil y la Transición*.

Table 1: Historical fiction broadcast by Spanish national channels (1999–2012, data through to March 2012).

times actually experienced by a significant part of the audience (the Spanish Civil War, the Franco regime and the Transition to Democracy), sentimentally interrelating the recreation of domestic life with the telling of historical events. Studies on audiences and their reception of *Cuéntame* highlight that older viewers made up its main consumer niche market, for example. These viewers perceived the series as an accurate portrayal of the past, mainly in

terms of its evocation of ways of life, domestic habits, family relationships and popular culture (Gutiérrez Lozano 2006: 440–45).

The second phase in historical fiction took place between 2008 and 2012. This period was characterized by a spectacular boom in production output. In total, 60 series, miniseries and TV movies joined the schedules. The so-called film law (*Ley del cine, Ley 55/2007*) granted public subsidies to TV movies while simultaneously obliging broadcasters to invest a certain percentage of their revenues in films. Both facets stimulated the production of fiction by means of two different formulas: outsourcing and co-productions between television networks and production companies. Average costs amounted to around €600,000 per episode of *Cuéntame* in 2012, €400,000 per TV movie in 2011 and €56,000 per episode of *Amar* in the 2006–2008 seasons.

All historical fiction productions broadcast between 2008 and 2012 generally attracted large audiences, which helped make costs easier to cover. Audience sizes have decreased in recent years due to the advent of Digital Terrestrial Television (*Televisión Digital Terrestre, TDT*), which has led to a proliferation of channels and therefore a fragmentation in supply. However, the audience share for historical fiction has continued to be significant: around 20 per cent in 2008 and around 15 per cent in 2011. These positive results have had a contagious effect on the large networks, which have correspondingly launched many productions. Seven of the ten most watched prime-time fiction productions in 2010 were historical in content, some of them becoming veritable television events. Such was the case with *23-F. El día más difícil del Rey*, which gained an audience of 6.7 million and was among the most viewed shows in the 2008–2009 season.

### **Dramatic genres and their orientation by channels**

The variety of formats has allowed for great programming flexibility and profitability. Many series, TV movies and miniseries were given intense promotional campaigns by their broadcasters. Some even resulted in spin-offs, such as *14 de Abril. La República*, from the series *La Se-ora*. These two works came from the same producer, had many characters in common and developed a coherent storyline spanning from the early 1920s to the early 1930s. Another notable variable is the balanced distribution of fiction productions across the different channels: TVE1 showed 25, Antena 3 showed 21 and Telecinco showed 12. These figures point to a shared strategy at both public and private broadcasters. Identifying some of the factors able to explain this affinity is important in its own right. It should also be pointed out that many foreign producers have collaborated with TVE, Antena 3 and Telecinco, which resulted in the homogeneous creative design, planning, filming and promotion of their historical fiction.

However, some peculiarities must also be taken into account. Telecinco specializes in sensationalist-style biopics of present-day celebrities, including the prince and princess of Asturias (*Felipe y Letizia*), the Duchess of Alba (*La Duquesa*), Isabel Pantoja (*Mi gitana*) and Carmen Ordóñez (*Carmina*). Such productions were related to the channel's brand image. Furthermore, these stories launched 'viral programming' (Artero 2007: 198–295), the broadcasting of live debates, reports and rebroadcasts of old content.

The characteristic genre of this historical fiction was drama. The only notable exception was one comedy (*Plaza de España*), which stripped away the taboo that still surrounded the Civil War. Simultaneously, the twentieth century proved to

be the most common time frame. Only 10 out of the 60 fiction productions broadcast between 2008 and 2012 took place before the twentieth century, and they all reflected different settings: the age of Antiquity through the peplum or toga (*Hispania*), medieval times through palatial intrigue (*Toledo*), the seventeenth century through adventure (*Águila Roja*, *Serrallonga*) and the nineteenth century through romantic telenovelas (*Bandolera*, *Tierra de lobos*, *El secreto de Puente Viejo*). In this sense, demonstrated through these dramatic patterns of identity that serve to reinforce the characteristic style of historical fiction, the affinity between Antena 3, Telecinco and TVE should also be mentioned.

### **Dominant historical periods**

The majority of historical fiction productions are set around events in the twentieth century: the 1917 parliamentary crisis (*Ojo por ojo*), the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (*La señora*), the Second Republic (*14 de abril*, *Clara Campoamor*), the Civil War (*Plaza de España*), the post-war period (*Amar*), late Francoism and the Transition to Democracy (*Cuéntame*), all the way through to the great upheavals provoked by terrorism: the assassination of Miguel Ángel Blanco (*48 horas*) and the terrorist attacks of 2004 (*11-M*). The aforementioned celebrity biopics should be added to these titles, as should productions about political milestones, including the difficult role of the prince and princess of Spain in official circles during the 1970s (*Sofía*), Franco's death (*20-N*), the change in politics between 1976 and 1978 (*Adolfo Suárez*) and the attempted coup d'état of 1981 (*23-F*).

This abundance of twentieth-century settings can be better understood when analysing the narratives on which they actually concentrate. Only ten productions centred their plots on the first third of the century, while the Franco regime in the 1940s and 1950s was the background to only a further six stories: *El ángel de Budapest* and *Amar*, as well as four miniseries based on the latter (*Flores para Belle*, *¿Quién mató a Hipólito Roldán?*, *Alta traición* and *La muerte a escena*). In contrast, 35 fiction productions (70 per cent of the total) took place between the 1960s and the present day. Of these, fifteen revolved around late Francoism and twenty around the Transition to Democracy. The interest in exploring these more recent times constitutes yet another unique facet of these exercises in media memory. References to the recent past that some viewers have actually lived through allow for the introduction of individual recollections.

Simultaneously, fiction has engaged in a wider intertextual television relationship. Many of the events taking place in these stories – the end of Francoism, the transition to and the stability of democracy, recent years – have already been dissected in talk shows and documentaries. Fictional drama has leaned on these pre-existing frameworks, but it has also surpassed them by establishing new angles of remembrance, for instance regarding aspects of the private lives of the political elite (the kings and princes, General Franco, Adolfo Suárez). This individualization of memory has been especially noteworthy in instant movies, productions about very recent events that took place only a few years – or even a few months – before they were produced. They allude to events that occurred in the immediate past, combining fiction and factual reality. This modus operandi was used in around ten police report productions (*El caso Wanninkhof*, *Días sin luz*, *Soy el solitario*, *El secuestro de Anabel*, *Vuelo IL8714*), as well as in those focusing on political and economic scandals (*El bloke*, *Operación Malaya*).

3. See the analysis by Marta Pérez Pereiro in this themed issue.

### **Representing the nation**

Another important aspect of these Spanish historical fiction accounts has been the hegemony of national history (O'Donnell et al., 2009). Only four out of the 60 productions considered (*Operación Jaque*, *Alakrana*, *Flores para Belle* and *El ángel de Budapest*) took place in international locations, and the latter two even flirt with the 'Spanishization' of the Second World War. *El Ángel de Budapest* evoked the assistance rendered by the Spanish diplomat Ángel Sanz Briz to the Jewish population in occupied Budapest in 1944. This framing enabled a correspondence to be established between that character and other symbolic figures standardized by the media (Oskar Schindler), but from a national point of view.

Another representation of Spanish nationalism in historical fiction has appeared in the insistence on setting the stories in Madrid. This setting has been presented, however, across different scenic levels. For example, *Amar* and *Cuéntame* took place in the popular city; that is, in middle-class and low-cost housing neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, a sometimes confusing closeness was established between residential settings and centres of power in politically themed pieces (*Sofía*, *20-N*, *Felipe y Letizia*). Finally, other stories put forward a *mélange* of settings, such as the countryside/city juxtaposition of *14 de Abril*, as a metaphor for class warfare.

The meaning of Madrid as a prototypical setting for Spanish history contrasts with other production guidelines. 'Catalanism', 'Galicianism', 'Andalusism' and 'Basquism' have been recognized as essential variables in productions by the Catalan broadcaster TV3 (*Poble nou* 1994; *Nissaga de poder* 1997–1998; *Ventdelplá* 2005–2009), by the Galician TVG (*Padre Casares* 2008–2009; *Libro de familia*<sup>3</sup> 2005–2012), by the Andalusian Canal Sur (*Arrayán* 2001–2009) and by the Basque ETB (*Goenkale* 1993, the longest-running serial in the Iberian Peninsula), respectively. These outputs have been valued as stories that adjusted their own scales of production, programming and consumption, and have thereby become vehicles for territorial sentiment (Castelló 2008; Lacalle 2007;; Meso, Pérez Dasilva and Mendiguren 2010). The use of local languages or accents and allusions to local characters, institutions, customs and modes of interaction comprise a catalogue of strategies to propose frameworks for such affirmation and recognition.

National historical fiction has, in turn, formulated a harmonious discourse about the whole of Spain, in which the past is seen as the root of the community, thus annulling peripheral territorial references. Spanishness has been explicit in some productions, even in titles: *Plaza de España*, *Hispania* and *Toledo*, the latter a toponym symbolizing the coexistence of Christians, Muslims and Jews during the Middle Ages.

Other works – including *Cuéntame*, *Amar* and *14 de Abril* – have cited class conflicts and gender tensions, but never territorial conflicts. Their stories, however, raise no controversy, as they deal with issues of national unity, decentralization and the right to self-determination. *La chica de ayer* was adapted from the BBC's fictional series *Life on Mars* with discourse filters: the IRA was present in the British series, but the Spanish version did not mention the ETA or Basque nationalism, as the writers and producers deemed it incongruent with the sitcom tone of the Spanish adaptation (Rueda and Coronado 2009: 295).

Emphasis on that which is shared has also been expressed as an allusion to an 'Other', which represents an aggressor acting against the national community. This provided the foundations for the miniseries *11-M*, whose



theme was the Madrid bombings of March 2004. It took a polarizing approach, differentiating between 'them', the Islamic terrorists as political-religious fanatics, and 'us', everyday characters who became innocent victims simply by being inside the trains that exploded on 11 March 2004. According to viewer reactions on Twitter, *11-M* caused a strong emotional impact and was perceived with intense realism. It did generate some racist responses, but overall served to revive personal memories and thus stimulate audience identification with the victims of 2004.

*11-M* evoked an apocalypse-laced collective past. On the other hand, in works of fiction based on the Transition to Democracy the historical backdrop was drawn as a morally positive framework for identity. In *Cuéntame*, for example, the 1970s were evoked not from a traumatic perspective, but in terms of nostalgia, establishing this decade as the basis for subsequent progress. *Crematorio*, a fictional series based on the novel by Rafael Chirbes, stands out as an antithesis to *Cuéntame* and its family-oriented viewpoint. *Crematorio* is about the ins and outs of the Bertomeu family and the obscure real estate business of Rubén, the family patriarch on the Valencian coast. *Cuéntame* may be considered an allegorical narrative of the national optimism experienced in the first decade of the twenty-first century, while *Crematorio* portrays a pessimistic metaphor interpreting the subsequent economic crisis and speculative bubble.

The economic crisis has had its own drastic impact on the production and broadcasting of works of fiction, closing the expansive cycle that began in 2008. Television networks have reduced their budgets and experienced postponements, such as *Isabel*, which was finished in 2011 and finally broadcast in September 2012. The decision to delay programming was a direct response to financial criteria: the longer the production was not broadcast, the longer it would not appear as an expense on the books. After the electoral victory of the Partido Popular in November 2011, fiction programmes set up within a socialist mindset were postponed, including *Tres días de abril*, a miniseries about the proclamation of the Republic; *Volveremos/Tornarem*, about the end of the Civil War; and the second season of *14 de Abril*. This programme blocking also had an impact on other networks: Antena 3 more than once suspended the premiere of *El tiempo entre costuras*, a serial based on the book by María Dueñas.

## HISTORICAL FICTION ON PORTUGUESE TELEVISION

### ***Broadcasting rhythms and core audience data***

The Portuguese television market consists of three generalist channels, one public and two commercial. Their programming is based on and highlights the functional role of fiction (Hobson 2003). While Brazilian telenovelas (TV Globo) dominated between 1977 and 1982, domestic production content began to appear thereafter, first on the public service (RTP1 – Radio and Television of Portugal) and, in 1992 and 1993, on the private channels (SIC – Independent Society of Communication; and TVI – Independent Television). These fictional Portuguese titles (from both sides of the Atlantic) became the main source of prime-time content and transversely set up competitive dynamics reflecting the efforts put into winning absolute audience leadership.

Given the success of the Brazilian output, the first productions from Portugal incorporated allusive references to TV Globo's titles, accepted even then as a paradigm of quality. Formats and genres have gradually diversified, as have the stories: the telenovela lives on in series, serials, telefilms and miniseries, with transnational themes anchored in amorous relationships, conflicts

and revelations of identity. They then began to alternate, with the inclusion of national and thematic spaces and the evocation of Portuguese authors and historical events.

Out of all the television fiction produced in the last decade and broadcast by the generalist Portuguese channels, 35 historical productions can be identified (Table 2).

| Title                              | Year      | Channel | Format          | Epoch              |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>Fuga</i>                        | 1999      | RTP1    | TV movie        | 1970s              |
| <i>Almeida Garrett</i>             | 1999      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | nineteenth century |
| <i>Capitães de Abril</i>           | 1999      | RTP1    | Film/TV movie   | 1974               |
| <i>A raia dos medos</i>            | 1999      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1936               |
| <i>Capitão Roby</i>                | 1999      | SIC     | Serial          | 1980s              |
| <i>A febre do ouro negro</i>       | 2000      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1940s              |
| <i>Conde diAbranhos</i>            | 2000      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1880               |
| <i>Alves dos Reis</i>              | 2000      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1920s              |
| <i>Monsanto</i>                    | 2000      | SIC     | TV movie        | 2000 (1960s)       |
| <i>O processo dos Távoras</i>      | 2000      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1758               |
| <i>A noiva</i>                     | 2001      | SIC     | TV movie        | 1960s              |
| <i>Jóia de África</i>              | 2002      | TVI     | Serial          | 1950s              |
| <i>Os Maias</i>                    | 2004      | TVI     | Telenovela      | 1880               |
| <i>A Ferreirinha</i>               | 2004      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1860–1896          |
| <i>João Semana</i>                 | 2004      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1840s–1860s        |
| <i>Pedro e Inês</i>                | 2005      | RTP1    | Serial          | fourteenth century |
| <i>Até amanhã, camaradas</i>       | 2005      | SIC     | Miniseries      | 1940s              |
| <i>Quando os lobos uivam</i>       | 2005      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1950s              |
| <i>Bocage</i>                      | 2006      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1800s              |
| <i>Nome código Sintra</i>          | 2006      | RTP1    | Serial/film     | 1870s/2000s        |
| <i>Regresso a Sزالinda</i>         | 2006      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1960s/2000s        |
| <i>Paixões proibidas</i>           | 2007      | RTP1    | Telenovela      | nineteenth century |
| <i>Conta-me como foi</i>           | 2007–2011 | RTP1    | Serial          | 1968–1974          |
| <i>O Dia do regicídio</i>          | 2007      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1908               |
| <i>A ilha dos escravos</i>         | 2007      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | nineteenth century |
| <i>Equador</i>                     | 2008      | TVI     | Miniseries      | 1908               |
| <i>A vida privada de Salazar</i>   | 2008      | SIC     | Miniseries/film | 1920s–1950s        |
| <i>O segredo de Miguel Zuzarte</i> | 2010      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | 1910               |
| <i>República</i>                   | 2010      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | 1910               |
| <i>Noite sangrenta</i>             | 2010      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | 1910               |
| <i>A noite do fim do mundo</i>     | 2010      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | 1910               |
| <i>Mistérios de Lisboa</i>         | 2011      | RTP1    | Miniseries      | nineteenth century |
| <i>Anjo meu</i>                    | 2011      | TVI     | Telenovela      | 1980s              |
| <i>Barcelona cidade neutral</i>    | 2011–2012 | RTP1    | Miniseries      | 1914–1918          |
| <i>As linhas de Torres</i>         | 2012      | RTP1    | Film/miniseries | 1810               |
| <i>Depois do adeus</i>             | 2013      | RTP1    | Serial          | 1970s/1980s        |

Source: *Televisão e Memória: a ficção histórica em Portugal e Espanha (2000–2012)*.

Table 2: Historical fiction broadcast by Portuguese free-to-air channels (1999–2012).

Following qualitative and quantitative analysis, the output can be split into two phases: 1999–2001, with the production of 11 titles, and 2002–2012, with the production of 25 titles. The disproportionality between production volume and production years stems from the positioning of the television landscape before and after the new millennium.

The eleven titles broadcast in the first period were produced by RTP and SIC. In what may be perceived as a kind of cultural proximity exercise (Rueda 2011), RTP broadcast the majority of the titles (eight), presenting to the Portuguese audience different approaches to past national historical events either through the lives of personalities (*Almeida Garrett*, *Alves dos Reis*) or through the country's important social and political moments (*Fuga*, *Capitães de Abril*, *A Raia dos medos*, *A Febre do ouro negro*, *Conde d'Abranhos*, *O processo dos Távoras*).

SIC, a private channel that then led audience rankings, adopted a more dynamic programming model based on entertainment formats and Brazilian telenovelas. This popular culture approach found space for only three productions that may be considered historical. While two of them dealt with the dictatorship and its aftermath (*Monsanto*, *A noiva*), the other followed a more commercial trend, depicting the life of a 1990s' conman known as Capitão Roby.

In 2000–2001, the Portuguese television landscape underwent a change: the private channel TVI moved up from last place to first. The focus on the reality show *Big Brother* and the renewal of national fiction won over the Portuguese public and, for the first time in 23 years, a Portuguese telenovela achieved larger audiences than any Brazilian counterpart. This reversal led to the establishment of a newly competitive market and consequently to the spread of historical fiction over the years, with an average of around three titles per year.

Of the 25 titles identified in the second period (2002–2012), commercial channels broadcast 6 and RTP1 broadcast 19. SIC maintained the thematic trend of the first period, with two titles on the *Estado Novo* dictatorship: *A vida privada de Salazar* and *Até amanhã, camaradas*. In addition, in accordance with its commercial orientation, *A vida privada de Salazar* inaugurated the monetization of content via a productive partnership resulting in the simultaneous release of the miniseries and the film.

The remaining four titles were broadcast by TVI. The historical moments presented are different and each title has its own individuality. *Jóia de África* (2002), which started as a series and was reinvented as a telenovela (52 chapters), was set in the colonial ambience of 1950s Mozambique. A (failed) romantic encounter, a well-known cast's search for identity, beautiful African landscapes, contemporary verbal expressions and incorporated archival footage contributed to its acceptance by both critics and the public. In 2004, TVI broadcast a Brazilian-produced adaptation of *Os Maias*, one of Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós's most famous works; in 2008, it broadcast *Equador*, an adaptation of the same-titled work of writer and journalist Miguel Sousa Tavares.

Produced with partial state funding, this series, broadcast every Sunday in prime time (21: 30), is still recognized as the most expensive fictional production in Portugal. Throughout 30 episodes, the public followed the story of Luis Bernardo Valença from his beginning as a young entrepreneur to his position as governor of São Tomé and Príncipe. The adaptation from the written language of the novel to visual language, the rigorous reconstruction of the early twentieth-century Portuguese monarchic era and the fantastic

production and direction turned an episode of national historical life into a televised framework with high aesthetic and technical standards. This not only marked a change in the habits of television consumption and Portuguese media memory but also aroused interest in academic and intellectual circles (Ferín, Burnay and Castilho 2010).

Finally, TVI presented the telenovela *Anjo meu* in 2011 and 2012. Contrary to the production canons of historical narratives, such as the use of weak serialization formats like telefilms and miniseries, this telenovela depicted rural life in the wake of the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 and continued into the Portugal of the 1980s. Although the plot is fictional, the time and historical framework are real, contributing to the awakening of a nostalgic remembrance across a larger number of generations.

The public service channel was responsible for most titles (nineteen) and reveals three productive trends: recourse to biographies (biopics), reliance on celebrations and the development of alternative production models (co-productions and adaptations/localizations). Francisco Moita Flores wrote the biographies (biopics) identified in the first trend. The conversion of the daily lives of Portuguese personalities into audiovisual language was achieved by mixing real facts and fiction, by including actual names in the titles – *A Ferreirinha, João Semana, Pedro e Inês, Bocaçê* – and by recreating historical and local environments. The second trend involved adopting the causes of national commemorations such as the fall of the monarchy (*O dia do regicídio* 2008) and the establishment of the republic (*O segredo de Miguel Zuzarte, República, Noite sangrenta, A noite do fim do mundo* 2010). The highlight of the third trend – alternative production models – relates to the establishment of relations with other stations and national companies beyond Portuguese geographical boundaries. The implementation of co-productions, especially with Portuguese-speaking countries (*Regresso a Sicalinda, Paixões proibidas, A ilha dos escravos*), enabled the development of stories, themes, authors and locations that were symbolically significant to all the countries involved. The human and financial investments and the subsequent broadcast locations vary from title to title.

Although the acquisition of formats and their adaptation have been discontinued in favour of domestic production, RTP1 broadcast five seasons of *Conta-me como foi* between 2007 and 2011. This Spanish format stands out from other historical television productions not only because of the controversy it generated but also because of the positive impact it generated among both audience and critics.

The social focus of the transposition of the Alcántara family history (Spain) into the Lopes family history (Portugal) was too tempting for the Portuguese public station. Previously, the station had shown caution about producing fiction involving the country's recent history. However, the decentralized approach to politics and major events did not result in the dramatization of these events, but instead in a change of perspective, removing the main figures from the foreground and focusing on anonymous citizens, the middle class and their lifestyles. This led to the construction of a showcase for the most remarkable events in recent national history, reaching both the generation that experienced the events and their children.

As previously mentioned, the fictional programmes – especially telenovelas broadcast in prime time – returned very high ratings (surpassed only by football matches).<sup>4</sup> In contrast, fictional historical content was frequently not as successful in terms of ratings (Table 3).

| Year | Title                    | Channel | Position | Rating (%) |
|------|--------------------------|---------|----------|------------|
| 2007 | <i>Conta-me como foi</i> | RTP1    | 7th      | 7          |
|      | <i>Paixões proibidas</i> | RTP1    | 8th      | 6          |
| 2008 | –                        | –       | –        | –          |
| 2009 | <i>Equador</i>           | TVI     | 3rd      | 14.4       |
| 2010 | <i>República</i>         | RTP1    | 10th     | 8.4        |
| 2011 | <i>Anjo meu</i>          | TVI     | 3rd      | 10.8       |
|      | <i>Conta-me como foi</i> | RTP1    | 9th      | 6.9        |

Source: Lopes and Gómez (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012).

Table 3: Historical fiction titles ranking among the top ten.

This fact may be related to the close relationships viewers have with the format and urban themes of telenovelas. In addition, this may be the result of little to no serialization or the prime-time to late-night broadcast schedule, which may cater to a smaller audience.

The public service channel was responsible for 77 per cent of the total volume of historical content, which probably derives from the core principles of public service. Meanwhile, private channels have other motivations: adoption of the telenovela format (*Jóia de África*, *Anjo meu*, TVI), which was designed to capture a long-term and faithful audience, investment in large-scale productions with different outdoor locations and numerous extras (*Equador*, TVI) and the exploitation of national personalities' private lives (*A vida privada de Salazar*, SIC).

### **Dramatic genres and their orientation by channel**

The dominant genre of historical fiction was drama, and the narratives were presented in more formats than single miniseries. This format, however, was commonly selected both for presenting content deemed 'more serious' and in order not to be a slave to audience ratings. The narratives' content spoke to an audience that had more leisure options and was more discriminating about what it watched on television. In many cases, programmes were broadcast on public holidays commemorating pivotal historical events, and their stories were either developed from scratch or adapted from emblematic national works. Their serialization (between two and six episodes) was shorter than the series/serial and the telenovela, and they contributed to the disruption of the television routine and the recovery of the 'ritual aspect of going to the movies or the theatre' (Balogh 2002: 125). Out of 36 productions, 17 were serials, 12 were miniseries, 4 were telefilms and 3 were telenovelas. Four productions were marketed in different formats on both the big screen and the small screen to enhance their visibility (*Capitães de Abril*, *Nome código Sintra*, *A vida privada de Salazar*, *As linhas de Wellington*).

### **The historical time portrayed**

Four predominant time periods can be identified: the nineteenth century, with the adaptation of canonical works by Portuguese authors such as Eça de Queirós, Camilo Castelo Branco and Júlio Dinis; the First Republic (1910–1926),

4. On a daily analytical basis, telenovelas take the top places in rankings (13–16 per cent). On broader analysis, football matches come in first (22–35 per cent), <http://www.marktest.com/wap/a/n/id~1ada.aspx> (accessed 13 December 2013).

5. *E depois do adeus* is the name of the song that won the National Song Contest in 1974 and that would serve as a password to launch the 25 April 1974 coup d'état.

including the effects of 45 different governments holding office; the 'Golden Age' of the *Estado Novo* (1939–1960); and the Portuguese Colonial War (1961–1974), including the end of the dictatorship and its physical and psychological consequences.

The literary works of realist and naturalist authors are a recurrent theme in audiovisual performances from the beginning of the twentieth century. They first appeared in silent movies, then in talkies after 1931 and in television after 1957. Cinema's recourse to plots and stories set in the nineteenth century represented a way to connect with the audiences of the early decades of the twentieth century and to use Portuguese authors as tools of the regime (*Estado Novo*), disseminating its principles and creating/managing specific concepts of national identity among the population. This trend continued to increase until 1974, as these consensual stories by prominent authors did not prove to be a focus of controversy. After 1974, following the stabilization of the democratic regime, the opportunity to address some of the most difficult themes and events of the dictatorship emerged. They were tackled first by taking a social approach, then through a more political approach, contributing to the proliferation of different fictional content formats with a historical basis.

These approaches to the *Estado Novo* period are in tune with the themes that have since been subject to wider analysis by academic researchers in contemporary history. They are also in keeping with a recent literary trend of historical novels and romantic views of Salazar, which display a nostalgic idea of the past and, more importantly, enhance the importance of a critical and collective perspective on the past for understanding the present from a democratic point of view.

### **Representing the nation**

Consequently, most themes used are national in essence and deal with the most problematic periods in recent Portuguese history: the conflict between monarchy and republic, the Colonial War (causes, duration and consequences) and the opposition to the dictatorship. While some productions handled their content apolitically by applying a more social approach, some political overtones can be observed that reveal a tendency to create and manage a collective memory focused neither on earlier times nor on other media (Torres and Burnay 2013).

In this sense, the aforementioned success of *Conta-me como foi* generated sufficient confidence within the public service channel to have Portuguese screenwriters design a new title that begins at the moment of the coup d'état and covers the subsequent process of decolonization. In the immediate aftermath of the Carnation Revolution, about 600,000 Portuguese people, hitherto residing in Portuguese African colonies, were forced to return to Portugal. Having left their existing livelihoods behind, the returnees found a country that was only just emerging from dictatorship and was unable and unwilling to accommodate them. This project, called *Depois do adeus*,<sup>5</sup> was more political in that it described the social polarization between those who advocated a democratic state with free elections and those who wished for a totalitarian communist state to take power (Burnay and Lopes 2013).

The development of historical fiction on Portuguese television remains a relatively untrodden path. TVI continues to produce prime-time telenovelas anchored in contemporary times; SIC, in an attempt to keep up with its competitor, has focused on developing the same format through a partnership

with TV Globo; RTP, whose advertising revenue has declined over the past two years, has suspended ongoing projects and is being privatized and restructured as a consequence of the Portuguese economic recession. In addition, the youngest audience members are migrating to pay channels and other distribution platforms in search of internationally successful fiction. These channels are consequently losing their audiences, forcing the broadcasters to choose whichever fiction formats and genres hold the greatest opportunity to achieve high ratings.

## CONCLUSION

Of the around 100 titles broadcast between 1999 and 2012 in the two countries, Spain produced about 60 per cent of the output, with Portugal accounting for the remaining 40 per cent. The breakdown by channel emphasizes the greater role of public service in both countries, although Spain reports a more balanced supply between public and private channels (30:22/12) than Portugal (27:5/4). Furthermore, the formats in both countries are diversified; they feature telenovelas, serials, series, miniseries and TV movies, with drama as the main genre.

The themes are mostly national, revealing an interest in significant historical moments. In Spain, they include the Civil War, the post-war period, Late Francoism and the Transition; in Portugal, they include the Regicide, Salazarism, the Colonial War and the Carnation Revolution. The twentieth century was the focus of most Spanish historical fiction production. From the whole corpus there are 21 titles in which at least a part of the plot takes place in the 1980s and 1990s and 11 productions whose plot takes place in the new millennium (between 2000 and 2010). In Portugal, only two titles addressed this very recent past (and these focused mainly on social issues).

The audiences in this segment are more enthusiastic in Spain than in Portugal, which is reflected in Spain's larger number of programmes set in the past. In fact, the strategies concerning the production of historical fiction differ between the two countries. In Portugal, they tend to commemorate established national events or personalities. In Spain, television has come to address national moments (such as the Transition) that had never before been fictionally represented. Their success led to the implementation of an acknowledged narrative model with significations for memory. This success is corroborated not only by the longevity of some titles (e.g. *Amar* and *Cuéntame* on TVE, the latter in its thirteenth season) but also by the deployment of spin-offs, biopics and instant movies.

Insistence on recent history is a feature common to both Portuguese and Spanish television fiction. This proximity between fiction and history takes shape through various narrative strategies: alluding to chronologically and subjectively recent time, setting plots within the frameworks of national spaces, triggering emotions or simplifying discourses. These factors underpin the assessment of historical fiction as generalist memory practice.

For example, in the case of historical environments more distant in time – Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern period – fictional productions combine topical narrative schemes and anachronisms. From the characters' language to their attitudes, lifestyles and moral codes, these productions have portrayed situations in such a way that they are completely understandable in the present day.

The time period most often evoked in Portuguese and Spanish fiction has been the twentieth century. This is a period recognizable to the general

6. Noteworthy among those documentaries are *Les fosses del silenci* (Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis for TV3 2003) and *Las fosas del olvido* (Alfonso Domingo and Itziar Bernaola for TVE 2004).

audience. Other programmes such as documentaries and live debates also usually refer to events or personalities from the twentieth century. This clearly represents a connection with the most popular and controversial discussion topics in the public sphere (Salazarism and decolonization in Portugal, the Civil War, Franco and the Transition in Spain). The temporal proximity to the twentieth century ensures that many of the events depicted on television interconnect with viewers' individual memories. Above all, the representation of these years provides subjective acknowledgement and sentimental evocation of nostalgic and traumatic issues.

These factors favour connections between past and present, reinforcing the contiguity between yesterday and today. For example, the commemoration of the Republic on Portuguese television sought to update a community reference through an appeal to the past, thereby rendering it a closer issue. In Spain, however, there has been a clear contrast in the treatment of the two major public memory issues: the Civil War and the Transition.

The Civil War was repeatedly addressed by historical fiction throughout the 1980s. The aim was clear: to propose a new discourse on the conflict as an alternative to that imposed by Franco. However, the Civil War practically disappeared as a time frame in the twenty-first century, although it is still treated in other formats, such as documentaries. TVE and Antena 3 have broadcast numerous investigative reports based on the testimony of victims of Franco's repression. Such reports denounce the violence inflicted, thus shaping television's contribution to 'historical memory'.<sup>6</sup> Some fictional works have incorporated this same view with respect to post-war times (*Amar*). More numerous productions have been set during the Transition (*Tarancón*, *Adolfo Suárez*, *23-F*, *Cuéntame*). Their scripts have insisted on nationally inclusive themes such as consensus and reconciliation.

This has produced a split in the functions of documentary and television fiction corresponding to the two memory systems that have coexisted in Spain in recent years: the criticism of Francoism and the legitimization of the Transition as the 'founding moment' of contemporary Spain. Both approaches existed in Spanish television during the first decade of the twenty-first century without apparent conflict.

What reactions has historical fiction generated in contemporary Spain and Portugal? Answering this question requires far greater scope than that available here, but we can make a few assumptions. In Spain, certain productions (such as *Cuéntame*) have been presented in documentary form, dedicated to commemorating the December 1978 constitution. This reinforces the legitimization of the discourse of memory through a confluence of formats (fiction and documentary). Other programmes have been criticized for displaying hypothetical ideological biases. Ramón Moreno, the parliamentary spokesman of the Partido Popular, reported in his blog that *14 de abril. La República* was socialist pamphleteering, an example of 'cliché ideológico, caspa revisionista (y) formol monotemático' (Moreno 2011). Furthermore, the main criticisms of fiction's ideological bias have come from researchers. For example, the first seasons of *Cuéntame* have been alleged to be complacent about the Franco dictatorship (Sánchez-Biosca 2006: 65–84) and *La chica de ayer* allegedly developed a selective 'forgetfulness' about certain darker aspects of the Transition such as the state's own recourse to violence (Cascajosa 2012).

In Portugal, the vast majority of historical productions achieved limited audiences, perhaps because most of them were either telefilms or in short-duration format, which, coupled with the historical content, simply do not



appeal to less educated and economically deprived sectors of the population. Such sectors comprise the main consumers of Portuguese television and telenovelas. We should nevertheless mention the social network dynamic of such productions as *Conta-me como foi* and *Depois do adeus* (RTP). Both titles have Facebook pages – active before, during and after the broadcasting period – and the comments are generally proactive and positive in tone, enhancing the didactic role of the series in some Portuguese households.

As regards the impact on the public sphere in Portugal, the series that generated the most controversy were *Ballet Rose – vidas proibidas* (RTP 1997), which was not subject to analysis, and *A vida privada de Salazar* (SIC 2008). The former was based on a 1967 scandal, immediately silenced by the regime, in which some of the most prominent political, business and religious figures of the time participated in sex parties involving underage girls. *A Vida Privada de Salazar* portrays the dictator's alleged relationships with the women in his life. During his 35 years as head of state, the myth that Salazar was married to the nation and had no personal life was fostered. This series presented the image of an eroticized bachelor dictator. Despite the interest the two series aroused, the audience figures achieved were below expectations, as were the controversies the series generated; they swiftly disappeared from public, private and media agendas (Burnay and Lopes 2013).

The recent financial crisis experienced by Spain and Portugal contributed to a market contraction that has slowed down advertising spending and consequently television fiction production. In addition, changes in the political cycles of both countries (with new, more conservative governments) have affected the agendas and strategies of public memory. The dire future of the public service channels in Portugal, the lack of work for screenwriters, the possible disappearance of channels in both countries and the increased appeal of different viewing platforms for younger generations leave the future of historical fiction on generalist television channels on the Iberian Peninsula open to interpretation.

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