

Home-grown fiction programmes in the late-Franco period and the first transition: Shaping a democratic culture (1970–1976)

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Abstract

This work reviews the role of Spanish-produced fiction in the shaping of a democratic culture in Spain. To this end, it studies in-depth a selection of domestic fiction programmes aired in the years leading up to the death of the dictator General Franco and the outset of the transition to democracy (1970–1976). Spanish television professionals during this period used fictional accounts to initiate themselves in a type of production that had scarcely had a presence in its rudimentary audio-visual market. But they also used fiction to bypass censorship and broadcast messages aimed at promoting a democratic culture. This research analyses the content and formal characteristics of 11 fiction series produced by Televisión Española that, besides being hugely popular, stood out for the ideological richness of their messages. These programmes proved to be important cultural pieces in laying the groundwork for the transition to democracy by acting as channels to instil values of freedom, consumption or gender equality and criticism of the Franco regime. This analysis concludes by showing how in 1976, the fledgling stages of the transition saw the advent of formally democratic programming that, however, had been fuelled, among others, by contents aired in previous years.

Keywords

Content analysis, Francoism, Spain, television fiction, transition to democracy

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Introduction

This article surveys the role of home-grown fiction televised during the last years of the Franco regime and the first years of the transition (1970–1976) in laying the groundwork for Spain's path to democracy. The death of General Franco in November 1975 marked the dawn of the Spanish transition to democracy. By then, Televisión Española (TVE) already had a 19-year history under the Franco regime, as Spain's sole public television station since 1956. At the time of the dictator's death, TVE was still the country's only television station. That its beginnings were forged under a dictatorial system established a series of characteristics that would impact the later evolution of this broadcaster.

TVE was initially markedly centralist and monopolistic. Its broadcasts from the station's Madrid headquarters at Prado Del Rey limited the development of regional television centres, which acted as mere correspondents, suppressing the possibility of regionalist or nationalist discourses. The tight political control of the medium led the broadcaster to be identified with political power, which would dog its two public channels (TVE1 and TVE2) during the ensuing democratic period (Baget, 2001). The ambiguity between television and power structure is also evident in the legal status of the medium, which at that time formed part of the Dirección General de Radio Televisión Española [Directorate General of Radio and Television Broadcasting], within the Ministerio de Información and Turismo [Ministry of Information and Tourism].

TVE was financed from its launch by advertising revenue, hence the decidedly commercial nature of its output, regardless of its public-service remit.

TVE's output was filled with a significant share of North-American productions, whose pace, structure and content the Spanish audience became accustomed to (Montero and Ojer, 2018). This reliance on foreign formats explains why the medium was hardly a driving force in the Spanish audio-visual industry. Nevertheless, the public television staff, not always qualified, expanded way beyond the organisation's production needs, since hiring did not follow planned, efficient and rational approaches; temporary contracts were often fraught with official shortcomings, legally requiring these professionals to join the staff of TVE (Baget, 2001).

Its public-service tenor was reflected in its relatively educational tone, which was very much in line with the technocratic spirit that prevailed from 1962, when Manuel Fraga and Jesús Aparicio-Bernal were named heads of the Ministry of Information and Tourism and the General Directorate of Radio Television of Spain (RTVE). Indeed, these very names embodied a new generation of apparently reformist Francoists, who, since the mid 1960s, had been entrusted with leading the so-called process of *apertura* (opening).

Apertura was a discreet process of modernisation or adaptation undertaken with the aim of supporting specific economic development, giving the old regime's external image a facelift and guaranteeing social stability, without renouncing the fundamental principles of Francoism (Tusell, 1989, 1993). One of the most symbolic measures of the *apertura* was the adoption of the new Press Law, which, although abolishing the model of censorship previously applied, maintained harsh penalties against any violation of the fundamental norms of Francoism. Press restrictions were becoming unacceptable at a time when advertising was growing and transnational advertising agencies were arriving

(Chuliá, 1999). However, under no circumstances was *apertura* intended to mean the regime's shift towards democracy.

Thus, television censorship focused, above all, on monitoring the media's portrayal of the Church and the Catholic religion, the 'morality of scenes', ensuring no depiction of nudity or sexuality, as well as explicit content in dialogues (Pérez Ornia, 1980). In a timelier manner, the highest levels of the government pointed to the need to intervene in certain sensitive matters, such as the revision of Spanish history, especially the build-up to the Civil War, or the appearance in public of the dictator in his final days, when his physical frailty had become obvious (Palacio, 2002: 88).

In television programming, fiction productions, precisely for their inventive and imaginary component, made it possible to 'tame censorship' (Durán Froix, 2008: 41). Thus, the early 1970s saw the emergence of some of these home-grown reformist programmes. These are fictions that fall within the most relevant genres of the period (television playhouse, serialised novels and drama series, the last of which were developed and produced using techniques characteristic of the small screen). Produced with TVE's human, technical or financial resources, these fictions have a maximum of 13 episodes; their original and thematic idea had to be tailored to the preferences of the directors of TVE and to issues that concerned Spanish society. Their production standards were flexible; ensemble cast series starring some of the leading actors of the day, whether in film or video (Diego et al., 2019).

In December 1975, Gabriel Peña Aranda was appointed as director general of Radiodifusión y Televisión [Radio and Television Broadcasting], the first of its directors who did not come from the regime's single party and who officially initiated the process of the transition to democracy. Thus, in 1976, television content with a clear democratic charge burst onto the small screen, largely on the initiative of the station's employees (Martín Jiménez, 2013, 2018; Palacio, 2012: 16). However, as will be shown below, already during the early 1970s some fiction programmes featured modernising plots that contradicted the pillars of the regime and nurtured values closer to democracy. The creative freedom allowed by fiction became the means through which to criticise, in a veiled manner, Franco's principles and opt for others that were more plural and open. These products have become a valuable resource to understand the Spain of this period (Chicharro-Merayo, 2018).

Hypothesis and methodology

The research question to be answered in this article is 'What was the role of home-grown fiction in preparing Spain for its transition to democracy?'

Indeed, Television was used as a catalyst for socio-economic development. The Francoist elite, especially the so-called 'technocratic sector' introduced it as a window to modernity and consumption (Callejo, 1995). Television output raised consumption expectations in its viewers. Advertising, along with the first television quiz shows, persuaded Spaniards of the value of material goods, which helped to encourage a shopping culture. These programmes were designed to foster consumption and present it as the hallmark of a regime seeking to legitimise the prevailing authoritarianism by increasing levels of material well-being (Bustamante, 2006). However, the defence of values such as money,

consumption or property was at odds with a system as controlling and harsh as the Francoist dictatorship, which, with its regulations, constrained free market forces and the freedom to participate in the public space (Palacio, 2005; Pavlovic, 2007). Television was also used as an 'opening to the world' through which Spaniards were able to look, albeit hesitantly, at capitalist Europe, or even North-American society, portrayed as a model of social and economic development. The discourse of the Franco regime struggled in its attempt to ignore the democratic nature of these neighbouring societies.

It is true that the mechanisms of censorship controlled any manifestly politically loaded message. However, from the early 1970s, some programmes were already instilling anti-Francoist values, thus contributing to strengthening democratic principles in the social construct (Palacio, 2012: 10). In particular, we understand that some of the fiction television content and home-grown production served as resources for instilling and socialising values of *apertura* and democracy. Along these lines, we cannot forget those working in the media who struggled to circumvent official television controls and censors and who were able to place programmes that broke with the ideological assumptions of the management, in the broadcast schedule (Baget, 1993). Our interest lies in ascertaining the construction, but especially, the transgressive content of these entertainment productions.

Using TVE's home-grown fiction as a sampling frame for this period, an intentional sample of 11 programmes was selected. The units of the sample were chosen according to several criteria: relevance and popularity in terms of being well-known and recalled by viewers, and at the same time identified by television historians as being key elements of the programme schedule of the time; the richness of their message, in which cultural elements can be identified in the direction of change and modernisation (Montero and Paz, 2013).

These productions were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The main categories researched were themes, plots, character building and settings. As shown in the results, the fictions were grouped according to their connection with specific modernising values: those critical of Francoism and promoting values of plurality and autonomy; those encouraging socio-economic development in the form of consumption and freedom of customs; those striving to promote gender equality, or those focusing on the value of the 'homeland' as a way to extol the freedom of a people.

The analysis prioritises semantic aspects over technical or visual ones. It also pays special attention to reception rather than production. The digitalisation of the archives of RTVE as well as their availability through their webpage, www.rtve.es, allows access to these documents. Finally, the video analysis was supplemented by a review of secondary sources, many of them of a historical nature, that would contextualise the programmes within the framework of this phase of television in Spain and enrich the analysis of these audio-visual documents.

Series inspired by literature encouraging plurality and subtly criticising the Franco regime

The bulk of the home-grown fiction production from this period attempted to set itself apart from foreign approaches by looking for a distinct Spanish sensibility through its thematic material and setting. Noteworthy among these are productions of a

costumbrista tone, (portraying everyday life, customs and mannerisms) that extolled Spanish stereotypes with all of their vices and virtues (*Remite: Maribel* [Return Address: Maribel, 1970], *El último café* [The Last Coffee 1970–1972], *Compañera te doy* [A Companion I Give You, 1973] or *Si yo fuera rico* [If I Were Rich, 1973–1974]).

In the same vein, literary sources provided another way to give a ‘Spanish’ flavour to fiction programmes. Given its initiatory condition, the use of literary texts compensated for creative limitations or lack of training in television screenwriting. The theatre, transformed into its televised version, *teleteatro*, or television playhouse, was often the initial format for offering products that would need to be made more complex in the future, especially in terms of their presentation and visual standpoint.

These early productions were guided primarily by educational and informational purposes but also by principles such as rigour and respect for the work in the adaptation process. According to the screenwriters and directors of the time, the television adaptation was very faithful to the literary story, which was presented as a sign of quality in the audio-visual product. These fictions were created to promote the culture of the homeland and disseminate emblematic Spanish works. There was an implicit underlying idea that the literary text had an artistic sensibility, while television was merely a medium for interpreting it for popular culture. In order for television fiction to acquire more autonomy from literary sources, it needed to be institutionalised as a cultural product through the establishment of its own language.

In addition, literature would be the appropriate breeding ground to develop television stories that, as literary adaptations, could feature discourses subtly critical of the Franco regime, and thus, evade censorship. Noteworthy among series along these lines were the following: *El pícaro* [The Rogue, 1974], *Cuentos y leyendas* [Stories and Legends, 1968–1976], *Los libros* [The Books, 1974] and the adaptation of *Entre visillos* [Between the Curtains, 1974].

From a screenplay by Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Pedro Beltrán and Emmanuela Beltrán, *El pícaro*, a 35 mm colour production, was a drama series directed and played by Fernando Fernán-Gómez, and shot in a variety of locations across Spain. The series also boasted a cast of very well-known actors who responded notably to Fernán-Gómez. Chiefly set in 17th-century Spain, but also in Italy (Chapter 1) and in Bavaria (Chapter 3), the series follows the travails of Lucas Trapaza, a rogue who will stop at nothing to work as little as possible and who is accompanied on his adventures by the young Alonso de Baeza. The screenplay draws inspiration from the writings of the great authors of the Golden Age of Spanish literature, such as those of Miguel de Cervantes, Francisco de Quevedo, Mateo Alemán, Vicente Espinel, Salas Barbadillo and the author of *Estebanillo González*, as well as the French author Alain-René Lesage. *El pícaro* was a literary adaptation ‘that used the words from the classics to underscore the seams of the official Francoist rhetoric, rather frayed at this point, in the face of the turbulent times brought on by the loss of Carrero Blanco in late 1973’ (Fernández, 2014c: 324). The pedagogical sensibility was combined with one that was critical of many of the essential values and practices of Francoism (Palacio, 2012: 66).

In a way, through the rogue of the *Siglo de Oro*, Fernando Fernán-Gómez denounces the Spanish picaresque character. Attention is drawn to the dynamic of social inequality and the corrupt use of power by the elites while questioning traditional institutions, such

as the army and the Church. The script points to how criminal behaviour and misconduct was hiding behind the morality of national Catholicism.

Cuentos y leyendas, consisted of a first season of 9 episodes, originally aired in 1968 and 1969, on the second channel of public television, and repeated on the first channel in 1972. The second season is more relevant to this research insofar as it was televised between 1974 and 1976 and included subtle criticism of some aspects of the Franco regime. It was shot in 16 mm colour, reinforcing its cinematographic feel through the lavishness of its exteriors and directed by film-makers a solid grounding cinematography. Its 29 episodes were directed by different directors, many of them from the Official Film School (EOC), which, it is worth mentioning, was one of the most manifestly anti-Franco cultural scenes.

As in the previous series (*El pícaro*), *Cuentos y leyendas* can be considered an author's series. As an anthology, it was made up of stand-alone episodes that varied in duration. The advantages of television seriality were still unknown, so each episode had its own technical crew, actors and director. In fact, 20 directors worked on this series. However, about half of the episodes were written by the same scriptwriters: Rafael J. Salvia and Rafael García Serrano, the latter being clearly identified with the ideology of the single Francoist party. His involvement in the creation of this series was an attempt to counter possible anti-Franco narratives (Palacio, 2012: 105).

This production, which tried to bring popular stories and the literary genre of the short story to viewers, stands out for its divulgatory intent as well as for its aim to highlight some icons of the popular imaginary: either in the form of characters (the knight, the nun, the peasant, etc.), settings (Toledo, Salamanca, etc.) and themes (love, loneliness, moral destitution, etc), among others. To this end, only works by pre-Civil-War authors were chosen, such as Pío Baroja, Clarín, Unamuno, Lope de Vega and Becquer, among others.

While all episodes are inspired by literature, the result sometimes has less to do with the source text and more to do with the directors' desire to express their own aesthetic or ideological concerns. It is for this reason that some of the episodes seek to objectively describe Spanish society and its meanness (avarice, envy, selfishness and ambition) as well as convey some veiled criticism of the rife stagnation and regression of the Franco regime (Fernández, 2014b: 311–316).

Some specific episodes, *El regreso de Edelmiro* [*The Return of Edelmiro*] and *Huida hacia el pueblo de las muñecas de cera* [*Flight to the Village of the Wax Dolls*], have been interpreted as a metaphor critical of the Franco regime and its inertia. In these, isolated and anguished microcosms are portrayed, immobile and morally degraded, closed to any external influence. It depicts the situation of the terminal, stagnant and immobile Franco regime, in which the youngest people's hopes for renewal are stymied by the statism of ageing elites (Fernández, 2014b: 311–316: 316; Palacio, 2005).

Critical discourse is also found in *Los libros*, a drama that also conformed to the concept of a 'writer's series' (Palacio, 2012: 104). Shot on location in 16 mm and 35 mm film gave it a very cinematographic feel. Its budget, production schedule and editing, however, were more similar to that of a television production.

Broadcast over 3 seasons (1974–1977) in 29 episodes, *Los libros* uses literature to create a format inspired by foreign formulae, such as the French *Les cent livres des*

hommes. The episodes draw on the classic authors of Spanish literature, ranging from Galdós, Cervantes, Larra and Fernando de Rojas, to others closer to Cela, Juan Ramón Jiménez and Unamuno, along with foreign novelists such as Balzac and Oscar Wilde. The third season, aired during the transition to democracy (late 1977), was particularly unconventional and encouraging of progressive values.

The *Los libros* series comprises visually differentiated episodes directed by different directors, including some new names fresh out of the Escuela de Cine (Jaime Chavarrí and Emilio Gutiérrez Lázaro). In the style of an anthology, its stand-alone episodes, linked only by the literary theme, attracted the public to read. The episodes centred on eminent writers (Gómez de la Serna, Mariano José de Larra, Edgar Allan Poe, etc.), but especially on the adaptations of the classics of Spanish literature (*El Cantar del Mio Cid*, *La Celestina*, *El libro del buen amor*, *El licenciado vidriera*, *Niebla*, *Viaje a la Alcarria*, etc.) and universal literature (*The Decameron*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Eugenie Grandet*, etc.).

Its clear didactic interest is also apparent in the very structure of the series: some of the episodes commenced with a talk by a literary scholar who explained the merits of the author and the work that was to be re-enacted (*The Decameron*); others began with the thoughts of the authors themselves (as in the chapter by Cela), or the use of a diegetic narrator who introduced the story to the viewers (*El Cantar del Mio Cid*).

The ‘paraphrasing’ of great authors and works of Spanish or world literature allowed the series to extoll the values of autonomy, freedom of expression, hedonism, the enjoyment and value of life, conciliation and the ability to dialogue:

In short, this series marked one of the most original, free and creative moments in television of the time. Through its variety and taking advantage of loopholes, they introduced educational, innovative and critical stories that exposed the skeletons in the cultural discourse of Francoism. (Fernández, 2014a: 137)

Fictions promoting the value of socio-economic modernisation: capitalism, consumption and new forms of relationship

Worthy of special mention are those fictions that celebrate the value of the processes of industrialisation and modernisation, and that contribute to the consolidation of a capitalist culture in which the ability to consume and own is relayed to the viewer as a huge advantage of economic development. These proposals defended the lifestyle of modern developed societies and extolled the economic growth in which Spanish society was incorporated from the 1960s to the early 1970s. Indeed, this process was dubbed the ‘Spanish economic miracle’.

Economic development was presented as the setting in which the characters in these fictions were able to enjoy new freedoms that, in principle, make economic sense, but transcend this plane: they increase their purchasing power, they can buy more, they can accumulate property and, consequently, can climb the social ladder. That is to say, these proposals depict a relatively open society with ample opportunities, but in which traditional uses and customs are also altered to make way to new forms of relationships.

Women's progress in the public sphere, sexual liberation, the new way of understanding courtship and relationships, new dress codes, new linguistic uses or more informal relationship formulas are, among others, social aspects linked to the modernisation and liberalisation of Spanish society that these fictions echo.

Especially illustrative is the case of *Los camioneros* [*The Truckers*, 1974]. This drama series, created around 14 episodes of about a half-hour each, was directed by Mario Camus using original screenplays by Pedro Gil Paradela. Filmed in 35 mm in mid-1973 and first broadcast on TVE during the evening timeslot, the series met with huge public acclaim, as evidenced by its winning the TP de Oro award for best Spanish series in 1974. It demonstrates how home-grown series production was gradually responding to an aesthetic model that was less theatrical and more cinematographic.

The story of *Los camioneros* is told through the figure of its protagonist, Paco, a young worker in a mechanic shop who aspires to be promoted to driver in order to buy his own truck. With this declaration of intentions, which the protagonist explains in the first episode, Paco clearly shows his desire for upwards mobility and social and economic recognition, in complete accord with the principles of the capitalist system, where differences are organised through social classes. Attributes such as merit, effort, ambition, skills and professionalism are presented as a guarantee for climbing the social-economic ladder.

This discourse appears consistent with the consolidation of an industrial society that required a growing middle class. The figures for the early 1970s indicate a rise in the urban middle class, with a resulting expansion in the service industry. A certain industrial concentration, an increase in the number of employees as well as worker training can also be observed. The upper management of the public sector started to outgrow that of the private sector (De Miguel, 1996). In this context, the series extols values such as determination, mettle, learning, know-how, commitment, discipline, methodical work, separation of work and leisure, time management, planning, precision, efficiency, knowledge and so on, instruments through which open societies progress, and which are linked to liberal principles. Nonetheless, the series, given its contextual character closely linked to a period of change, also reflects institutions and environments that shaped much more conservative values: order, security, tradition and origins and even repression (the army, the Civil Guard, rural areas). Along the same lines, the portrayal of woman through female characters opts for defending their more traditional roles.

With a screenplay by the illustrator and member of the Real Academia Española Antonio Mingote, *Ese señor de negro* [*That Man in Black*, 1975–1976], directed by Antonio Mercero, is a drama series consisting of 13 episodes of 26 minutes each, containing hints of satire. It won the Ondas award for best Spanish production as well as the TP de Oro for best Spanish series and best actor in 1975. The guiding thread of the series revolves around the everyday situations experienced by its protagonist, Sixto Zabaleta, providing a narrative pretext to offer a critical discourse on some aspects of socio-economic development.

Sixto Zabaleta defends at any cost the traditional and antiquated values of Spanish society. Meanwhile, showing a much more liberal and progressive character, his great grandfather, materialising in the form of an old portrait from the beginning of the 20th

century, offers his grandson advice and guidance. In their conversations, the grandson defends these values and the more traditional order and rejects some of the incipient transformations in family, personal and sexual relationships, and uses and customs that are largely referred to and qualified as 'modern lifestyles'. Thus, for example, Sixto Zabaleta is critical of issues such as attire, the way of dancing or the leisure activities of the young people of the 1970s. Likewise, he condemns sexual relations outside of marriage and expresses evident macho attitudes, seeing some of the female characters as mere erotic objects. The protagonist is treated somewhat as a caricature. His discourse does not invite empathy and allows the viewer to maintain a certain critical distance, while questioning and even poking fun at his statements.

Ese señor de negro highlights the delicate and anomic time in which Spanish society found itself, the debate between the deeply ingrained Francoist values, exemplified by the protagonist's black attire and the new developments in the incipient democratic scenario under construction. The story is critical of the more unyielding and authoritarian values. Hence, it provides a good account of the ideological and cultural conflicts between the different generations. As Sixto himself indicates 'shameless youth' and the axiological developments that come with them are one of the leading themes of the story.

The critical tone of the series sometimes extends to aspects closely linked to political power. The episode entitled 'Los oportunos trámites' [The timely formalities] parodies the Francoist government and civil servants, depicting incompetence, slowness and inefficiency as well as the citizen's powerlessness before the bureaucratic machine.

Este señor de negro is remarkable as much for the construction of the main character as for the development of the themes and plots of the female roles. Sixto's sister, Carola (Mari Carmen Prendes); his favoured customer, Loreto (Florinda Chico), whom he flatters and admires; and his assistant and employee, Encarnita (María Garralón) offer the viewers a chance to relate with female models that embody different ages, life situations and expectations.

The television series *Entre visillos*, broadcast on the first channel of public television in 1974, as part of *Novela* programme, merits special attention. The result of an adaptation of the book of the same name by the novelist Carmen Martín Gaité, it consists of 15 serialised episodes lasting between 21 minutes and 30 minutes each. *Entre visillos*, adapted by Miguel Picazo with the author's permission, was shot on a tight budget and exclusively in indoor locations. The story concerns a group of middle-class teenage girls who embody conventionalism and lack of ambition. From an anthropological but also a critical perspective, the series portrays the lifestyle of a provincial city in the 1950s, from a woman's perspective. Various types of women are featured, all of them young and married with little prospect of emancipation. Absolute paternal authority, social, moral and political prejudices, a lack of prospects for the main characters, the influence of traditions and customs and so on, evoke the oppressive atmosphere of the post-war period. In this respect, the TV series reproves uses and customs, the mechanisms of social control as well as the severity of the vital itineraries that shaped the Spanish society of the time, and especially, women. In a sense, *Entre visillos* advocates the need to build new formulas of femininity, reformist and plural, allowing women to take on more active, empowered and autonomous roles. These types of female models appeared in the following series.

Fictions encouraging gender equality and the promotion of women

We identified some fictions in this period promoting female stereotypes that create some tension with the dominant Francoist ideal. These approaches fostered, to a greater or lesser degree, variations of the strict Francoist definition of the subordinate role of women as wife and mother. They feature relatively original women characters committed to furthering women's freedom and fulfilment as well as advances in gender equality.

First, eroticised characters were used as a strategy to make headway. The portrayal of eroticism, particularly through the presence of the woman's nude body, was one of the ways to renew the image of a Francoist femininity that rested, among others, on religious faith, puritanism and virginity. Second, giving visibility to the figure of the 'economically independent woman' was another. The latter challenged Franco's idea of the male as the necessary head of the family.

In the early 1970s, Jaime de Armiñán wrote and directed some serial fiction in which his women characters play a leading role. *Las doce caras de Eva* [*The Twelve Faces of Eve*] was a 12-part stand-alone drama series with a touch of comedy broadcast on TVE during the 1971–1972 season. Under the direction of Jesús Yagüe, with screenplays by Jaime de Armiñán, it seeks to explore the feminine idiosyncrasy using the signs of the zodiac as a narrative device. Each episode corresponds to a different sign of the Zodiac, which provides an excuse to articulate various gender stereotypes (the nostalgic one, the practical one, the emotional and dramatic one, the upright one, etc.). Many of these characters embody unconventional situations and values according to Franco's ideology: from Sara, who calls off her wedding just days before going up to the altar, to Amalia who holds domestic authority over her husband. Values such as freedom, energy, strength, innovation, transgression or passion are some of the elements that lend shape to the leading women's characters.

Tres eran tres [*Three Were Three*, 1972–1973] is a 13-episode serialised drama series, in which Jaime de Armiñán recounts the ups and downs of three sisters, who, brought up separately, meet as adults to brave their work and relationship problems. The conflict between personalities representing different positions on the modernity-conservative scale gives shape to the narrative structure of this fiction. The professional and university-qualified woman, economically and emotionally independent, who does not seek marriage, who challenges established power and rejects the subordinate role conferred on her by the regime, plays a leading role. In fact, this fiction series, which was abruptly pulled, defends the democratic ideal through its approach to women (Palacio, 2012: 28). In any case, the series opts for renewed models of femininity.

Of particular relevance among this group of fictions is *Juan y Manuela* (1974), performed and written by Ana Diosdado, who comes from the theatre scene. Broadcast on TVE1, in 13 serialised episodes, this drama was already seen as a somewhat more sophisticated production adapted to the language of television, including outdoor scenes. The plot concerns Manuela, a character who, despite her conventionalism (a wealthy and idle spoilt brat), is somewhat transgressive: she smokes, drives, opposes class prejudices and defends women's financial independence. Not surprisingly, the first episode finds

the protagonist as a young woman who abandons the altar just days before she is due to marry a young doctor, exemplifying the figure of the ideal husband. Manuela's character is in sharp contrast to that of her grandmother, symbolising femininity in its most traditional and conservative version. She reproaches her granddaughter's conduct. In this way, the fiction expresses the modernisation of Spanish women. (Palacio, 2012: 31).

Conclusions: 1976, patriotic fiction to encourage democracy

Our analysis of television ends in 1976, the year in which the Francoist Arias Navarro ended his term as president of the Spanish government. In July 1976, Adolfo Suárez took up the presidency and would begin the formal dissolution of the Franco regime and the building of a democratic system. Some landmark productions came together at this point that clearly tested the Francoist discourse and came to reflect the process of transition in the form of fictional discourse, ushering in a new era in television broadcasting. The first democratic elections would not take place until June 1977, but the climate of uncertainty and the weakness of the Francoist sectors brought about some liberalisation in the creation and broadcasting of content.

In February 1976, *Paisaje con figuras* [*Landscape with Figures*] began. In this historical drama series, supervised by Mario Camus and screenplayed by the writer Antonio Gala, its 13 episodes gave voice to historical Spanish figures, including the writer Francisco de Quevedo, the navigator Juan Sebastián Elcano, who first sailed around the globe, or Mariana Pineda, who took part in the liberal and constitutional revolts of the 19th century. They are portrayed plainly and as human, which was at odds with the grandiloquent Francoist discourse on Spanish history. The objective of the author was to bring the general public closer to the relevant personalities of Spanish history who also 'suffered from Spain's treatment of its men: worse when they are great' (Gala, 1985). Broadcasts of the series were suspended because of its content, in particular, the initial intervention of Gala himself, troubled the Arias Navarro government. The author's response came in an article published in the magazine *Sábado Gráfico*, in which he went so far as to question Arias Navarro himself, resulting in the author's indictment. In November of the same year, the series was returned to the air.

None of the series included in this study has lingered in the Spanish imagination quite like *Curro Jiménez*. Broadcast in late-1976, the last series reviewed in this study takes up the struggle against the French invasion, a theme previously explored in *Diego de Acevedo*, a 1966 production recounting the adventures of a Peruvian creole officer in the Spanish army who fights the Napoleonic troops in Spain in the early-19th century.

The legendary *Curro Jiménez* was inspired by the figure of Andrés López, boatman by trade who, because of problems with the law, has to leave his village of Cantillana (Seville) and live in the hills. *Curro Jiménez* picks up on scenes, plots and characters present in the iconography of this legendary character (Montenegro, 2011). Before the series was even broadcast, the magazine *Tele-Radio* announced with unrestrained optimism that 'television series like these could mean for Spain what the Western meant for America' (Ferrer, 1976: 41). Among its strong points are the demeanour of the actors; the

intensity and agility of the narrative and, like in adventure films, well-defined characters, with a clear distinction between the good guys and the bad guys. The series extols the common person and highlights the courage of the Spanish people and their rebellion against injustice (Dualte, 1977: 43).

The production was filmed using typically cinematographic methods and strategies; a single-camera under the direction of the following five different directors: Joaquín Romero Marchent, Francisco Rovira Beleta, Antonio Drove, Mario Camus and Pilar Miró. Some of Spain's most important stars appear in its episodes. As the leading actor (Sancho Gracia) pointed out in an interview with the magazine *Teleprograma*:

Ever since they started to talk about Curro Jiménez, it was considered an extravagant series, with travel to natural settings, with huge casts and well-known names, with cinematographic production using 35 mm cameras and full-colour film, and not least with such highly celebrated directors. (Weinberg, 1977: 50)

The story's epic character brings an adventure series with a genuine Spanish flavour to the viewer. The hero is a Spanish version of a Robin Hood-like figure whose wayward actions appear justified in as much as they are seen as putting right social inequalities. The tangled plots and scenes with his partners in crime infuse a degree of comedy in certain places. Meanwhile, the setting in Andalucía in the early-19th century offers a televised reading of Spanish history and introduces many cultural references with which the Spanish public could identify (places, clothing, food, linguistic use, customs, etc). The cast of characters presented in the series is totally stereotypical.

In terms of meaning, it hailed the value of courage, audacity, justice, masculinity, brute force and agility, in addition to, as Riesman (1981) points out, a strange and particular sense of justice that evokes 'the man directed from within', while at other times bringing to life the solitary hero of the Western genre (Tudor, 1974). His masculinity, in the classic sense, was still a reflection of the expectations of the male figure at the time of production and broadcast of the series (Dualte, 1977).

The character, despite its simple construction, still contains political and clearly ideological connotations. He is an outsider and anti-establishment figure working for good causes and especially for the unity and defence of the Spanish territory. His patriotism legitimises practices such as violence, robbery and the obstruction of justice for the benefit of a greater good: the protection of the Spanish nation. The opposition to injustice, in all of its forms, becomes one of the motivations that explains the protagonist's audacious acts. The story extols the pride of class and the value of freedom and emancipation. Thus, the protagonist closes Chapter 5 'La gran batalla de Andalucía' [The Great Battle of Andalucía] in the following terms: 'The time has come for us to be set free. We are going to fight however we can, no matter the weapons, but we will never be a defeated people' (Palacio, 2012: 182).

Having shown the role of television as a cultural institution and an unquestionable part of the process for contemporary social change, this research reveals the problems that television professionals experienced in their efforts to circumvent censorship controls, while at the same time, it highlights the strategies used to achieve these objectives. Sometimes, originality was the solution; more often than not, continuity and conservatism

in the messages was the appropriate breeding ground for introducing ‘small doses’ of transgression. Resorting to literary sources allowed for the introduction of critical messages with ‘the classics’ as a cover. Comedy and parody allowed for poking fun at more rigid attitudes. ‘Exotic’ female characters sometimes offered new approaches to femininity. A very outdated masculinity was used to defend values of modernity, consumption and meritocracy.

In the same vein, this work brings to light the versatility of the language of television, which, through its discourse of entertainment, can perform a latent, yet highly transcendent, socialising function for paving the way for democracy. The magic of television hooked these viewers through their messages designed for escapism, but also nurtured principles and modernising values.

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