



Cabecinhas, R. & Abadia, L. (eds.) (2013)  
*Narratives and social memory: theoretical and methodological approaches*  
Braga: University of Minho  
ISBN: 978-989-8600-04-2  
pp. 190 -201

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## The Subject-Matter of Audiovisual Historical Fiction in Portugal (1909-2010)

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### Abstract

Every era reconstructs social memory, the media becoming one of the main instances of selection, production and presentation of the past to each new generation. In this research, we intend to compare the production of audiovisual fictional memory in Portugal since 1909, looking for continuities and contrasts in the fictional subjects in the dominant audiovisual mass media in each period: cinema, in the period 1909-1957, theatre for television in RTP (*Rádio e Televisão de Portugal / Radio and Television of Portugal*) in the period 1958-1970 and TV drama in national generalist TV channels from 1990 to 2010. The survey through synopsis of cinema, TV theatre and TV drama productions (series, miniseries, serials, telenovelas and films for television) will allow for an understanding of what the media elite in each period considered as the past that was worthwhile to (re)create, remember and (re)integrate in the present and the novelists and playwrights that were worthy of adaptation to the screen. Based on a diachronic basis, the survey suggests a combined analysis of the hegemonic proposal of “preferred past” in each period with the respective political situation (1909-1931: silent cinema in an underdeveloped country, looking for mass success with the new media; 1930-1945: triumphant Estado Novo dictatorship and integrated cultural policy, through the SNI (*Secretariado Nacional de Informação / National Secretary of Information*); 1958-1970: post-War Salazar regime in a slow decadence; 1990-2010: consolidated democratic regime). Besides establishing the results of the empirical analysis, this research wishes to verify the validity of the applied methodology, simple and of rapid completion, for the development of the study of audiovisual social memory.

### Keywords

historical fiction; media memory; television; Portugal

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## INTRODUCTION

The present research is anchored in the project in progress “Memory and Television: Historical Narratives in Portugal and Spain (2000-2012)”, by a joint team of the Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Cultura, of Faculdade de Ciências Humanas of Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, the Universidad Complutense, Madrid, and the Universidad Carlos III, Madrid.<sup>1</sup> Through the comparison between Portuguese and Spanish television

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contents with a historical background, this larger research project endeavours to understand, among other issues, how national networks and scripts articulate with each country historical, cultural political and social sensibilities. For the present paper, we decided to look for the subject-matter of audiovisual historical fiction in a chronological, diachronic way, in order to establish the continuities and changes in the subject-matter of the dominant audiovisual mass media in each period. We selected silent and sound cinema, from the first Portuguese fictional film in 1909 to 1957, passing to teleplays in the new media from 1958 to 1974, and to present-day TV fiction, from 1990 to 2010. We divided cinema in two periods, silent and sound cinema, for practical reasons and because the division coincides with the end of the liberal, parliamentary regime of 1910-1926, and the beginning of the Estado Novo in 1933, after the dictatorship of 1926-33. The Estado Novo, or New State, was a nationalist regime, inspired by the rightist European regimes, including a cultural policy controlling the industry and censorship. By 1957, the cultural hegemony of the Estado Novo apparatus was slowly decaying and opposition intellectuals began diversifying the subject-matter of audiovisual fiction, trying to bypass censorship. For practical reasons, and because our main interest is television, we focused on teleplays since the founding of the national TV broadcaster RTP, whose regular emissions began in 1957<sup>2</sup>. The choice of teleplays results from the importance of the genre and because we did not find accessible sources listing television drama in this period. The Coup d'état of 1974 overthrew the dictatorship and brought profound changes in cultural institutions and personnel. We sense that audiovisual fiction of the revolutionary period was more interested in the present than in the past, but we left it to a future research, concentrating instead in the television drama fiction of the period 1990-2010, after the consolidation of democracy, the entry in European Economic Community in 1986 and the beginning of private television in 1992. Television was then the main mass media in the country, reaching virtually all the population in mainland Portugal and the Islands of Azores and Madeira. Portuguese cinema, by contrast, had abandoned or been forced to abandon the possibility to reach the "masses" and its output was residual when compared with television production. Thus, television was the only audiovisual media capable of presenting fiction history to a large audience.

In this paper, we consider audiovisual historical fiction as any feature film, teleplay or TV fictional content whose time setting is in the past in relation to the production and presentation time, thus experienced as having a past or historical background by the public. We find useful the differentiation between "costume drama" and "historical drama", the first ignoring the historical discourse and using "the exotic locale of the past as no more than a setting for romance and adventure", while the second "engages that discourse by posing and attempting to answer the kind of questions that for a long time have surrounded a given topic" (Rosenstone, 2006, p.45). This differentiation will be noted whenever the used sources allow it.

<sup>2</sup> Our main source was the survey *Memórias dos Arquivos RTP: 298 Peças de Teatro*, a dactyloscopy prepared by the Direcção de Novos Projectos e Arquivos, RTP, Sacavém, 2002. The list includes the teleplays that exist in video support. It does not include teleplays presented live of which no copy exist. In its first years, theatre was a main genre in RTP. The channel presented a play almost every week. For instance, in 1958, RTP aired 50 plays (Teves, 1998: 97). We consider the list as a representative, unique sample of the tele-theatre produced by RTP in the period studied here. This project may include in the future the exploration of other sources. We wish to thank the support of the Direcção de Aquisições e Controle de Grelha of RTP in the verification of the subject-matter of several teleplays.

The objectives of the research are fourfold: To establish the subject-matter of historical fiction; To establish the recourse to literary adaptation and original scripts; To establish the periods set in historical fiction, the historical background and main themes; To establish continuities and changes in the subject-matter.

### **BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Fiction was always a privileged segment on Portuguese television programming. Created in 1956 and with regular broadcasts from March 7, 1957, the public station, RTP, accustomed the Portuguese to regular meetings with dramatized stories. In the 1990s, when the private sector was allowed to invest in the television market (constitutional revision of 1989), two new players appeared – SIC (*Sociedade Independente de Comunicação* / Independent Society of Communication) and TVI (*Televisão Independente* / Independent Television) – and the competition for audiences became an imperative, even for the public generalist channel. Thus, besides the offer of new informational and entertainment programs, the fictional titles were increased, and new formats, genres, casts and plots appeared. If international blockbusters were well accepted, national productions gradually became a success, leading to disputes between channels around this segment.

Usually anchored in common references, fiction titles have the power to work as an active agent of memory, as a key to interpretation of a symbolically common past, contributing to an exaltation of identity. In this sense, television has allowed deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural identities, functioning as a source for the construction of *identity projects* (Barker, 2005). In this line of thought, Maria Immacolata Lopes (2009) believes that fictional programs play a major role in the organisation of the TV market, because the way they are constructed allows the presentation, production and reproduction of the image of a people, who feels identified with the product's content. In this manner, television fiction presents itself as a *popular narrative about the nation* which ends up suffering a process of *indigenisation* (Appadurai, 2004).

The fictional narratives, despite history and memory, were often seen by many intellectual groups as a poor television product. However, its cultural validity has been justified, since they enable cultural and interpreting competences by the viewers; present themes for discussion among peer groups; promote awareness and social integration and provide a repertoire of meanings necessary for the identification / building of the “I” and of the “us” (Lopes, 2009, Burnay, 2010).

In a context of globalisation and mobility, the idea of nation is associated with a symbolic dimension, more than with a spatial one, and television (and fiction), plays a crucial role in its expression through the *thematization*, i.e., the act of showing/documenting and narrating/commenting on the political, economic and socio-cultural facts; through *ritualisation*, the ability to align the nation's social time, to create a collective time; through *belonging*, the ability to create memories and expectations; and, finally, through *participation*.

The term “memory” has acquired in recent years an increasingly important status in the study of Humanities and Social Sciences. The complexity of the relationship between

history and memory, and especially the need to study the politics of memory from a historical point of view has been the subject of several authors (e.g. Olick & Robbins, 1998; Pérez Garzón, 2000). Nevertheless, there is a lack, particularly in Portugal, of a line of work on the role of media as “agents”, “producers” and “reproducers” of memory.

The development of reception studies from the perspective of Cultural Studies (among others: Alasuutari, 1999; Hall, 1973; Morley, 1986) contributed to the consolidation of a line of work interested in the relationship between the reception, readers, media texts and the construction of meanings. From a territorial and socio-cultural context, these works allow an understanding of the differences in how individuals perceive and decode the representations of the national and of the regional, particularly on television, a medium with large penetration in the private and family life. If it is possible, through these analyses, to understand how the individuals relate to television fiction programs, an approach to the titles from the production point of view is important to understand how television enhances the symbolic construction of “national family” (Morley, 1992). The emergence of TV series labelled as of “quality” since the 1980s in the United States and Great Britain, with a global distribution and warm reception, has also contributed to a new approach to television fiction by television, cultural and genre studies.

Stemming from this idea, we chose television as a paradigm and the historical fictional narratives as case studies. The motivations for this choice are based on the fact that the fictional contents play a functional role on scheduling (Hobson, 2003), and on the observation of an increase of historical fiction contents in recent years. Of complex definition, we can speak of “historical content” in a double meaning: a) narratives developed in past years; b) narratives that present discourse and historical figures with direct influence on the development of the plots.

Having this theoretical background, we chose to observe, in the present work, the historical themes that gave life to audiovisual titles produced between 1958 and the present (2010).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Since we are breaking ground in this research area, we decided to use simple sources and methodology to arrive at a first overview of the subject-matter of audiovisual historical fiction. We used one of the most reliable surveys of feature cinema (Matos-Cruz, 1999) and the above mentioned volume of *Memórias dos Arquivos RTP* for cinema and teleplays covering the years 1908-1974. For the television fiction from 1990 to 2010, we used information provided by RTP, SIC, TVI, interviews and databasis as IMDb (Internet Movies Database), and also direct knowledge.

The research did not involve viewing of films, teleplays and most TV drama. With the available synopsis and search in reference books and sites, we did a survey with the following variables: date, title, script (adapted/original), period set and main themes. In television drama, we also considered the TV network responsible for the programmes (production, co-production and presentation).

### *SILENT CINEMA (1909- 1931)*

Cinema began in Portugal as early as 1896, but only in 1909 was the first fictional film produced. Industry was small and with a small output: only 108 fictional productions from 1909 to 1931, independently of footage, or an average of 4.7 films per year. Quality as perceived by critics and public was rarely attained. Only a handful of silent films were acclaimed at the time and mentioned for their qualities by critics (Nobre: s.d; Pina: 1978). The same can be said of the Portuguese sound cinema during the period covered in this research. In 1959, an author could title chapters of his book about cinema and public in Portugal with bitter eloquence: “Absolute zero”, “Zero in characters”, “Zero in landscape”, “Zero in popularity”, “Zero in taste”, “Zero in documentary” and “Zero in economics” (Gama, 1959).

The silent fictional cinema era corresponded roughly to the First Republic of 1910-1926. Contrary to the press, cinema, especially fictional, was not a political tool of propaganda. The State did not commit itself to fund or influence cinema; production was the result of private initiative, individual or business, normally incipient. Some films were connected to theatre, either as interludes during performances, as adaptations of successful plays or as vehicles for popular actors. Eighteen films of historical background represent 17% of the total fictional silent cinema. Of those, 15, or 88%, are adaptations of literary works, novels, short stories or plays.

The adaptations concentrate around very popular works: Júlio Dinis, Camilo Castelo Branco and Manuel Pinheiro Chagas had two works each adapted; Eça de Queirós, Júlio Dantas, Manuel Maria Rodrigues, Eduardo de Noronha, João Reis Gomes, Gervásio Lobato, and the *Romanceiro* [collection of romances] had one each.

The large majority of historically based fiction is situated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (10) and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (3). One film can be situated in either the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Middle Ages originated three films and the 16<sup>th</sup> century originated the only film mentioning the Portuguese outside the territory, in this case representing a battle against the Moors in Morocco. It was a cinema segment intended as a background to a play, thus providing the battle action difficult to stage.

Portuguese silent cinema showed no vocation to represent political life, except when it implied action, as in the two adaptations of the life and deeds of José do Telhado, a Portuguese Robin Hood involved in politics and civil war in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One comedy had an anticlerical tone, echoing the Republic times. Most historical fiction represented urban or rural social life. Of the eighteen films of the sample, 11 can be characterised as costume drama and the other seven as historical drama. The main themes, ambience or script background were rural life (7 films), urban life (3), crime, aristocratic life and Middle Ages biography (2 each), war against the Moors and Magical Middle Ages (1 each).

### *SOUND CINEMA (1931-1957)*

Between 1931 and 1957, only 102 fiction sound films were produced in Portugal or directed by Portuguese directors, an average of 3,8 per year. Of those, 24 had a historical background (24%). There was a small increase from silent cinema in the use of past or

historical material, due to a more nationalistic approach from the State, now involved in production.

Half of those 24 films were adapted from Portuguese novels and the other half had original scripts. Four novels had already been adapted to silent films: *As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor*, *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca*, *Amor de Perdição*, and *Rosa do Adro*. The adaptations were mostly from realist, naturalist or popular authors. Júlio Dinis' novels were the most adapted, in three films. Camilo Castelo Branco, Eça de Queirós, Almeida Garrett, Júlio Dantas, Afonso Lopes Vieira, André Brun, Manuel Maria Rodrigues, E. Rodrigues *et al.* and Manuel Pinheiro Chagas each had one work adapted to the screen.

The adaptations show the affirmation of a cinema canon, coming from the silent cinema and continuing later. As to the periods set in sound cinema historical fiction, the 19<sup>th</sup> century proved again to be the most popular, with 12 adaptations. This is probably due to the fact that audiences identified themselves easily with the (adapted) work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century authors. The other periods set in sound cinema historical fiction produced between 1931 and 1957 were the 20<sup>th</sup> century (5 films), the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (3), the 16<sup>th</sup> century (2) and the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (2). The main themes, ambience or script background were social life (18 films, of which 8 in rural ambience), biography (3), Estado Novo and Empire (2) and Medieval romance and politics (1).

Social life was treated as apolitical. Only the films about the Estado Novo and the Empire are directly political, since no other point of view would be accepted. The most political film, *A Revolução de Maio* (1937), deals with the overthrow of the liberal-democratic regime in 1926. The collective script was signed by António Ferro, the head of the cultural and propaganda Estado Novo department (SNI), and the also director António Lopes Ribeiro, who signed the most propagandistic films of the Estado Novo regime.

Four themes in this period were already treated by silent cinema: *Zé do Telhado* (twice), *Rainha Santa* and *Fátima*. In this case, the apparitions were treated historically, while in the silent film *Fátima Milagrosa* (1928) the theme was treated as the present of the production. There was also an increased interest in using cinema as a tool to reinforce national identity through the use of historical events: 15 films can be characterised as historical drama and only nine as costume drama. As in silent cinema, costume drama uses mostly canonic novels, thus transferring to the new media the national aura of the authors and fiction adapted.

#### TELEPLAYS (1958-1974)

Since 1957 teleplays became a television programmatic area with a huge success. An adaptation by poet and author Afonso Lopes Vieira of *O Monólogo do Vaqueiro*, also known as *Auto da Visitação*, and the first known work of the sixteenth century Portuguese playwright Gil Vicente, was the first play to be produced for television, aired by RTP on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 1957, five days after the beginning of regular emission (Teves, 1998, p.70). Although it was not a consensual choice, in one point there was a convergence opinion: it had to be a Portuguese author to be adapted. Until the 1980s, and despite the existence of other drama formats such as films and *feuilletons*, teleplay was the main one, with the adaptation of

national and international authors, and offered to the public in one or two emissions a week. From 1977, the importance of teleplays has been reduced, due to the *telenovela* (*Gabriela*, TV Globo). Born in Cuba and heir of Arab tales of Scheherazade, of the medieval tales, of the bourgeois novels, of the nineteenth century feuilletons, of the photo and radio novels, it had its guaranteed success in Brazil from the 60'. Portugal was the first country to import the Brazilian format and RTP, celebrating 20 years of existence, made a public presentation of *Gabriela* at the Ritz Hotel and announced its broadcasting in prime time, five times a week. During the 1974-5 revolution and the subsequent period of democratic normalisation, the Portuguese joined in mass and, rapidly, took on new behaviours and adopted new routines (Ferin, 2003). Five years after, the Portuguese *telenovela* appeared – *Vila Faia* – and set up a continuous supply of domestic and Brazilian productions.

Facing the establishment of this pattern of television drama production and consumption, teleplays began to lose their importance on the screen, a tendency verified in other European countries. Nevertheless, their existence on the first 20 years of television in Portugal is, today, a milestone in the national media memory.

From the existing 103 plays in the RTP archives produced between 1958 and 1974, 38 were from Portuguese playwrights (37%), of which 17 (45%) had a historical background. The historical periods of the teleplays show a strong presence of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reality (with eight titles), due to the representation/adaptation of Gil Vicente 16<sup>th</sup> century plays (4) and Almeida Garrett's plays taking place at the 16<sup>th</sup> century (3).

There were also adaptations of other Portuguese authors – representatives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – such as Eça de Queirós (3) and Júlio Dinis (1), whose works continued to be read and studied in high school, as part of the national educational plans.

In this line, it is interesting to mention that the selection criteria were the canonic qualities of the authors and not the historical background that the plays eventually had. During the analysed period, Portugal was living under a dictatorship (Estado Novo), and television, due to its impact on the population, was used to disseminate the regime principles and, linked to that, an idea of national identity. "Drama" and "comedy" were the main genres, helping to give shape to the stories based on family and social tensions of the time set.

#### *TV DRAMA PRODUCTIONS (1990-2010)*

Television fiction has been an anchor content for programmers. Its potentiality in terms of formats and genres, combining with its capacity to attract large and heterogeneous audiences, has been central for the performance of networks worldwide. Portugal is not an exception and, despite the existence of only four free to air channels, there are fierce battles for share between the three generalists (RTP1, SIC and TVI), mainly on prime time and through the production of telenovelas and serials. Casts and locations are articulated with "good stories", narratives that must have the ability to penetrate in the individuals' daily life and presenting themselves, at the same time, as the expression of *a general structure* [of self but also] *of collective sentiments* (Buonanno, 2004, p. 154). In this sense, we find in Portugal an offer of stories set in the present – depicting the contemporary activities

grounded, at the same time, in local and global dimensions – but also set in the past. This “past”, although not lived by all generations, is remembered, told and, depending on the events, has repercussions on present time. In fact, through drama and through the evocation of an *idealised memory* and *traumatic memory*, each fiction title can become an exercise of cultural proximity to the viewers (Rueda, 2011) and television can become a mnemonic device par excellence (Sobral, 2006, p.6).

Bearing in mind these realities, we identified in the analysed time period 50 titles under the designation of costume and historical dramas, of which 84% has been produced and broadcasted by RTP, followed by SIC with 12% and TVI with 4%, emphasising the ideal goals of the public service concerning the ‘promotion of the Portuguese culture and of the values which express the national identity’. Furthermore, by developing Portuguese historically themes, and especially for the prime time slot, RTP is also pursuing other central objectives assigned to public service, such as supporting the national production and the Portuguese language, ensuring creativity and audiovisual experimentalism, combating the standardisation of the television’s offer, and promoting the access to critical knowledge<sup>3</sup>. These missions have been accomplished by the development of selected national past events in different formats, such as series, serials and TV films, and in an outsourcing system, recurring to small and independent production companies. In fact, nowadays, the private channels occupy their prime time with fictional formats produced by big companies – e.g. *telenovela* – which shows present realities and, in the majority of the cases, transnational facts.

From the 50 titles, 16 (32%) were adaptations of Portuguese novels, and the others 34 were original scripts. The authors adapted were Eça de Queirós (4), Camilo Castelo Branco, Júlio Dinis and Álvaro Cunhal (2 each), Vitorino Nemésio, Aquilino Ribeiro, Alexandre Herculano, Ângela Caeiros, Mário de Carvalho e Miguel Sousa Tavares (1 each).

The playwright Almeida Garrett was the subject of a biopic where some of his plays scenes were reenacted. We can note the use of the canonic authors already worked in the other studied media, but also a non-normative path through the adaptation of four novels written by three authors with a political background opposed to Estado Novo. As mentioned before, this was made possible because in the 1990s Portugal was already living a consolidated democracy.

In relation to period settings, there’s a concentration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (28 titles), followed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century (17), mainly due to the Portuguese novel adaptations. Five titles are scattered by defined periods, ranking from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: 16<sup>th</sup> century and Middle Ages (2 each) and the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (1).

From the 28 titles set in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 43% are set in a time range between the beginning of the century until the 20s; 29% are set in the 60/70s; 18% in the 40/50s and the remaining three titles (11%) occur in isolated dates, such as in 1936 (Spanish Civil War). In fact, the first three identified periods coincide with the most significant political, economic and social shifts in Portugal: (1) the duration of the first Republic (1910-1926), marked by an instability proved by the existence of 45 governments; (2) the Portuguese colonial war and the

<sup>3</sup> *Obrigações de serviço público e termos contratuais da prestação de serviço público* [Public Service Obligations and Contractual Terms for the Observance of Public Service]: <http://ww1.rtp.pt/wportal/grupo/governodasociedade/missao.php>



terminus of the dictatorship (1961-1974), which left physical and psychological marks in some generations and (3) the height of the Estado Novo (1939-1960). These findings are better understood by the analysis of the main themes, ambience or script background (Table 1).

Main theme	#
Colonial issues	8
Opposition to Estado Novo	8
Social life	7
Biography	7
Monarchy/Republic	5
World Wars	3
Social-political life	3
Portuguese Civil War, 1832-4	2
French invasions	2
Discoveries	1
Spanish Civil War	1
Portugal foundation	1
Corruption (bank)	1
Fantasy	1

Table 1. Main themes in Portuguese TV drama productions (1990-2010)

Colonial issues, the opposition to the Estado Novo, the squabble between Monarchy/ Republic and the World Wars are the subject-matter of 24 titles, almost half of the total, which corroborates our ideas. If social life was treated as apolitical, these contents explored political themes, indicating a tendency to create or manage a collective memory absent in the previous periods. In fact, television fictional titles produced in the last two decades show the recovery and the re-creation of a First Republic memory, the “dark side” of Estado Novo (repression, etc.) and “the dark side” of the colonial war and its scars, subject-matters that were impossible to be discussed by any kind of media in previous decades.

## CONCLUSIONS

Regarding transpositions from literature to the screen, we note that the most adapted authors are the 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic (Almeida Garrett) and realist authors (Eça de Queirós, Júlio Dinis and Camilo Castelo Branco) that have survived in the literature canon, while others of the same period, considered to have less quality, disappeared from the preferences of cinema and television. Eça de Queirós, the main realist author of the nineteenth century, was adapted since silent cinema, but his daring descriptions of bourgeois society gained a new impetus in later audiovisual fiction, while Júlio Dinis’ tender realism and well-crafted narratives maintained its attraction until the present (Table 2). The growing autonomy of audiovisual production and language shows, nevertheless, that the resort to literary transpositions has lost its strength in historical and costume drama: in silent movies, adaptations represented 85% of all historical fiction, in sound cinema they represented 50% and in television drama only 32%.

We also note the interest in two reality themes since silent movies until the present: Fátima’s devotion and miracles, made into fiction in a silent film and twice in sound films, the last one with a participation of RTP as co-producer; Zé do Telhado, the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Portuguese Robin Hood, was adapted also into a silent film, two sound films and presented as a subplot in a TV series (*João Semana*, RTP, 2004).

Author	Silent cinema	Sound cinema	Teleplays	TV	Total
Eça de Queirós	1	1	3	4	9
Júlio Dinis	2	3	1	2	8
Camilo Castelo Branco	2	1	-	2	5
Almeida Garrett	-	1	3	(1)	4 (5)
Total	5	6	7	8 (9)	26 (27)

Table 2. Main authors adapted by Portugal audiovisual industry

Summarising this research, we can say that bringing the history “that matters” and the collective memories to the screen is done differently through media, formats and genres. The periods set in historical fiction show a major interest in the periods nearer to production, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries accounting to the large majority of audiovisual preferences (Table 3). After the revolution of 1974, TV drama had to “rush” to historical topics of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that were previously either controversial or subject to censorship. Until 1957, cinema concentrated in moralising and “consensual” stories or historical episodes. Only after the normalisation of the democratic regime it was possible to tackle some issues, like colonial war and post-traumatic stress, the First Republic and the Estado Novo dictatorship. Politics, almost absent in cinema and pre-74 television, burst in television historical fiction in the period studied in the survey (1990-2010). Rural ambience almost disappeared from the screens, mirroring the rapid development towards urban life that the country suffered in the last 30 years.

Period set	Silent cinema	Sound cinema	TV drama	Total
Middle Ages	3	3	2	8
15th-16th centuries	1	2	2	5
17th-18th centuries	4	2	1	7
19th century	10	12	17	39
20th century	0	5	28	33

Table 3. Periods set in historical fiction in Portuguese silent and sound cinema and TV drama

Costume drama concentrated in social life and we can detect two main reasons for its productions: the will to capitalise the success and authority of literary works and authors from the past and the will to capitalise the “quality value” of the genre itself among institutions (government, TV networks, co-productions) and audiences alike. Historical drama, based in real events and real characters, was used to “re-create” the past, and to present old or new perspectives adapted to the times, while capitalising an expected popularity of the themes (the crimes of Diogo Alves in silent cinema, Zé do Telhado in sound cinema and TV, Oliveira Salazar and women in TV, etc.). While costume drama tends to create strong characters and is centred in an entertaining plot, historical drama has a more acute “intervention”, because of its stronger connection to past events. Thus, historical drama is more inclined to create a historical “social memory” among viewers.

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