

## **Latin America's Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series**



# Latin America's Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series



History as Fuel for Entertainment

Edited by  
Mónica Contreras Saiz and Stefan Rinke

**DE GRUYTER**

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# Contents

Mónica Contreras Saiz, Stefan Rinke

**Introduction: Latin American History in Fiction, Fiction in Our Reality — VII**

Mónica Contreras Saiz

**“Any resemblance to reality is pure coincidence”: Broadcasting and Reception of Latin American Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series of Memory (1968–2023) — 1**

Edward Goyeneche-Gómez, Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed

**Portrayal of State Institutions in Colombian Telenovelas: The Mediation of Citizenship — 57**

Carolina Galindo

**Dos décadas. Dos momentos de una institución: el Ejército Nacional de Colombia en *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña* — 75**

Franziska Englert

**Through the Eyes of a Child: Caracol’s Attempt to Challenge Guerrilla Representations in *La Niña* — 99**

Hannah Müssemann

**“Aquel Palacio en Llamas” – Licencias narrativas para explicar lo inexplicable. La representación de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en telenovelas y series sobre la historia colombiana — 119**

Tatjana Louis

**Telenovelas of Memory. A Didactic Experience — 163**

Omar Rincón

**Ensayo: Narrar al narco-capitalismo pop — 191**

Roberto Abdala Junior

***O bem-amado*, carnavalizando a cultura política brasileira e enfrentando a ditadura — 215**

Karen Genschow

**Familiarizing the Audience with Dictatorship – Memory and Mediation of the Collective Trauma of Dictatorship Through the Family in Two Television Series of the Southern Cone — 237**

Lorena Antezana Barrios, Eduardo Santa Cruz

**Memorias de una década a través de *Los 80*. Vida cotidiana, discurso televisivo y democracia de baja intensidad — 263**

Holle Meding

**Framing the Dictatorship: Uncovering Correlations of Archetypes in Chilean TV Series Using Digital History — 285**

Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda

**Audiencia cotidiana y violencia: análisis de las funciones sociales del televisor en *Los 80, más que una moda* — 325**

Claudia Bossay

**Historical Walkabout, Returning the Archival Records Used in *Los 80* TV Series to the Streets of Santiago — 349**

June Carolyn Erlick

**Epilogue — 367**

**Authors — 379**

Mónica Contreras Saiz, Stefan Rinke

## Introduction: Latin American History in Fiction, Fiction in Our Reality

The image of the television static chosen for this book's cover evokes memories across generations, while also reflecting a key moment in television history. It seemed to us a powerful metaphor, not only representing entertainment and the past, but also the “noise” that arises when sensitive aspects of Latin American history are woven into fictional narratives meant for entertainment. Over the past 20 years, the production of telenovelas and television series addressing Latin America's recent and traumatic history has grown significantly, shaping the region's social perception of history, historical consciousness, and the political and memorial culture of the region. Their global consumption continues to rise, with these fictionalized histories occupying an increasing space in our shared reality. Although often seen as mere entertainment, historical telenovelas and TV series provide an accessible interpretive framework for a broad audience, allowing viewers to connect with national and international histories through fiction — often more readily than through history books, journalistic articles, or documentaries.

Television responds not only to the demands of the industrial system or commercial strategies,<sup>1</sup> but also reflects the expectations of its audiences as well as the visions of its creators. Since its beginnings in Latin America, telenovelas and series have continually evolved, giving voice to diverse perspectives on complex and controversial historical events that have shaped the region, such as dictatorships, armed conflicts, revolutionary movements, and drug wars. History, in this sense, has become an essential resource, acting as a “fuel” for the narratives of Latin American television fiction. At the same time, this history demands expression in varied formats, carrying a force that, like volcanic lava, is compelled to erupt.

In this context, audiovisual fiction with historical content has the potential to construct metaphorical truths through compelling visuals and narratives, fostering a form of historical thinking.<sup>2</sup> Although it does not always invite critical reflection,

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1 Jesús Martín-Barbero, Sonia Muñoz (Coordinators), *Televisión y melodrama. Géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992), 20.

2 María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Cadena (Ed.), *La ficción histórica en la televisión iberoamericana 2000–2012. Construcciones del pasado colectivo en series, telenovelas y telefilms* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, RODOPI, 2016), 2–3.

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this approach does not deny the possibility of challenging traditional discourses. Developing historical thinking involves a process of remembering that is not necessarily about preserving the past, but rather about questioning the present and envisioning the future.<sup>3</sup>

Telenovelas and some TV series are often underestimated as mere superficial entertainment. This view, held by certain intellectual and social sectors, overlooks their significant cultural impact.<sup>4</sup> These productions represent a mass phenomenon that influences both daily life and public discourse, shaping attitudes, values, perceptions, and ultimately the worldview of their audiences.<sup>5</sup> Depending on the perspective from which they are examined, they can be seen as commercial products, cultural commodities, part of historical culture, and even as media of collective memory.

Some historians consider these productions not only as expression of historical culture but as historical sources in their own right. Beyond simply informing us about the past they depict, they offer perspectives on the cultural and political context of their creators, revealing how these cultural products are infused with the memory culture of their time.<sup>6</sup> Each viewing experience also provides a unique insight into how individual viewers connect with the past. From the perspective of memory studies, these telenovelas and TV series serve as vehicles for transmitting memory, regardless of the original intent of their creators, and shaped by the unique reception experience of each viewer. Thus, they have the potential to generate and disseminate historical memories of Latin America's recent past, influencing collective memory on both local and global scales, according to their cultural and commercial reach. However, it is also possible for them to go unnoticed and be consumed solely as entertainment.

The articles collected in this volume are the outcome of various academic efforts, including conferences, workshops, panels at international congresses, and research residencies, all organized by the project *History Transfer Through Entertainment Media in Latin America. Laboratory for Memory and Digital Media Research*, GUMELAB.<sup>7</sup> The team of contributing authors hails from universities in

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3 Sabine Sielke, "Joy in Repetition. Acht Thesen zum Konzept der Serialität und zum Prinzip der Serie", in *Populäre Serialität: Narration – Evolution – Distinktion. Zum seriellen Erzählen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Ed. Frank Kelleter, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015) 390–91.

4 Jesús Martín-Barbero, Germán Rey, *Los ejercicios del ver. Hegemonía audiovisual y ficción televisiva* (Barcelona: Ed. Gedisa, 1999), 15–9.

5 Carsten Wunsch, Holger Schramm, Volker Gehrau, Helena Bilandzic (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Medienrezeption* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014).

6 See article by Mónica Contreras Saiz in this volume.

7 GUMELAB is the acronym for the German-language project title "Geschichtsvermittlung durch



Germany, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, and the United States, bringing expertise from fields such as history, communication, literature, sociology, political science, and cultural studies. Their professional paths represent diverse stages of academic careers and varying levels of experience with fiction as an object of study. Among them are prominent scholars recognized in this field, researchers who have expanded their work by integrating the study of historical telenovelas and TV series, and early-career academics presenting fresh insights from their doctoral theses or doctoral research projects in progress.

In many of the articles in this compilation, disciplinary boundaries blur around the object of study — telenovelas and TV series on recent Latin American history — and methodological approaches become richer and more diverse, adapted to the specific research questions. The articles explore a wide range of themes, from examining the historicity and narrative paradigms of these productions to analyzing their multiple roles and representational techniques. They also delve into how these productions portray state institutions, contrast different narratives of the same historical event, function as pedagogical tools, and establish archetypes tied to specific historical events, ultimately shaping political culture and collective memory.

The compilation opens with an article that serves as an introductory chapter and offers a comprehensive overview of fictional productions on Latin America's recent and politically sensitive past, spanning from its beginnings to the year 2023. The subsequent articles are organized according to the geographical origin of the case studies, beginning with five articles and one essay dedicated to the Colombian context, followed by an article focused on the Brazilian case, and culminating with five articles on the Chilean case, one of which compares productions from Chile and Argentina. To close the compilation, we invited June Carolyn Erlick, author of the outstanding book *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context*<sup>8</sup> and with whom we had the opportunity to discuss several of the topics covered here, to write an epilogue where she shares her reflections on this compilation.

The emphasis on the case studies of Colombia and Chile is due to the remarkable and growing production of telenovelas and TV series in both countries, which explore their recent history with special prominence since the beginning of the 21st century, in contrast to other countries in the region. This does not diminish the relevance of the experiences of other Latin American countries, whose recent histories have also inspired similar productions. This compilation, in line with other works in the area,<sup>9</sup> seeks to promote research in this field for Latin America. It also

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Unterhaltungsmedien in Lateinamerika. Labor für Erinnerungsforschung und digitale Methoden”.

8 June Carolyn Erlick, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

9 Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins (Ed.), *Television Histories. Shaping Collective Memory in the*

invites reflection on the reasons why some national histories have not yet made it to the screen, despite the need expressed by audiences to see their own experiences reflected in the fictions they consume.<sup>10</sup> It also raises questions about the implications of these absences in the transmission of the past and the construction of a historical memory that embraces the traumas and political violence that have marked the region. In the following, rather than presenting the articles compiled in this volume one by one, we will highlight the most relevant discussions that connect these contributions.

## The power of images to remember and learn about history

When we remember, our brain recalls not only personal experiences but also the knowledge and information it has acquired over time. When watching telenovelas and TV series depicting recent Latin American history, some viewers may relive events they experienced firsthand, while others may have only heard something about them, or even nothing at all. For many, these productions will be their first exposure to such events, “learning” them through the medium of visual storytelling. In educational contexts, research has shown that combining historical information in both textual and audiovisual formats greatly enhances retention, compared to relying solely on texts. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that in contemporary culture, public perceptions of history are increasingly influenced by images presented across various audiovisual formats.<sup>11</sup>

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*Media Age* (Lexington Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); Guillermo Orozco Gómez and Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (Ed.), *Obitel* 2013. *Social Memory and Television Fiction in Ibero-American Countries* (Porto Alegre: Editora Meridional Ltda, 2013); Rodríguez Cadena, *La ficción histórica*; Julien Bobineau and Jörg Türschmann (Hrsg.), *Quotenkiller oder Qualitätsfernsehen? TV-Serien aus französisch- und spanischsprachigen Kulturräumen*, (Wiesbaden: Springer Vieweg, 2022).

**10** Hannah Müsseman, who analyzes on social networks the reception of the Netflix series *Narcos*, has highlighted in several conversations we’ve had how at the time, numerous users on Twitter (today X) ask for a Honduras version of *Narcos* to be made, for example: “¿Para cuándo la serie de #Narcos Honduras, @NetflixLAT” (For when #Narcos Honduras series, @NetflixLAT), tweet of June 24, 2021, [https://x.com/htr\\_443/status/1408077923278626822](https://x.com/htr_443/status/1408077923278626822); “¿no hay suficiente material ya? Para iniciar la serie #Narcos Honduras.” ([...] isn’t there enough material already? To start the #Narcos Honduras series). tweet of March 30, 2021, <https://x.com/Daros24/status/1376984435036463114>.

**11** Sabine Moller, “Movie-Made Historical Consciousness,” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 64, (2013):393.

Telenovelas and TV series that explore these themes play a fundamental role in shaping our perceptions of the past. In this line, the articles by Mónica Contreras Saiz, Hannah Müsseman, and Holle Meding offer important clues to understand how this process takes place. Contreras presents and analyzes the concept of “memory images” and the process of their creation, while Müsseman reflects on the relationship between the time devoted to a historical event in these fictions and their impact on collective memory. Meding explores the creation of specific archetypes that facilitate the fictional representation of historical events, contributing to the construction of a shared memory of these events.

Contreras, after analyzing an overview of the production in Latin America of what she calls “telenovelas and TV series of memory” of the last 55 years, presents the concept of “memory images” as an analytical tool that allows examining the interactions between the visualized images and the memories, knowledge and personal interpretations of the viewer. Based on interviews with viewers, members of the production team, the systematization of viewers’ comments on social networks and many discussions with the GUMELAB research team, four different types of memory images were identified. Contreras examines the sources used by the production teams to create these images in their fictional stories, pointing out that the personal memory of the creatives about the events represented plays an essential role, complemented with other sources inherent to academic work, such as interviews, press and archive. Likewise, in these productions, as in other cultural products, elements of diverse artistic expressions such as literature, music and cinema converge, which turns these series into true transtextual repositories.

Müsseman, through a detailed analysis of the representation of a specific historical event in Colombia’s recent history, demonstrates that a greater exposure of images of an event translates into a more lasting memory. In his article, he analyzes how the Siege and Retaking of the Palace of Justice in Bogota in 1985 is represented in three Colombian productions, as well as the reactions of their audiences expressed on Twitter (now X). Historical events are not isolated incidents but comprise an accumulation of prior and subsequent circumstances. In the particular case of the Siege and Retaking of the Palace of Justice, Müsseman points out how, as the judicial and historical investigations progress, numerous events and consequences unfold, such as the planning of the siege by the M-19 guerrilla group, the army assault, the fires, the taking of hostages, the disappearance of people and the violent response of the military, in addition to the persistent struggle of the victims’ families to know the truth and obtain justice. In her analysis Müsseman focuses on how the productions *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015–2017), *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012) and *El General Naranjo* (Fox Telecolombia, 2019–2020) depict the alleged connection between Pablo Escobar and the M-19 in planning the Palace of Justice takeover, as well as in the representation of the victims. Her analysis of

viewers' reactions on Twitter reveals that the production dedicating the most narrative space to this historical event is the one that endures most prominently in collective memory.

The lasting impact of an image broadcast in these productions is closely tied to the archetypes crafted by the creative teams around the historical figures involved in the events they portray. Holle Meding, through a textual analysis of all Chilean series on the dictatorship between 2008 and 2023, identifies recurring archetypes used in the representation of the Pinochet dictatorship. Among the most frequent are *the soldiers and police officers*, *the middle-class person*, *the communist* and the political dissident. A particularly notable archetype, which Meding calls the “remediated dictator,” represents Augusto Pinochet. Instead of appearing as a direct character (with one exception), Pinochet is often evoked through archival footage and audio integrated into the plot, serving a specific narrative function. Meding concludes that these archetypes are fundamental in the narrative structure of each series and form part of the prevailing discourse of memory about the Chilean dictatorship. She also notes that these images and narratives tend to highlight a heroic resistance to the dictatorship, while negatively characterizing Pinochet's supporters, often without exploring their motivations or perspectives.

But while the images transmitted in telenovelas and TV series may help us remember and understand history better, several articles in this volume also show that they shape and transform it according to the particularities and limitations of their formats. Each image entails specific narrative decisions: the sources chosen, the angles and styles employed, and the interests, explicit or implicit, of those who produce them. Thus, the visual account of history is conditioned by intentions, perspectives and contexts that, in many cases, can influence the collective perception of the past and how we interpret it in the present.

## **Representation of the State and its impact on Latin American political culture**

Our research on the portrayal of recent history in television fiction has focused particularly on Latin American political history over the past six decades. This period is marked by dictatorships, revolutionary movements, corruption, and both internal and international conflicts, which have left a lasting and often traumatic impact on society — or on specific sectors of it. While numerous Latin American television productions draw inspiration from real events and cover cultural or sports themes, none of these have been included as case studies in this volume unless some aspect of their plot directly relates to political history. Political history occupies a central

role in the narratives analyzed, significantly influencing cognitive, emotional, and evaluative attitudes toward political issues — that is, shaping political culture. These telenovelas and series engage with the political culture of each viewer and resonate with their political and ideological leanings, even without necessarily being watched in full. In many cases, a title or promotional clip alone is enough to prompt viewers to decide whether or not to watch a series.

The way in which state institutions are represented is a central issue in this context. The contributions of Edward Goyeneche-Gómez, Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed and Carolina Galindo address precisely this issue for the Colombian case. Goyeneche and Uribe, through a textual and audiovisual analysis of the Colombian telenovelas *En la boca del lobo* (Teleset, 2014) and *Bloque de Búsqueda* (Teleset, Sony Pictures, 2016), propose in their article that there is a narrative and formal canon in contemporary Colombian telenovelas that address the recent past on drug trafficking wars. This analysis is contrasted with interviews conducted with focus groups, audiences and creators of these products and they conclude that institutions in both telenovelas are portrayed as fragile, corrupt and lenient with criminals, especially from the perspective of politicians in power. This shifts the narrative focus from individual criminal responsibility to the ineptitude, corruption, or even brutality of state institutions.

Central to their analysis is the ideological dimension through which the past is constructed in these audiovisual productions. This dimension considers the historical context in which the telenovelas are created and, we would add, that it also takes into account the political culture. The decoding of these television products is developed collectively, grounded in the viewers' own backgrounds — their knowledge, predispositions, ideas, ideologies, and beliefs. Although both telenovelas are told from the perspective of those confronting the drug lords, they ultimately convey that Colombian institutions are broken and untrustworthy. Meanwhile, the drug lords are portrayed as more complex figures, with some embodying values related to family and religion. As a result, a deep-seated distrust of institutions prevails, while the image of the capos remains relatively intact. This is a significant and delicate conclusion, as it suggests that these productions may be further eroding public trust in state institutions, thereby impacting the political culture.

Carolina Galindo conducts a textual and comparative analysis of the representation of the Colombian National Army in two productions about the Colombian armed conflict: *Hombres de Honor* (Cadena Uno, 1996) and *La Niña* (Caracol, 2016). Her study is based on the viewing of randomly selected episodes and a press review. These productions were broadcast at key moments of the Colombian armed conflict: the first during one of its most violent phases (1995–2000), and the second in the context of the Havana negotiations, which culminated in the 2016 and 2017 Peace Accords. The article documents how both productions respond to institutional and

propaganda purposes, and their comparison reveals both transformations and continuities in the representations of the military.

Galindo identifies three types of representations of the Colombian military that vary over time and analyzes how these images impact the public through a review of YouTube comments. Through this analysis, the article suggests possible effects of these representations on the processes of construction of historical memory and political formation around the armed conflict in the country. In a first survey, it is observed that *Hombres de Honor* reinforces a heroic image of the institution, while *La Niña* generates a notable polarization with respect to the responsibilities of the Colombian armed conflict. In terms of political formation, Galindo argues that these productions contribute to forge a position on the Colombian armed conflict, where personal experience and media exposure converge to shape this perspective.

These two articles illustrate how the image of the Colombian state and its public forces play a central role in fictional representations of crucial political and historical issues in Colombia. Galindo demonstrated that a positive representation of the army enhances its public perception. Likewise, something similar should occur with the image of politics in general, in order to encourage greater citizen participation. However, these productions tend to highlight mainly the corruption that permeates the political system – an undeniable reality –, which tends to foster apathy towards politics, ultimately discouraging civic engagement.

If, instead, the work of tenacious politicians and courageous judges were also highlighted, fiction could make a valuable contribution to viewers' political culture. In this sense, we need more inspiring stories and fewer stark reflections of reality. Just as in the telenovelas of the past, where humble protagonists overcame obstacles to achieve success, we now need to see depictions of principled politicians, unwavering judges, and honest public forces working to build better societies. With boldness and creativity, production teams can achieve through fiction what may seem unattainable in reality.

## Transformation of values and coexistence through Latin American fiction

The articles by Roberto Abdala Junior and Franziska Entglert highlight the power of telenovelas to promote positive cultural transformations, shaping the development of a critical political culture and fostering social coexistence. In this regard, it is important to recognize that historical fictions not only encourage audiences to reflect on past social and political issues but can also convey values that influence how contemporary political situations are approached.

Historian Roberto Abdala Junior analyzes in his article the cultural and political impact of the Brazilian telenovela *O bem-amado*, first broadcast in 1973 by Rede Globo de Televisão, whose influence marked the political culture and generated remarkable historical consequences. Abdala argues that the telenovela's success influenced the results of the 1974 elections, where the Brazilian Democratic Movement – MDB, a party opposed to the dictatorship, won an unexpected victory. To demonstrate this connection, Abdala employs the classical hermeneutic method of historical research and Bakhtinian semiotics to decode the audiovisual language of the plot, and applies theories on historical consciousness and its relation to the creation of a critical consciousness to analyze the immediate reception of the audience. From this theoretical combination, Abdala coins the concept of “historical reception”, which allows analyzing how the telenovela generates cognitive (reflection) and practical (action) responses in the audience, motivating an active and participatory reception.

Through “historical reception”, Abdala concludes that humor played a central role in *O bem-amado*, promoting critical thinking about politics and mobilizing the audience's historical consciousness. This telenovela not only dialogued with the Brazilian political culture of 1973, but also with that of 2021, the year it was rebroadcast by Globo Play. Abdala points out that, through political satire, *O bem-amado* appealed to a complicit and particularly active audience, capable of identifying and reflecting on the values and criticisms presented on screen, both in its original era and in the current context.

From another perspective and with a case study focused on Colombia, Franziska Englert's article, based on her doctoral thesis,<sup>12</sup> explores the impact of the peace agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian state and the FARC-EP guerrilla on television productions, focusing on *La Niña* (Caracol, 2016), a telenovela that tells the story of a former combatant recruited as a child. Englert analyzes how *La Niña* expanded knowledge about child soldiers, presenting them mainly as victims, and also addressed the Colombian state's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program (DDR), with the aim of increasing its legitimacy and raising public awareness of the challenges faced by ex-combatants. In this analysis, Englert concludes that *La Niña* was created not only for entertainment purposes, but as a resource aimed at preparing Colombian society for the challenges of peace: learning to live together. Englert underlines how this production represents an example of collaboration between entertainment and the State, highlighting the

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<sup>12</sup> Franziska Englert, *The Transition will be Televised. Telenovelas, Reconciliation and Transitional justice in Colombia*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2022).

power of telenovelas to act as agents of socialization and education in times of social change.

Both productions show that television fiction can act as an agent of social change, promoting reflection and facilitating dialogue on issues of historical and political relevance. While *La Niña* allows understanding and empathizing with the reality of ex-combatants in the Colombian context, *O bem-amado* highlights the power of humor as a tool to question and analyze political structures in Brazil. Englert and Abdala Junior conclude that, far from being trivial entertainment, telenovelas are a means of social education capable of motivating citizens to become actively involved in building societies that are more just and aware of their past and present.

## Narrative paradigms: neoliberalism and narco-capitalism

In her article, Mónica Contreras Saiz highlights that the two main predominant themes in television fiction on recent Latin American history have been the dictatorship and drug trafficking. In this regard, the articles by communicators Lorena Antezana, Eduardo Santa María, and Omar Rincón suggest that these fictional stories are based on two narrative paradigms: neoliberalism in the Chilean context and narco-capitalism in the Colombian context.

Lorena Antezana and Eduardo Santa María analyze, through a textual and televisual study of the first season of the Chilean series *Los 80, más que una moda* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), how this production reinterprets the dictatorial past from a neoliberal perspective that has prevailed since the late twentieth century. Their study begins with a political analysis of the constitution of political and economic power after the dictatorship and examines the repercussions of this on the development of the cultural industry, specifically on the audiovisual offer. In this context, they argue that television discourse has played a crucial role in sociocultural processes, influencing the formation of identities and symbolic and cultural production. These productions have contributed to consolidate visions and narratives about current Chilean society, incorporating themes, interpretations and rewritings of its present as well as its past. According to Antezana and Santa María, *Los 80* has contributed to sediment a common vision of the dictatorship period, built from the “agreed transition to democracy” between the winners of the 1988 Plebiscite and the military regime.

While the dominant narrative paradigm in the Chilean series *Los 80* explains the last Chilean dictatorship from a neoliberal perspective – thus revealing the role



of television during that period –, in the Colombian case, and with possibilities of extrapolation to other countries in the region, Omar Rincón analyzes the phenomenon of “pop narco-capitalism”. In his essay, Rincón explains how television becomes the main reference for the universes and aesthetics of drug trafficking, a lifestyle that, according to him, has become the mainstream aesthetics of the 21st century, driven by the undercurrent of capitalism. This type of capitalism, says Rincón, is narrated through popular culture, and in countries such as Colombia and Mexico many telenovelas and series on recent history are presented in the format of “narconovelas”. These productions, with drug traffickers as protagonists and plots centered on drug trafficking, not only reflect Latin American history of the last five decades, but also narrate a version of capitalism, or “narco-capitalism,” as Rincón calls it.

Rincón questions whether it is the drug traffickers who create narcoculture, or if the entertainment industry itself drives it. He suggests that “what is striking is that narco and entertainment converge happily, offering hallucinatory and magical stories that promise we can all be heroes of consumption,” thus fueling capitalism. His essay explains how the narco narrative on television broke away from the melodramatic ethic centered on romantic love, adopting instead the ethic of the postmodern hero seeking social advancement. He also examines the stories that underpin this narrative, describing them as a “fictional realism that tells *another* history, different from the official one in Latin America.”

This narco-capitalism thrives by generating violence and destruction through its capitalist production, while simultaneously presenting itself in a “cool and pop” style that offers an alluring narrative. Here, television — though central — is only one component. This phenomenon also spans music, fashion, and lifestyle, seducing the public by promoting narco culture as both a lifestyle model and a mainstream ideal of style, appearance, and self-display.

## Narrative paradigms: the family

In the first two decades of this century, Latin American fiction adopted a successful format previously tested in the United States and Spain: narrating the great milestones of political, cultural and social history through the daily experiences of an urban middle-class family. This approach was implemented in series in Chile, Ecuador, Argentina and Peru.<sup>13</sup> These productions not only awakened nostalgia

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<sup>13</sup> See article by Mónica Contreras Saiz in this volume, 15–7.

through music, fashion and customs of the past, but also addressed controversial issues in the political history of each country. In each of these series, members of the protagonist families were assigned political values that were reflected in their reactions to historical events. The articles by Karen Genschow, Lorena Antezana and Eduardo Santa María delve into the role of the family as a shared paradigm of perception and interpretation of the past that connects with the public and their own memories.

Karen Genschow conducts a textual analysis of the series *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014) from Chile and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVP, 2017) from Argentina, relying on theories of literary criticism and memory studies. Both productions are set in the context of the last dictatorships of these countries and narrated from the perspective of “common” families. According to Genschow, in both series there is a pedagogical intention aimed at “learning identity” by showing “how we were” and, therefore, “how we are”. These fictitious families become a mediation device between the historical past represented in the series and the present of the audiences, who probably identify with a daily life centered on family life.

The historical dimension that underlies the plots, together with the materiality of television production, creates a narrative pattern that is familiar to viewers in two senses: first, as individuals with a reference to the historical past and, second, as members of a family. According to Genschow, it is in this link where the connection that series establish with the collective memory lies. The author also emphasizes that the use of the audiovisual archive in these productions transmits a critical reflection on the role of the media, which, by offering a biased version of reality and omitting aspects such as repression, terror and violence, did not fulfill their genuine function of informing. The articles by Claudia Bossay and Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda add to this same reflection.

The protagonist family is presented as a model of national integration and as a paradigm of consensual interpretation of the dictatorial past. However, Genschow argues that this narrative excludes other memories, thus limiting the plurality of perspectives on that historical period. In this connection, Antezana and Santa María’s article complements our understanding of the role of the family in the history of the Chilean dictatorship. They argue that the family was the pillar on which the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Chile was built. In this sense, by selecting a family as the protagonist, the series *Los 80* recognizes the Chilean family as a key social actor of the time. Thus, the “Herrera Family” represents a discourse that, by supporting the “transition agreed” with the dictatorship, politically legitimizes that phase of change. For Antezana and Santa María, *Los 80* reflects the democratic transition in Chile through four areas of analysis in its first season: everyday life, media memories, Chilean identity and economic values. In each of these aspects, the series presents the transition as the only viable solution to

the crisis, thus underpinning development and social peace, and avoiding conflicts or power struggles.

In conclusion, both Genschow's and Antezana and Santa María's analyses underline for the Chilean case, that *Los 80* constructed a narrative of the past that conforms to the discourse of the agreed transition, exalting the family as a symbol of social cohesion and stability. However, the emphasis on a consensual narrative may restrict the diversity of memories and experiences of the dictatorial period, silencing the perspectives of those who questioned the terms of the transition, and the concessions made in its name.

## Pedagogy, historical fiction and television

The articles by Tatjana Louis and Claudia Bossay explore pedagogical experiences that are closely linked to the transfer activities of the GUMELAB project. Louis presents the results of a seminar entitled *Telenovelas de la memoria*, given in the second semester of 2022 at the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá – Colombia), in which 43 students participated. During the course, the students analyzed three Colombian telenovelas, exploring what imagery of the past evoked in them and what concrete learning they extracted from them. For her part, Bossay examined in depth the use of the audiovisual archive in the first season of the Chilean series *Los 80, más que una moda* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), detecting the actual locations where they were filmed. Based on these findings, she designed the route of one of the six “Travels of Dialogue – Remembering & Travelling”<sup>14</sup> that were developed within the framework of the GUMELAB project.

Louis reflects on the extent to which audiovisual productions contribute to knowledge of the past. She notes that, while her students are often skeptical of the accuracy of telenovelas, many report a deeper understanding of the historical events depicted after watching them. The article points out that, although college students recognize the fictional nature of these shows, they tend not to question the content if the narrative seems plausible and aligns with their existing knowledge, experiences, and values. This suggests that telenovelas can convey a form of historical knowledge, though they do not always encourage a critical perspective on history. Critical thinking appears to arise primarily when the representation

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<sup>14</sup> These activities were inspired by the Citizen Science approach, which promotes the exchange between science and society. Within the framework of the GUMELAB project, six travels of dialogue were organized with citizens. See more at: [https://www.gumelab.net/en/transfer/Dialogreisen-\\_-Erinnern-\\_-Bereisen\\_/index.html](https://www.gumelab.net/en/transfer/Dialogreisen-_-Erinnern-_-Bereisen_/index.html).

directly challenges students' personal experiences or values, or when it is contradicted by outside information.

The use of audiovisual historical archives in telenovelas and TV series on the recent history of Latin America is a frequent feature in these productions. Claudia Bossay, in her article, analyzes this resource in detail in *Los 80*, identifying its function in the narrative and its connection with historical themes such as the history of the Chilean television channel Canal 13, the economic crisis of the 1980s, the economic and commercial boom in downtown Santiago, and the protests. With this material, Bossay created four video clips and selected emblematic places in downtown Santiago represented in the series, with the objective of analyzing the historical meaning that the series projects to a young audience, in this case composed of the 12 young university students from Santiago de Chile who participated in the tour.



**Figure 1:** This QR code provides access to the video documenting the GUMELAB's transfer activity Travel of Dialogue "Remembering & Travelling: Los 80's in Santiago's Downtown – Protest and the Economic Model," Santiago, Chile.

During the tour, participants watched the video clips in the same places where they were filmed, with the purpose of reflecting on the historical significance of the fiction and their own memories of the dictatorship and the series. Among the topics of discussion that emerged was the importance of the Canal 13 archive, which contains iconic images of the Chilean past in the hands of a private company, and all the issues related to its accessibility. It is an archive that is not public, and to view it one must pay for it. Likewise, the viewing of the video clip of the protests left the participants with the perception that the political interaction between the State and the citizens has changed little in the last 30 years. On the other hand, looking at these archival images as a whole and outside the fictional plot, they offer new interpretations of the past. In this regard, Bossay observed in this material how the dictatorship maintained its control through a combination of economic myth, entertainment and fear, thus consolidating power through fear. In this, the management of the media was key.

The article by Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda complements Claudia Bossay's reflections by examining the symbolic role of the television set in the plot of *Los 80* during the first season and its relationship with the violence of the dictatorial

context. Sánchez systematizes all the scenes in which the Herrera family's television set appears or alludes to television, classifying them according to four social functions of television, based on the theories of Francesco Casetti and Federico Di Chio. To enrich his analysis, Sánchez introduces the concept of “centripetal image” by André Bazin and the notion of violence by Johan Galtung, peace and conflict theorist. With this theoretical framework, Sánchez argues that television in the 1980s acts as a device of “public violence,” defining this violence as the influence of television on the characters' perception of everyday reality. In this sense, television molds reality and transforms it into “easy-to-digest” values and stereotypes that function as role models, thus preventing political imagination and disarticulating the social bond, which should be founded on the debate of the commons. This process, Sánchez argues, contributes to the fragmentation of society into factions, diluting social cohesion and the possibility of critical dialogue. This situation that Sánchez describes for the society of the 1980s is still very much in force for the participants in the journey that Claudia Bossay documents in her article. What is most relevant to this, and what constituted a point of identification, is how the perception of political interaction does not seem to have evolved, or even changed, in the last few years.

The articles by Tatjana Louis and Claudia Bossay highlight two ways of using historical fiction in the classroom to encourage reflection, not only on recent history, but also on how it is constructed and reinterpreted in the present through cultural products. These productions acquire additional value by resonating with the personal experience of students, who, through interaction with these narratives, find new connections with their own context and collective memory. Juan Pablo Sánchez's article enriches from a theoretical perspective the relationship between television, fictional plots and the historical development of the dictatorship itself.

All the studies presented underscore the cultural and educational impact of historical fiction in Latin America, illustrating how these narratives can serve as vehicles of collective memory and as catalysts for reshaping historical perceptions and fostering active citizenship. We hope that the insights gathered here will deepen our understanding of the intricate relationship between media, the construction of social reality, and our perception of history, inspiring further research in this dynamic field.

We extend our gratitude to all the authors for their valuable contributions, to the institutions supporting their research, and to their engagement in GUMELAB's organized activities. This publication was made possible through funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Free University of Berlin, whose support has been essential in creating a space for reflection and dialogue on the influence of televised fiction on historical memory and political culture in Latin America.

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Mónika Contreras Saiz

## “Any resemblance to reality is pure coincidence”

Broadcasting and Reception of Latin American Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series of Memory (1968–2023)

**Abstract:** The article starts from the premise that Latin American telenovelas and TV series that address contested issues of recent Latin American history constitute an expression of the region’s historical culture, contributing to the construction of a historical memory, especially around episodes of political and traumatic violence. Beyond their commercial nature, these audiovisual productions – telenovelas and TV series of memory – address issues such as dictatorships, drug trafficking, revolutionary movements, and armed conflicts, affecting the way audiences perceive and remember these historical events. In many cases, these telenovelas and TV series even have significant implications in the politics and history of the region. From a historical perspective and with the aim of offering a complete overview of the production and diversity of these television programs, the article analyzes a set of 80 productions broadcast between 1968 and 2023, highlighting key aspects of their creation and reception processes. In particular, it examines which sources are used by the creative teams and how they are in some cases used as authentication strategies to lend verisimilitude to the plots. The article proposes that these sources contribute to the creation of “memory images”, which interact with viewers and foster a dialogue between the represented past and their own memories. Finally, it is suggested that telenovelas and TV series of memory offer a fertile field for future research, given their impact on collective memory and, especially, their contribution to the understanding of how the recent history of Latin America is narrated through these popular entertainment formats.

**Keywords:** historical culture; Latin America; memory; telenovelas; TV series.

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**Resumen:** El artículo parte de la premisa que las telenovelas y series latinoamericanas que abordan temas controvertidos de la historia reciente de América Latina constituyen una expresión de la cultura histórica de la región, contribuyendo a la construcción de una memoria histórica, especialmente en torno a episodios de violencia política y traumáticos. Más allá de su naturaleza comercial, estas producciones audiovisuales – telenovelas y series de la memoria – abordan temas como dictaduras, narcotráfico, movimientos revolucionarios, y conflictos armados, afectando la forma en que las audiencias perciben y recuerdan estos eventos históricos. En muchos casos, incluso, estas telenovelas y series tienen implicaciones significativas en la política y devenir histórico de la región. Desde una perspectiva histórica y con el objetivo de ofrecer un panorama completo de la producción y diversidad de estos programas de televisión, el artículo analiza un conjunto de 80 producciones emitidas entre 1968 y 2023, destacando aspectos clave de sus procesos de creación y recepción. En particular, examina qué fuentes utilizan los equipos creativos y cómo éstas en algunos casos son empeladas como estrategias de autenticación para otorgar verosimilitud a las tramas. El artículo propone que estas fuentes contribuyen a la creación de “imágenes de la memoria”, que interactúan con los espectadores y fomentan un diálogo entre el pasado representado y sus propios recuerdos. Finalmente se sugiere que las telenovelas y series de la memoria ofrecen un campo fértil para futuras investigaciones, dado su impacto en la memoria colectiva y, especialmente, a su contribución en la comprensión de cómo se narra la historia reciente de América Latina a través de estos formatos populares del entretenimiento.

**Palabras clave:** América Latina; cultura histórica; memoria; series; telenovelas.

## Introduction

How many times have we seen telenovelas and TV series that start with the warning “any resemblance to reality is pure coincidence”? Every audiovisual production that starts with this warning is suggesting that it will deal with topics that could be familiar to us, and that, in truth, are not a coincidence. Especially those that base their plots on episodes related to the political and national history of several Latin American countries. In this article I argue that these productions, throughout the history of television fiction and now in on-demand television platforms, are building a historical memory of those contested pasts that have marked the recent history of Latin America. A student, with some indignation, questioned me about this when I presented this argument in class: How can there be a relationship



between the construction of historical memory and these commercial entertainment products in Latin America?<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, to speak of “historical memory” (*memoria histórica*) in Latin America in recent decades has a particular meaning for the region. The construction of this memory is closely linked to the approach to processes of extreme violence inscribed in recent national histories, which have generated a collective trauma in society or parts of it, and which include especially massive human rights violations perpetrated either by the State or by organizations of different types. In this context, the term historical memory is mainly associated with transitional justice processes and their institutional forms such as truth commissions, national centers of historical memory or memory museums. These official entities have the task of writing a narrative about those violent pasts, where the testimony of the victims is crucial for it to truly constitute a historical memory and contribute to the consolidation of democracy.<sup>2</sup> Under this approach, it is understandable the difficulty of associating the production of fiction programs, such as telenovelas and TV series, with the construction of a historical memory.

However, all media leave an imprint on the collective memory as well as act as mediators that select, interpret and disseminate versions of the past, influencing how history is remembered and interpreted. In that sense, although all telenovelas and series have an impact on our collective memory, there is a specific group of telenovelas and TV series that have contributed more directly to the construction of a historical memory, especially around the episodes of political violence that have shaken the continent. I call these productions “telenovelas and TV series of memory”.

From my perspective as a historian and researcher in the field of memory studies, I initially proposed the working concept “telenovelas of memory” to describe those televised historical fictions that met the following characteristics: 1) they represent a chapter of Latin America’s political, recent and traumatic history, i.e., a past with witnesses still alive and ongoing or pending memorial processes; 2) they evoke in many viewers their own memories of the historical events depicted; and 3) they employ authentication strategies, such as the use of real names of public figures for their characters, archival images or filming in places where the events occurred,

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<sup>1</sup> Within the framework of the chair *Ringvorlesung Kontexte und Begriffe der Lateinamerikaforschung* directed by Professor Susanne Klengel for the master’s program *Interdisziplinäre Lateinamerikastudien* at the Freie Universität Berlin, I was invited to present the GUMELAB project in the winter semester 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Salomón Lerner Febres, “La búsqueda de la memoria histórica en América Latina: reconciliación y democracia,” *Hendu – Revista Latino-Americana de Direitos Humanos* 1, no.1 (Julho 2010): 18.

among other techniques that provide a plausible appearance, precisely to fulfill the promise of being plots that are “based on real events”.<sup>3</sup>

As I delved deeper into exploring more telenovelas and TV series of this type, and better understood their formats and transformations over time, I realized the importance of including both in my concept of work. This distinction is fundamental, since, in essence, telenovelas tend to have a melodramatic structure, while TV series tend to adopt a tragic structure.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, both formats have been present since the beginnings of television. Currently, miniseries are setting a trend in the production of historical fiction, to the point that many telenovelas are being “serialized”, especially those dealing with sensitive issues of the past. It should be noted that, like telenovelas, described as “a genre in constant transformation and experimentation”,<sup>5</sup> TV series are also in a continuous process of evolution. As commercial products, both formats must adapt to market demands, continually innovating to appeal to a broad audience.<sup>6</sup> Over time, they have incorporated various genres, such as melodrama, action, suspense, thriller and even comedy, in different combinations and proportions. In addition, their incursion into historical themes, especially politically sensitive ones, has further fueled this transformation and experimentation of both formats.

A first systematization of television fiction production in all Latin American countries yielded a list of 80 productions made between 1968 and 2023,<sup>7</sup> that meet the characteristics that I have defined under the concept of “telenovelas and TV series of memory”. This set of productions reveals that, although there has been a

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3 The format closest to the concept of “Telenovelas and TV series of memory” is the docudrama. However, I do not use this term because the docudrama does not distinguish between different time periods and can cover any historical era. In contrast, the concept of “Telenovelas and TV series of memory” is limited to historical periods that have been experienced by the audiences themselves, or by their parents or grandparents. This concept is not designed as a television genre, but rather as an academic category that, based on these characteristics, includes various formats such as telenovelas, series, miniseries, anthologies, and docudramas.

4 Armando (Dago) García (screenwriter, film and television producer, vice-president of production, Canal Caracol), interviewed by the author, February 25, 2022, Bogotá, Colombia.

5 Nora Mazziotti Ed., *El Espectáculo de la pasión. Las telenovelas latinoamericanas* (Argentina: Ediciones Colihue, 1993), 18.

6 Martín Sueldo, “Montecristo: telenovela y derechos humanos,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 30 (2012): 181.

7 I began this systematization before the start of the GUMELAB project in April 2021, and over the past three years, it has been completed thanks to the contributions of the GUMELAB research team and colleagues from the University of Chile, the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and the University of Rosario in Colombia. I am grateful for their collaboration and suggestions. This systematization (as of December 2023) remains a work in progress.

notable increase in their production in the last two decades, the recent past of the region has been, since the beginnings of television in Latin America, a recurrent source of inspiration in the television industry. This increase in production aroused my interest as a historian and led me to ask myself: how can we understand this media culture in the field of entertainment around the recent history of Latin America? And, above all, how is it perceived by viewers? How can we analyze what these telenovelas and series leave in the memory of their viewers?

The first question leads us to analyze telenovelas and TV series of memory as part of historical culture. The second and third, on the other hand, are related to the effects that these productions have on the historical consciousness and memory of those who watch them.<sup>8</sup> Within the discipline of history, the distribution and reception of history in the present is a specific field of research in the didactics of history. In this context, historical culture is studied as a specific way in which societies understand, experience and interpret the past in their everyday life and how this understanding orients the practice of human life.<sup>9</sup> Alongside the concept of historical culture, I also consider that of historical consciousness, which is equally important in the field of history didactics. This concept refers to the internal and personal process by which individuals understand their past and relate it to the present and the future. These specific ways of relating to the world are, in turn, linked to historical thinking, a fundamental prerequisite for the memory of every individual. Historical thinking, which is also memory and images, becomes historical when it transcends one's own vital-historical memory in terms of time.<sup>10</sup>

In summary, while telenovelas and TV series of memory serve as an external expression of the historical culture of the societies that produce them, historical consciousness is the internal reflective process that arises from viewing these works, involving the understanding and interpretation of the historical content they depict. This process can be observed by analyzing the dialogues that emerge between the images and narratives presented to the viewer, and how these interact with their own memories, knowledge, and interpretations of the past being represented.

In order to understand telenovelas and TV series of memory as part of a historical culture within entertainment that addresses the recent history of Latin America, this article presents a preliminary analysis of 80 telenovelas and memory

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8 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Conciencia Histórica, pensamiento crítico y telenovelas en Latinoamérica,” in *Escenarios para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico*, coord. Eugenia Varela Sarmiento (Buenos Aires: CLACSO; Bogotá: Universidad de La Salle, 2019), 57–61.

9 Hilke Günter-Arndt, “Geschichte als Beruf,” in *Geschichte. Studium – Wissenschaft – Beruf*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Dagmar Freist, Hilke Günter-Arndt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 32–50, 36.

10 Günter-Arndt, „Geschichte“, 36.

series, from their beginnings to the present (2023). I will examine which relevant historical events have been addressed, the Latin American countries that have played a central role in this type of productions and highlight some examples of the debates they have generated among their audiences. The first part of the analysis is organized around six thematic categories that group telenovelas and TV series. In the second part, I will explain the sources used in the creation of these productions and their effects on the creation of “memory images”, previously defining this concept and the types of images that we have identified from the empirical material worked.

The main sources used to gather information on this set of 80 productions were Wikipedia, the press, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and specialized bibliography.<sup>11</sup> To explore their production processes, interviews with members of the creative teams were conducted and consulted. In addition, to obtain a preliminary view of its reception, I have qualitatively analyzed comments in social networks and audience segments. Although this analysis is not representative, it offers important clues about the effects of these productions on audiences and the dialogues established between the images and narratives transmitted and some of their viewers.

## Telenovelas and TV series of memory: an overview

“For those who are watching the comments to see if the plot is good. I just finished it and during the time I watched it, I was glued to the novela, the actors are super good and I feel that it made me change a lot, watching it was like having a history, education and values class in one novela. It is a super production, I highly recommend it.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There are no institutions that centralize the production of fiction across all Latin American countries since the beginnings of television, with the exception of the Ibero-American Observatory of Television Fiction (OBITEL), which has made significant progress since 2005. Of the total 80 telenovelas and series, 56% were located through Wikipedia, 21% through press records, 7% via IMDb, and another 7% through specialized literature, with OBITEL's yearbook standing out. 4% were identified through the information available from television channels. Other sources, with lesser contributions, included my experience as a viewer, conversations with colleagues, Facebook, and YouTube.

<sup>12</sup> Comment by @jamisg3357 on episode No.1 of the Ecuadorian series *Nuestra Historia* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=booU8W-n790>, video published on September 4, 2019. All quotes from social media are originally in Spanish, unless otherwise noted, and have been freely translated into English by the author. “Novela” is the colloquial term many people use to refer to a telenovela in Latin America.

This is a comment left two years ago by a viewer on YouTube of the first episode of the Peruvian series *Nuestra historia*, first broadcast in 2016 by TV Perú.<sup>13</sup> Although some of the telenovelas and TV series of memory have been broadcast on open television repeatedly, their dissemination has extended to our days thanks to platforms such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Facebook and the instant messaging application Telegram – among others –, which has made it easier for them to reach audiences beyond the national ones and above all has allowed me to watch many of them and include them in my research.

With this YouTube commentary I want to highlight the type of digital sources I have worked with, as well as this new cultural practice of online viewing, which facilitates the direct dialogue that these cybernaut viewers establish with the television programs they choose to watch. Being able to access chapters of telenovelas and series broadcast in the past in different Latin American countries, and also to read the opinions and discussions of those who watched them, provide a valuable source for understanding the impact of these fictions on people’s historical consciousness and opens new paths for empirical research in this field.

With the exception of Paraguay, these productions include episodes from the contested pasts of nearly every South American country. However, the great absence corresponds to Central American countries. Although there are telenovelas and TV series that deal with the recent past of Cuba, Dominican Republic and Mexico, the same does not happen with the rest of the countries in the region. This is undoubtedly due to the limited development of their commercial television industries. It is likely that, with a more consolidated audiovisual industry, these countries would have already developed plots about their controversial and traumatic political pasts, such as those of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Haiti and Costa Rica. This conclusion is based on the fact that almost 85% of the telenovelas and TV series of memory are of national production, that is, the controversial episodes of history portrayed in the fictions usually correspond to the same countries that produce them. The 15% of the productions that have been made by international teams with respect to the historical plot they represent, show new practices in fiction production and it is the incursion of fictions spoken in Spanish in the production plans of large American production houses such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Telemundo, Univision, HBO and Apple TV among others.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The episode was uploaded by TV Perú to its YouTube channel in 2019. Later, in the section “Telenovelas and TV series of memory about national political conflicts”, I will discuss this production.

<sup>14</sup> Anna Marie De La Fuente, “Netflix Habla Español. Streaming service kicks up original production in Latin America hoping for bigger payoff s in subs,” *Variety* 337, no.9 (2015): 61; Luis Pablo Beauregard, “Netflix habla español,” *El País*, October 16, 2015, <https://elpais.com/cultura/2015/04/29/>

The predominant format is the miniseries, accounting for 46% of productions (37 in total) with an average of 9 episodes. It is followed by the telenovela format, representing 28% (22 productions) with an average of 100 episodes. In third place is the series format, making up 21% (17 productions) with an average of 17 episodes, and lastly, the anthology format, which represents 4% (4 productions). It is important to note that classifying some productions within these formats can be problematic due to their hybrid nature. Many TV series and miniseries incorporate significant amounts of melodrama, and both their length and airing schedules bring them closer to the telenovela format, to the point where viewers often perceive them as a “novela”.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, some productions classified as telenovelas include substantial amounts of action and suspense, with protagonists that break away from the classic characteristics of the genre.

Analyzing which are the main themes dealt with in the contested and traumatic pasts of the set of telenovelas and TV series of memory, I have determined six categories: dictatorships, drug trafficking, violent political conflicts, revolutionary movements, specific historical events and political figures.

## **Telenovela and TV series of memory dealing with aspects of Latin American dictatorships**

From the late 1970s to the present, almost half of the telenovelas and TV series that make up this set of historical fictions (49% of the total, 39 productions) have addressed, directly or indirectly in their plots, the theme of dictatorship. However, not all dictatorships that Latin America has suffered in its recent history have been represented in fiction. Narratives have concentrated mainly on the dictatorships of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908–1935) and Marcos Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela (1951–1958), Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (1930–1961), the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985), Guillermo Rodríguez Lara in Ecuador (1972–1976), Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973–1990) and the last dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983).

If we place these periods in a timeline, we observe that fictions that have dealt with different aspects of Latin American dictatorships cover more than eight decades of history, from 1908 to 1990. These narratives began to be broadcast continuously on television from 1979, extending until 2023, the year in which this systematiza-

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[actualidad/1430337224\\_439278.html?event=go&event\\_log=go&prod=REGCRARTCULT&o=cerrcult](https://www.elsegundo.com.ve/actualidad/1430337224_439278.html?event=go&event_log=go&prod=REGCRARTCULT&o=cerrcult).

<sup>15</sup> “Novela” is the colloquial term many people use to refer to a telenovela in Latin America.

tion concludes. Below, I will present them following a preliminary periodization option that organizes them chronologically according to the year of their first broadcast on television or digital platforms.

## And for the first time, the dictatorship became a telenovela in Venezuela (1970–1980)

In 1979 and during the first half of the 1980s, Venezuela brought to the small screen four telenovelas that dealt directly with the last two dictatorships the country had suffered up to that moment, which turned Venezuelan television production into a pioneer in the fictionalization of dictatorial regimes. These productions narrated sensitive stories of the past in a context where there were still living witnesses of those events, which added a component of living memory to these historical fictions. The telenovelas were *Estefanía* (RCTV, 1979) which dealt with the dictatorship of Marco Pérez Jiménez (1951–1958); *y Gómez I* (RCTV, 1980), *Gómez II* (RCTV, 1981) and *La Dueña* (Venezolana de Televisión, 1984) which focused on the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez, who ruled Venezuela from 1908 to 1935 and whose regime is known in historiography as “El gomecismo”.

At a time when telenovelas tended to focus exclusively on love stories, *Estefanía* marked a turning point. It was the first to address, along with the romance of its protagonists, issues such as torture committed by a police intelligence agency and to include the figure of the dictator as a character within the plot.<sup>16</sup> In addition, it explored the capacity of organization and resistance from the underground against tyranny, characteristics that confer great relevance to this telenovela.

Two key figures in the history of Venezuelan entertainment fiction, Julio César Mármol and José Ignacio Cabrujas,<sup>17</sup> were linked to these four productions. Both stood out for creating telenovelas that moved away from the traditional “telenovela rosa” (pink telenovela) of the time.<sup>18</sup> José Ignacio Cabrujas stood out for including

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<sup>16</sup> It refers to the so-called “National Security” (Dirección de Seguridad Nacional – DSN). The dictator, portrayed in the telenovela as “General Marcos Suárez Figueres” and played by actor Luis Rivas, was inspired by Marco Pérez Jiménez, who, during the broadcast of *Estefanía*, was living in exile in Brazil. *Estefanía* was also the first telenovela broadcast in color in Venezuela.

<sup>17</sup> Cabrujas wrote the following television works: *Juicio a Juan Vicente Gómez* (1975), *Proceso a Juan Vicente Gómez* (1975), and *El asesinato de Carlos Delgado Chalbaud* (1982), which could be classified as *telenovelas de la memoria* due to their focus on recent history. For now, I have not included them, as I have yet to confirm additional information about these productions.

<sup>18</sup> Julio César Marmol wrote *Estefanía*, José Ignacio Cabrujas wrote *Gómez I* and *Gómez II*, and

in all his telenovelas characters that questioned reality, bringing greater verisimilitude to the genre.<sup>19</sup> Julio César Mármol, for his part, witnessed the political violence of the Pérez Jiménez regime. At the age of 17, after participating in a student protest against the government, he was arrested and imprisoned for six months in the dungeons of the National Security.<sup>20</sup> It can be inferred that both their political orientation and personal experiences contributed to the sensitization of the two librettists to deal with issues such as the dictatorships they had witnessed.

These Venezuelan fictions about the dictatorships of Gómez and Pérez Jiménez represent an important effort of public historical memory by addressing the human rights violations committed during these periods. It is especially significant if we consider that, in the context of the Cold War of the 1960s, a process of transitional justice or the construction of historical memory about these dictatorships was still unthinkable. The Venezuelan state did not initiate a formal process to sanction crimes, disappearances, torture, and other human rights violations perpetrated for political reasons until 2011, focusing primarily on the period of the “Punto Fijo” pact, which spanned from 1958 to 1998.<sup>21</sup>

Once the dictatorship became the subject of a telenovela in Venezuela, between 1979 and the mid-1980s, this issue did not cease to be present on the Latin American small screen in the following decades. Paradoxically, while in Venezuela the dictatorships of the 30’s and 50’s that the country had suffered were taken to fiction, in other nations of the continent bloody dictatorships were simultaneously lived, which would later become “fuel” for new television productions.

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both wrote *La Dueña*.

19 Leonardo Padrón, “A propósito de Cabrujas”, in José Ignacio Carabrujas, *Y Latinoamérica inventó la telenovela* (Caracas: Alfadil 2002), 16.

20 Daniel Cuevas, “Sobre Estefanía, la telenovela venezolana de 1979,” *El Nacional*, October 24, 2019, <https://www.elnacional.com/papel-literario/sobre-estefania-la-telenovela-venezolana-de-1979-2/>.

21 The Punto Fijo Pact, signed in 1958 after the fall of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, was an agreement between the parties Acción Democrática, Copei, and Unión Republicana Democrática to ensure democratic stability through an equitable distribution of power among the parties in government. However, the Communist Party and sectors aligned with the dictatorship were excluded, and human rights violations continued.



## Brazilian dictatorship: the second to be brought to television in the 1990s

As in Venezuela, in Brazil, in the 1990s, two Brazilian TV series left their mark on the treatment of the memory of the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964–1985), before a process was initiated by the State to address the crimes committed under the dictatorship.<sup>22</sup> The most important is the miniseries *Anos Rebeldes*, broadcast by Rede Globo in 1992, which addressed for the first time the subject of the military dictatorship, which had just ended seven years earlier. During 20 episodes, more than 30 million viewers followed the experiences of a group of teenage friends between 1963 and 1979 and saw how the dictatorship affected their lives. Historian Roberto Abdala Junior investigated how the miniseries influenced the political action of young people, which became evident in the demonstrations calling for the impeachment of President Fernando Collor de Melo in 1992 on charges of corruption.<sup>23</sup> Then, in 1998, the TV series *Hilda Furacão* (Rede Globo) dealt with the theme of dictatorship indirectly by addressing the relationship between right-wing politics and young socialists around three years before the beginning of the 1964 civil military dictatorship – the period of Jânio Quadros’ government, his resignation and the entrance of João Goulart. In addition to the prohibition and persecution of communists, the narrative shows how there was a distorted view of what it meant to be a communist. The miniseries was a great success with audiences and critics alike, and much of this was due to its meticulous work in depicting the political and economic context of the time.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1990s, the production of telenovelas and TV series entered a new stage related to production technologies that manifest other intertextualities.<sup>25</sup> *Anos*

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<sup>22</sup> In 1995, the Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappeared Persons (CEMDP) was established, though it faced numerous limitations. It was not until 16 years later, in 2011, that a Truth Commission was formed, tasked with investigating human rights violations that occurred between 1946 and 1988, including those during the military dictatorship (1964–1985). For more information, see: Samantha Viz Quadrat: “Historia y memoria de la violencia política de Brasil dictatorial,” en *Las luchas por la memoria en América Latina. Historia reciente y violencia política*, eds. Eugenia Allier y Emilio Crenzel (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2016), 123–48.

<sup>23</sup> Roberto Abdala Junior, *Memórias da ditadura, TV e os “rebeldes” anos 1980* (Curitiba, PR: Editora Prismas, 2017), 423.

<sup>24</sup> Heloiza Chaves, “Além do amor e a boêmia: As marcas da política e economia na narrativa de Hilda Furacão,” *Medium*, November 23, 2021, <https://medium.com/@mariaheloiza.souza/al%C3%A9m-do-amor-e-a-bo%C3%AAmia-as-marcas-da-pol%C3%ADtica-e-economia-na-narrativa-de-hilda-furac%C3%A3o-8d4b9c82530b>.

<sup>25</sup> Mazziotti, *El Espectáculo*, 19.

*Rebeldes* in fact repeatedly integrated short films with historical images and black and white archival footage by Brazilian filmmaker Silvio Tendler. The innovation of these “panels of historical images” consisted not only in the representation of events of reality at decisive moments in historical time, but also in the composition of the melodramatic plot.<sup>26</sup>

## Rise of dictatorship as a theme and part of the plot in historical fiction (2000–2020)

The boom in the production of telenovelas and series dedicated to dictatorships reached its peak in the following two decades. Between 2000 and 2020, 22 television series related, directly or indirectly, to the dictatorships of the Dominican Republic (1942–1952), Brazil (1964–1985), Ecuador (1972–1976), Chile (1973–1990) and Argentina (1976–1983) were produced.<sup>27</sup> Half of the productions of this wave of telefiction are related to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, making it the most treated in Latin American television fiction to date.<sup>28</sup> The predominance of the dictatorship theme is explained by at least three reasons. First, the current memorial processes in the continent, both in relation to the political violence of the

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<sup>26</sup> Roberto Abdala Junior, “Anos Rebeldes,” accessed June 17, 2023. <https://www.gumelab.net/es/forschung/fallstudien/weitere-Telenovelas-und-Serien/Anos-Rebeldes/index.html>

<sup>27</sup> For the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic: *El Chivo* (UniMás, Caracol, 2014). For the dictatorship in Chile: *Mea Culpa* (Anthology format, episode 103, ninth season, TVN, 2004), *Los 80, más que una moda* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), *Los archivos del Cardenal* (TVN, 2011), *12 días que estremecieron a Chile* (Chilevisión, anthology episodes 5, 7, 10 of the first season in 2011, and episodes 6, 9, and 11 of the second season in 2017), *Amar y morir en Chile* (Chilevisión, 2012), *Ecos del desierto* (Chilevisión, 2013), *No, la serie* (TVN, 2014), *Sudamerican Rockers* (Chilevisión, 2014), *Una historia necesaria* (Canal 13 Cable, 2017), *Mary and Mike* (Chilevisión, 2018), *Dignity/Dignidad* (Joyn Plus+, Mega, 2019), *Berko, el arte de callar* (Cadena Fox, TVNA, 2019), *Invisible Heroes/Héroes invisibles* (Yle TV1, Yle Areena, Chilevisión, 2019). For the dictatorship in Brazil: *Senhora do Destino* (TV Globo, 2004), *Queridos Amigos* (Rede Globo, 2008), *Amor e Revolução* (SBT, 2011), and *Os Dias Eram Assim* (Globo Play, TV Globo, 2017). For the dictatorship in Argentina: *Montecristo* (Telefe, 2006), *Televisión por la identidad* (Telefe Contenidos, 2007), *El Pacto* (América Televisión, 2011), *Volver a nacer* (TVP, 2012), *Amores de historia* (TVP, 2012), *Historia de un clan* (Telefe, 2015), *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Telefe Contenidos, 2017). For the dictatorship in Ecuador: *Parece que fue ayer* (Ecuavisa, 2013), *3 Familias* (only the fifth season, Ecuavisa, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> I co-authored an article with Hannah Müssemann where we analyze this body of productions and their connection to the country’s memorial processes. See: “Pasados traumáticos representados en telenovelas y series. Una comparación de las experiencias en Chile y Colombia,” *Revista de Historia Comparada*, (forthcoming).

20th century since the 1990s, as well as the celebration of the Bicentennial of the South American countries in the first decade of the 2000s, have created a propitious context for these themes to be addressed in entertainment formats. The Bicentennial was a key moment in which nations reflected on their recent histories, models of democracy and the outstanding debts of States with their societies.

Secondly, in some countries there is a convergence between a solid audiovisual industry and a recent history marked by the experience of a dictatorship, as is the case of Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Finally, and especially considering the Chilean experience, where I have had the opportunity to interview several members of the production teams, I have noticed that there is a predominant political stance that condemns the human rights violations committed during the Pinochet dictatorship, therefore, there is a political commitment to disseminate these issues in the formats they create.<sup>29</sup> These are, as Marian Schlotterbeck has pointed out, cultural products made by those called “the children of the dictatorship”.<sup>30</sup> It is significant to consider that all the dictatorships dealt with so far in fiction are ideologically right-wing military and civil-military dictatorships, leaving aside other dictatorial regimes such as the one-party dictatorship in Cuba.

Among the first telenovelas that emerged in these two decades, *Montecristo* (Telefe, 2006) stands out, the first to deal with the subject of the dictatorship in Argentina. Although its plot takes place in the present, it revives the theme of the last dictatorship (1976–983). The protagonist, Laura, is the daughter of a disappeared detainee, born during her mother’s captivity and illegally given up for adoption to a torturer, which deprived her biological family of the right to know and raise her, and robbed Laura of her identity. When Laura begins to have doubts about her identity, she goes to the offices of the “Asociación Civil Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo” (Civil Association Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo) – scenes that were filmed in the actual premises of the organization.<sup>31</sup> Through its fictional plot, *Montecristo* also informed its audience about the legal process so that those Argentines with doubts about their identity could request a DNA study with the National Bank of Genetic Data through the National Commission for the Right of Identity (CONADI). So in

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<sup>29</sup> Historian Roberto Abdala Junior reached a similar conclusion regarding Brazilian historical culture in the 1990s, the period when *Anos Rebeldes* was produced. Junior Abdala, *Memórias*, 423.

<sup>30</sup> This label has been applied to all those creatives, writers, filmmakers, actors “who grew up during the dictatorship and entered the workforce in the height of the neoliberal stage”. Marian E. Schlotterbeck, “Actos televisados: el Chile de la dictadura visto por el Chile del bicentenario,” *A contra corriente*, 12. (2014):138.

<sup>31</sup> Sueldo, “Montecristo”, 183; Karen Genschow, “Montecristo. Un amor y una venganza (2006). El trauma colectivo de la dictadura argentina en clave melodramática,” *Iberoamericana*, 17, no. 65 (Mayo-Agosto 2017): 67–91.

*Montecristo* we are watching a telenovela explicitly put at the service of a memorial process. The viewing of the telenovela multiplied the number of queries about identity in the offices of the Grandmothers.<sup>32</sup>

Following the success of *Montecristo* and as part of a communication strategy of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo to directly reach their grandchildren who are still missing through mass media, artists from different fields such as theater, cinema, music, graphic arts, painting and television were called upon to collaborate. Thus, in collaboration with the Argentine channel Telefe, the miniseries *Televisión por la identidad (Television for Identity)* was created. It consisted of three episodes, in anthology format, broadcast by the same channel in 2006 and narrated the story of three real cases of missing grandchildren. The moving and novel aspect of the miniseries was that, for the first time, each episode included video clips with images of the real grandchildren who inspired the main characters. The program was declared of cultural interest by the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires, received the Clarín Award 2007 as best anthology fiction and four Martín Fierro awards, including best miniseries of the year. In 2008, it won an Emmy award for best television miniseries. To this day, the three episodes are available on Abuelas' YouTube channel, remaining accessible to new audiences who want to learn about the issue of the babies stolen during the dictatorship and the work of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo.<sup>33</sup>

In Brazil, between 2000 and 2020, four telenovelas related to the military dictatorship were produced. One of them, *Amor e Revolução*, aired in 2011 on the Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT) channel, tells the love story between a military intelligence officer and a leader of the student movement who joins the armed struggle and becomes a guerrilla fighter. Similar to *Television for Identity*, this production experimented with the inclusion of video clips of real witnesses at the end of its fictional plot. Most of these testimonies were from people who opposed the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964–1985) and became victims of the regime; also included, to a lesser extent, were testimonies from sympathizers of “the revolution of '64”, as its supporters call that period. This gave the production a very unique characteristic, as it is the only one among all the telenovelas and series about Latin American dictatorships that have given voice to real sympathizers of the victimizers.

However, the testimonies were only presented at the end of the first 60 chapters of the 204 that make up the telenovela, since the ratings showed that they did

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<sup>32</sup> Sueldo, “Montecristo”, 189.

<sup>33</sup> Here is the link to the playlist:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3\\_eALxvQDA&list=PLr6ojCqgUoZ938bBkFKibzQ-JTWAgCpYh](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_eALxvQDA&list=PLr6ojCqgUoZ938bBkFKibzQ-JTWAgCpYh).

not arouse great interest among viewers, who increased their ratings once they were eliminated.<sup>34</sup> In addition, SBT decided to eliminate the testimonies because it could not get any military or ex-military personnel to participate, which, according to the channel’s management, was neither accurate nor fair. In order to avoid offering only one version of the history, the channel opted to suppress the testimonies.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the broadcasting of the telenovela, an ideological conflict was generated in the public sphere, because the military disagreed with the way they were represented. This discontent reached the point of presenting a petition signed by 97 military and ex-military personnel requesting the suspension of the telenovela.<sup>36</sup>

In these two decades of boom (2000–2020) Latin American fiction also adopted a successful format that had been previously tested in the United States during the 1980s and in Spain in the early 2000s:<sup>37</sup> to narrate major milestones of political, cultural and social history through the daily experiences of an urban middle-class family. This approach was implemented in Chile, Ecuador, Argentina and Peru. In Chile, the series *Los 80, más que una moda* (Canal 13) stood out from 2008 and for seven years, allowing Chileans to remember and learn about significant events of the 1980s along with the Herrera Family, becoming one of the most acclaimed series in the history of Chilean television. In 2013, the Ecuadorian series *Parece que fue ayer* (Ecuavisa), told the story of the 1970s in Ecuador through the Álvarez family. Then, in 2015, *Nuestra Historia* (TV Perú) presented Peruvian history between 1978 and 2001 with the Robles family.<sup>38</sup> Finally, in 2017, the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVP), set its plot in the history of the country between 1974 and 1983 with the Martínez family as the main character.

The four productions not only evoked nostalgia through music, fashion and customs of the past, but also addressed controversial issues in the political history

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34 Dayse Maciel de Araujo, “Comunicação, consumo e educação: o caso da telenovela *Amor e Revolução*” (Dissertação, Programa de Mestrado em Comunicação e Práticas de Consumo, Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, 2013), 52; Karen Genschow, “Kollektives Gedächtnis, Diktatur und Melodram in spanischen und lateinamerikanischen Telenovelas,” in *Quotenkiller Oder Qualitätsfernsehen? TV-Serien Aus Französisch- und Spanischsprachigen Kulturräumen*, ed. Julien Bobineau (Wiesbaden: Springer Vieweg, 2022), 129.

35 Kelia Jimenez, “SBT corta depoimentos reais em *Amor & Revolução*,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, November 14, 2011. [https://web.archive.org/web/20111011234641/http://outrocanal.folha.blog.uol.com.br/arch2011-07-10\\_2011-07-16.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20111011234641/http://outrocanal.folha.blog.uol.com.br/arch2011-07-10_2011-07-16.html).

36 Araujo, “Comunicação,” 60.

37 I am referring to the American series *The Wonder Years* (ABC, 1988–1993) and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Televisión Española, 2001–2023) from Spain. See the article by Karen Genschow in this volume.

38 Actually, in *Nuestra Historia*, it is the story of five families, although the Los Robles family is the protagonist. Later, in the section “Telenovelas and TV series of memory about national political conflicts”, I will discuss this production.

of their countries. These themes were generally introduced through the television set in the family living room, functioning as a narrative resource to integrate historical audiovisual archives, mainly fragments of news broadcasted in news programs of the period in which the plot is set. In each of these series, the characters of the protagonist families were assigned political values that were reflected in their reaction to political events, which were integrated with archival images and even with the plot of the series itself. Thus, we find the politically committed son or daughter, who shares leftist values; the son or daughter who is not interested in political issues or has an opposing stance; the youngest son, generally 9–10 years old, who raises uncomfortable questions from the innocence of childhood. The mother usually takes an apolitical position, while the father, although he does not openly express his political opinions, is the one who suffers most directly from the consequences of the economic decisions of the regimes of his time.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond the search for commercial success as any production in the field of entertainment, these TV series had a commemorative and, in some cases, educational purpose. *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014) and *Parece que fue ayer* (Ecuavisa, 2013) were created in the context of the celebration of the Bicentennial of Chile and Ecuador respectively. *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVP, 2017),<sup>40</sup> was a state educational bet through Argentina's Public Television. The series was shown from Monday to Thursday and on Fridays a program entitled *Cuéntame un poco más* was presented in which "some scenes of the week functioned as triggers for questions and questioning to historians, specialized journalists and witnesses".<sup>41</sup>

The production of these TV series is expensive, and their commercial success is not guaranteed. *Parece que fue ayer* (2013), produced by the Ecuadorian channel Ecuavisa, was the least successful of them all. Although it was announced in 2011, it was not aired until 2013 and, according to critics, at an inconvenient time. Initially planned to have 12 episodes, its number was reduced to six, which affected the continuity of the stories and contrasts with the other productions of this type, which averaged 70 episodes. It was also criticized for its lack of verisimilitude, since the Álvarez family, represented as a Quiteño family, was made up of actors from the Ecuadorian Coast and Highlands whose accents "did not work". In addition, the

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39 This model is not followed in the Peruvian version of *Nuestra Historia*.

40 Argentina was the only Latin American country that bought the rights from the Spanish production. Maripaz Alcaraz, "Los remakes internacionales de *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," *FormulaTV*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.formulatv.com/noticias/71759/remakes-internacionales-cuentame-como-paso/>.

41 Marcelo Stiletano, "Cuéntame cómo pasó: la historia argentina, según una típica familia de clase media," *LA NACION*, August, 21, 2017, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/espectaculos/television/cuentame-como-paso-la-historia-argentina-segun-una-tipica-familia-de-clase-media-nid2055055/>.

house where the Álvarez family lived “did not look anything like a 1970s Quito”.<sup>42</sup> However, on YouTube it was lamented that the series had gone off the air due to the low audience and an Ecuadorian person wondered “could it be that our history does not matter to us?”,<sup>43</sup> while another person added that he was saddened that this TV series “that would have contributed to our Ecuadorian historical memory” was reduced to so few chapters and did not have the proper promotion.<sup>44</sup> What it did not achieve *Parece que fue ayer*, Ecuavisa achieved with the highly successful comedy in Ecuador *3 Familias*. In 2019, the channel premiered the fifth season of this “telenoveled TVseries” (*serie novelada*), using similar resources to those of *Parece que fue ayer*, such as the use of archival images from the seventies and eighties throughout 86 episodes. However, in *3 Familias* these resources were employed in a merely incidental manner, without delving into the historical themes of the archival material. This is reflected in the audience comments in the episodes available on YouTube, where there are no mentions of the country’s history, but rather with nostalgia and memories of the culture of the time. Predominating the codes of comedy over those of a historical fiction.

In this set of fictions related to Latin American dictatorships, it is not easy to establish generalities without first conducting a detailed research on each of them. It is essential to understand their production contexts, their plots and their reception by the public. Furthermore, to assess their value and scope as products of a historical culture and as vehicles of memory, it is necessary to contrast the fictional narrative with the historiographic narrative and the ongoing memorial processes. This allows us to identify the differences and similarities between the various narratives and to explore the extent to which historical research has been interested in these issues, what achievements it has made, and what gaps fiction has filled or addressed that historiography cannot cover. As I have watched these TV series, I agree with the idea of the writer Juan Gabriel Vásquez, who states that fiction, in many cases, offers information, knowledge or revelations that historical research cannot provide, “because they belong to an order of the human that is not that of

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42 David Nikolalde, “‘Parece que fue ayer’, otra víctima de la mediocridad de la televisión ecuatoriana,” *Caricato*, February 18, 2013, <http://revistacaricato.blogspot.com/2013/02/parece-que-fue-ayer-otra-victima-de-la.html>.

43 “There are definitely shows worth watching, and they take them off the air due to low ratings. *Parece que fue Ayer*, a series based on the 1970s in our country – what a shame, truly!! In Spain, the *Cuéntame cómo pasó* version was very successful and well-received. Is it that our own history doesn’t matter to us?” Comment by @yanelagonzalez7468 on the promotional video for *Parece que fue ayer*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6NhWhAWZ-U>, video published on November 16, 2011.

44 Comment by @davidnikolalde to the promotional video for *Parce que fue ayer*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z96QAouocvg>, video published on November 28, 2012.

tangible and verifiable facts”.<sup>45</sup> This intangible and unverifiable aspect is related to what the producer of the Chilean-German series *Dignity* (Joyn Plus+, Mega Chile, 2019) Andreas Gutzeit described as “the emotional truth”.<sup>46</sup> the emotions of an era and those that the story itself evokes in each viewer, creating a unique emotional connection with the history.

On the other hand, the most revealing issue that these historical fictions offer us for the didactics of history is that, more than teaching us about the past, they reveal to us the emotions, concerns and interests of our present. In this context, some short stories about the production of series related to the dictatorship are interesting. For example, we know that two Chilean productions about the dictatorship faced difficulties to reach broadcast television. Often, seeing them advertised on the channels, it is assumed that they are aligned with the editorial line and have the full backing of the channel. What is often overlooked, however, are the complex processes that occur behind these productions before they become part of the channels’ programming schedule.

In a personal conversation I had with Nona Fernández, co-writer of the Chilean series *Los Archivos del Cardenal* (TVN, 2011), she told me that it took Josefina Fernández, creator of the series, several years to get the backing of a Chilean television channel for the project. Finally, in 2009, the TVN channel (Televisión Nacional de Chile) supported the script’s application for state funding.<sup>47</sup> *Los Archivos del Cardenal* was the first series to offer a more direct and realistic account of the repression, crimes and impunity under the Pinochet regime, focusing its plot on the work of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, a Catholic Church institution that defended human rights during the dictatorship.<sup>48</sup>

Another production that faced difficulties to be broadcast on free-to-air television was the miniseries *Una historia necesaria* (Canal 13 Cable, 2017). Premiered

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45 Vásquez said this in reference to literary fiction, but I have extended it to television fiction. Juan Gabriel Vásquez, *La traducción del mundo. Las conferencias Weidenfeld 2022* (Barcelona: Alfaguara, 2023), 10.

46 As part of the conference “Latin America’s Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series. A Cross-Sector Dialogue between Academia, Entertainment and Society”. See the report of this conference at: <https://www.hsozkult.de/index.php/conferencereport/id/fdkn-142950>.

47 Nona Fernández, personal communication, August 17, 2015, Santiago de Chile; Javier Mateos-Pérez, “La producción de las seris de televisión chilenas de éxito (2008–2012)” in *Chile en las series de televisión. Los 80, los archivos del Cardenal y El reemplazante*, ed. Javier Mateos-Pérez, Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor (Santiago de Chile Chile: RIL Editores, 2018), 144.

48 Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor, “Los archivos del cardenal: esto no es ficción”, in *Chile en las series de televisión. Los 80, los archivos del Cardenal y El reemplazante*, ed. Javier Mateos-Pérez, Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor (Santiago de Chile Chile: RIL Editores, 2018), 87–108.



on September 11, 2017, with a commemorative purpose, but restricted only to Chilean subscribers of Canal 13 Cable. This miniseries, which I consider one of the most audacious proposals among all Chilean productions that have portrayed various aspects of the dictatorship, consists of 16 episodes of 5 minutes each, dedicated to show the hours prior to the disappearance of several opponents of the Pinochet regime. The brevity of the chapters responded to its target audience: “large consumers of short-duration content”.<sup>49</sup> The aesthetics of the miniseries, more cinematic than television, was recognized with the award for best short fiction film at the Barcelona Film and Human Rights Festival in 2017. A year later, it won a prestigious Emmy for best short series, which allowed it to be broadcast on free-to-air television thanks to its international success.

It is likely that the initial reluctance to broadcast it on television, despite having received public funds for its production,<sup>50</sup> was due to its openly denouncing nature. The episodes were based on cases documented in the Rettig report,<sup>51</sup> in judicial records, in the archives of the library of the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD, *Association of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees*) and in testimony from relatives, friends and witnesses of the disappeared detainees.<sup>52</sup> Each chapter included an epilogue showing the photographs and names of the members of the security forces who were responsible in each case, as well as the status of their trials, a format that was celebrated on social networks for its impact, allowing “grandchildren” of the perpetrators to learn about the actions of their grandparents.<sup>53</sup>

With these examples I try to illustrate that, although in the Chilean case there is a generation of creatives who approach the subject of the dictatorship in a critical

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49 América Jiménez, “Una Historia Necesaria: La miniserie que rescata la memoria para las nuevas generaciones”, September 15, 2017, <https://fcei.uchile.cl/noticias/137013/una-historia-necesaria-la-miniserie-que-rescata-la-memoria->.

50 Normally, all Chilean productions that have received funding from the Consejo Nacional de Televisión CNTV (National Television Council) must be broadcast on public television.

51 The Rettig Report is the name given to the final report submitted on February 9, 1991 by the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the human rights violations that took place in Chile during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. The Commission, which was in session for nine months, covered the period from September 11, 1973 to March 11, 1990. It can be consulted at this link: <https://bibliotecadigital.indh.cl/items/edb83a4d-9121-48ee-8e66-09fe31e926fe>.

52 EPOL, “Canal 13C estrenará serie CNTV sobre Detenidos Desaparecidos en dictadura,” *El Periodista*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.elperiodista.cl/2017/08/canal-13c-estrenara-serie-cntv-sobre-detenidos-desaparecidos-en-dictadura/>.

53 Coca (Coca@risueno) “it is good that in the series # A Necessary History they put the names of the culprits – when there are any – so that the grandchildren, if they knew us, know what their taitas were doing”, Twitter, September, 2017, <https://x.com/UHNecesaria>.

way through television fiction, not all people linked to the television industry share this position, unless it is a convenient product for the entertainment industry or generates good profits. Such was the case of *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014). In a series of interviews I conducted with members of the production team, the political commitment of the team to portray this era in a critical manner was evident. However, it also brought to light the complexity faced by Chile's Channel 13, a channel, at that time, with a Catholic and conservative tradition, and with a mostly pro-Pinochet audience, in the face of the appearance in *Los 80* of a character from the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez,<sup>54</sup> which could have offended part of its audience.

Rodrigo Bazaes, Art Director of *Los 80* and director of the last two seasons, told me in an interview that this concern was always present for him, until he directly asked Channel 13: “Why in all these years has no one objected at all that there is a *frentista*?” The answer was that *Los 80* was a great source of income for the channel.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the commercial success neutralized the channel's possible ideological objections. This case suggests that the significant impact of *Los 80* on Chile's historical and cultural memory was also due, in part, to its commercial success; otherwise, the series would not have reached seven seasons, nor would it have had the necessary continuity to become what it was.

In the 2000s and 2010s, in which Southern Cone dictatorships dominated as a theme and part of fictional plots, the exception was *El Chivo* based on Mario Vargas Llosa's novel “La fiesta del Chivo” (The Feast of the Goat). Like the book, the telenovela tells the story of the dictatorship of Dominican Rafael Leónidas Trujillo and focuses on his assassination in 1961 and the consequences it had in the Dominican Republic.<sup>56</sup> *El Chivo* premiered in 2014 on UniMás, the U.S. Spanish-language free-to-air network owned by TelevisaUnivision. A random reading of YouTube comments related to this production and in comparison, for example, with productions about Venezuelan or Southern Cone dictatorships, point to a substantial difference in audience perception. While in general the latter were seen by their viewers who commented on YouTube as political proposals to understand the value of democracy and reject the violation of human rights, and in many cases their verisimilitude is valued, the opinions regarding *El Chivo* are divided. There are those who appreciated it, but there are also those who criticized its lack of verisimilitude;

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<sup>54</sup> The Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR) was a leftist guerrilla organization in Chile, founded in 1983 during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

<sup>55</sup> Rodrigo Bazaes (art director of *Los 80*, director of seasons 6 and 7), interviewed by the author; April 5, 2023, via Webex, Santiago – Berlin.

<sup>56</sup> AP, “Vargas Llosa al mundo de las telenovelas con la serie ‘El Chivo’,” *El Financiero*, July 15, 2014, <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/after-office/vargas-llosa-al-mundo-de-las-telenovelas-con-la-serie-el-chivo/>.

besides not all Dominicans felt represented and there are those who took the series as a “lack of respect for the country”. The production of *El Chivo* was in charge of a Colombian company and was filmed in the same country, in one of the comments on YouTube, it was stated that when the Colombians made the series of *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012) that “as they know it was spectacular, I do not know why they did not include Dominican historians in the production...”.<sup>57</sup>

In general, and considering the contrast of viewers of *El Chivo* on YouTube with those of the Argentinean, Chilean and Brazilian TV series, as well as the statements of its creators in the press, a clear connection is evident between the memorial culture of a country, the historical consciousness of both creators and audiences, and the impact that these series generate after their production and viewing. Further studies on the production and audiences of these productions will contribute to a better understanding of these interrelationships.

## **Dictatorship, a present legacy: between commemoration, transnational perspective and its shadow on culture (2020–2023)**

In the past decade (2010–2019), during its first four years, nine TV series dealing, directly or indirectly, with some Latin American dictatorships had already been aired. Between 2020 and 2023, the last period considered in this systematization, six miniseries were aired in four years, whose plots and subplots address issues linked to dictatorships in Chile, Argentina and Brazil. If we consider that during this period the global COVID-19 pandemic broke out, which considerably affected audiovisual production, we can conclude that the number of series broadcast on the dictatorship was remarkable, even in contexts of crisis.

This group of six miniseries focused mainly on the Pinochet dictatorship, with four productions: *Isabel* (Mega, 2019) and *Prisioneros* (Movistar TV, 2022), which deal indirectly with some aspects of the regime, and *La sangre del Camaleón* (TVN, 2023) and *Los mil días de Allende* (TVN, 2023) which address the dictatorship directly. Meanwhile, *El amor después del amor* (Netflix, 2023) indirectly tackled the Argentine dictatorship while *El presidente: juego de la corrupción* (Amazon Prime

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<sup>57</sup> All citations in quotation marks are comments made to the video “Julio Bracho interpreta al dictador Trujillo en serie ‘El Chivo’ de RTI-Televisión,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzQtCrLHbO4>, video published June 16, 2014.

Video, 2022) also indirectly – but from a transnational perspective – addressed the dictatorships of Chile, Brazil and Argentina. These productions demonstrate that, even by 2023, the theme of dictatorships remains a significant source for historical fiction. This is partly due to its role in commemoration, but also reflects the creators' interest in projecting “the shadows of dictatorship” in cultural realms like sports and music, while highlighting its transnational dimensions. It also reflects the growing interest of U.S. and European production companies in the stories that can be “extracted” from Latin American history.

*La sangre del Camaleón* and *Los mil días de Allende*, both broadcast in 2023, had an entirely commemorative function on the 50th anniversary of the coup d'état in Chile, which occurred on September 11, 1973, when President Salvador Allende was overthrown and replaced by a military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet. A particularity of these series, within the group of Chilean productions that deal with the dictatorship, is that, only 19 years after the dictatorship was portrayed for the first time on Television in 2004, Chilean fiction dared to represent Augusto Pinochet as a character and “take him out of the television set”.<sup>58</sup> This challenge was assumed by Chilean actor Daniel Alcaíno in *Los mil días de Allende*. At the same time, the narrative period of the dictatorship has been expanding, with a growing number of series that cover not only the years of the regime (1973–1990), but also moments before and after that enrich its historical explanation. An example of this is *Los mil días de Allende*, which portrays from Allende's presidential campaign to the day of his death. This tendency to broaden the historical context has been consolidated in fictional narratives about the Pinochet dictatorship.

Another particularity that stands out in this decade is the transnational perspective of the dictatorships of Brazil, Chile and Argentina in historical fiction. This is seen in the series *El Presidente: juego de la corrupción* (2022),<sup>59</sup> based on the book *Jogo Duro: A História de Joao Havelange* by Ernesto Rodrigues, which explores how the Brazilian João Havelange became the first Latin American to preside over FIFA. Through this plot, the relationship of these dictatorships with soccer, a sport that, as mentioned several times in the series, “brings joy to the people”, was thematized, underlining its relevance in times of repression.

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58 Until that point, Pinochet's figure had appeared in the TV series through audiovisual archives of real news, generally integrated into scenes “featuring a television” displaying images of the dictator, sometimes accompanied by his audio.

59 In the press it was presented as the second season of the series *El Presidente*, the first season of the (Amazon Prime Video, 2020) focused on the Chilean case of Sergio Jadue, the president of the Chilean Football Federation.

The three dictatorships appear in a “contingent” or “accessory” way, i.e., they are not the central issue or the focus of the series, but “their shadow” can be appreciated. Given the period covered by the plot (1966–1982) and the international character of soccer, the relationship between sport and politics is evident, as well as the use of large-scale sporting events to make visible or cover up political realities. In this context, dictatorships cannot be ignored.

In *El Presidente: juego de la corrupción*, five dictators from Brazil and Argentina are depicted with their real names.<sup>60</sup> In particular, the Argentine dictator Jorge Rafael Videla is shown pronouncing the slogan of the campaign to clean up Argentina’s image in the world: “We are doing this World Cup so that the world knows that in Argentina we are Rights and Humans and so that the Argentine people will be happy” (Chapter 6, 10:37). Although the series adopts a tone of comedy and satire, it recreates shocking scenes, such as the visit of a FIFA delegation to the National Stadium of Chile in 1973, reflecting the use of soccer stadiums as places of repression and control during some dictatorships of the Southern Cone.

If the theme of the dictatorship is maintained, either as the main plot or as a setting context, and this transnational trend continues, it is likely that in the next few years we will see a series about the *Condor Plan*.<sup>61</sup> For now, it is suggestive that the German production company Story House is preparing a thriller series about the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, in which a German officer must rescue his daughter, who is detained by the military regime.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, from the previous period and in the current one, I have identified what I have called “the shadow of the dictatorship” in fictional productions dedicated to biographical series of cultural figures. In this period, *Isabel* (2019), which portrays the life of Chilean writer Isabel Allende; *Prisioneros* (2022), about the emblematic Chilean rock band “Los Prisioneros de Chile” and *El amor después del amor* (2023), which addresses the life of Argentine singer Fito Páez, stand out. In *Isabel*, the series brings us closer to the writer’s experience of exile due to political persecution during the dictatorship. On the other hand, both *Prisioneros* and *El amor después del amor*, show a context of oppression marked by the

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<sup>60</sup> From Brazil: Alencar Castelo Branco (1964–1967), Emilio Garrastazu Médici (1969–1974) and Ernesto Geisel (1974–1979). From Argentina: Jorge Rafael Videla (1976–1981) and Eduardo Massera (1976–1978).

<sup>61</sup> The Plan Condor was a covert operation in the 1970s-80s where South American dictatorships collaborated to track, detain, and eliminate political opponents across borders. It involved intelligence sharing and widespread human rights abuses.

<sup>62</sup> Emiliano De Pablos, “Sisi Showrunner Andreas Gutzeit Eyes Latin America for Argentina 1978 World Cup Set Thriller Disgrace,” *Variety*, June 22, 2023, <https://variety.com/2023/tv/global/sisi-story-house-andreas-gutzeit-disgrace-1235651094/>.

presence of intelligence police agents in the streets, while rock music is considered “a voice of resistance” against authoritarianism.<sup>63</sup>

Up to this point I have systematized and presented, in an introductory way, a set of 38 productions grouped in four chronological periods, all of them related to some dictatorships of the last century in Latin America. The diversity of narratives, temporalities, controversies generated, processes of production, reception and distribution, formats, and the use of strategies to authenticate reality, as well as their relationship with ongoing memorial processes, among many other characteristics, suggest the possibility of other periodization and thematic classifications that would enrich their analysis. Each of these productions offers a vast field of research and, with this article, I would like to invite a deeper exploration of each of them. The reconstruction of their production, reception, marketing and distribution histories not only shows how historical fiction is created, but also reveals the themes that certain groups – and even governments – consider relevant to bring to the screen. In turn, the public incorporates these stories into their entertainment space, either with the interest of “seeing the past” or without foreseeing the memories and conversations that may arise. These telenovelas and TV series of memory about some Latin American dictatorships, on the one hand, constitute a valuable archive that is part of the historical culture of the region, where there is still much to reflect on the subject of dictatorship. On the other hand, they have the potential to contribute significantly to broadening the historical consciousness of their viewers.

## Telenovelas and TV series of memory about drug trafficking

Drug trafficking is the second most treated topic, after dictatorships, in the representation of traumatic events in the recent history of Latin America through television fiction. Although about 70 narconovelas and narcoserries related to the region have been produced,<sup>64</sup> only 20 of them I have classified as telenovelas and TV series

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<sup>63</sup> In *El amor después del amor*, the first chapter takes place in 1978. After listening to an audio that reports on an operation by the public forces against subversives, the following announcement appears: “It is the third year of military dictatorship in Argentina. Thousands of people are missing, mostly young people. Artists are persecuted. Rock is considered a voice of resistance.”

<sup>64</sup> According to a first systematization carried out by Jacqueline Johana Peña from 1982 to 2022. *Telenovelas y series en la narcoestética visual*, unpublished working paper, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos (ZILAS) de la Universidad Católica Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, GUMELAB, Freie Universität Berlin, 2023.

of memory, which represents 25% of the total.<sup>65</sup> These productions present important differences in the quality of their production and in the use of strategies to authenticate reality, such as the use of real names, historical archive material and filming in locations where the events occurred. The production of these telenovelas and TV series in Latin American countries seems to be linked to the role that each has played in the internal division of illegal drug trafficking. It is no coincidence that, of the 20 productions, 12 are related to Colombia, representing 60% of the total, while 4 are related to Mexico, equivalent to 15%. Bolivia and Brazil, although with fewer productions, are also part of this group. It is interesting to note that drug trafficking had already appeared as a theme in television fiction since the 1980s, long before the term “narconovelas” became popular, which did not begin to be widely used in relation to these productions until the early 2000s.

Several of these telenovelas and TV series about drug trafficking have explicitly contributed to the historical construction of traumatic memories.<sup>66</sup> However, by focusing mainly on drug lords as protagonists, these productions have been criticized for privileging the point of view of criminals and victimizers. In the cases of Colombia and Mexico, some of their creators have explicitly stated their intention to contribute to the construction of historical memory and the transmission of history.<sup>67</sup> In Colombian productions, these narratives not only address the life of the druglords and the fight against them, but also key aspects of the Colombian armed conflict, the peace processes with the guerrillas and paramilitary action. In addition, other topics such as money laundering have started to receive more attention as seen in the Brazilian series *O Mecanismo* (Netflix, 2018).<sup>68</sup> Similarly,

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65 Bolivia: *Oro verde* (ATB, 1988), *Coca* (ATB, 1989), *La última expedición* (Cruceña de Televisión, 1989). Colombia: *El Cartel de los sapos* (Caracol, 2008), *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), *Alias el Mexicano* (RCN, 2013), *La viuda negra* (Univisión, 2014), *En boca del Lobo* (UnMás, RCN, 2014) *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015, 2016 and 2017), *Bloque de búsqueda* (RCN, 2016), *Sobreviviendo a Escobar, Alias J.J.* (Caracol, 2017), *Noticia de un secuestro* (Amazon Prime Video, 2022), *Goles en contra* (Netflix, 2022). Mexico: *El Señor de los Cielos, first season* (Telemundo, 2013), *El Chapo* (Univisión, 2017), *Narcos, Mexico* (Netflix, 2018), *Somos* (Netflix, 2021). Brazil: *O Mecanismo* (Netflix, 2018).

66 In collaboration with Hannah Müsseman, I co-authored an article analyzing this group of Colombian productions and their relationship with the country's memorialization processes. Given this previous work, I will not delve deeply into these productions here. See: “Pasados traumáticos representados en telenovelas y series. Una comparación de las experiencias en Chile y Colombia,” *Revista de Historia Comparada*, (forthcoming).

67 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Narcotráfico y telenovelas en Colombia: entre narconovelas y ‘telenovelas de la memoria’,” *Panorama* 157 (2017): 26–31; Camila, Osorio, “Netflix produce *Somos*, a new series about the 2011 Allende massacre,” *Ediciones EL PAÍS*, May 25, 2021, <https://elpais.com/mexico/2021-05-25/netflix-produce-somos-una-nueva-serie-sobre-la-masacre-de-allende-de-2011.html>.

68 *O Mecanismo* primarily focuses on corruption, yet I categorize it under drug trafficking because

connections between important figures in politics, the armed forces and corruption have become more common in the subplots. According to several reception interviews I have conducted with their viewers, these productions have nurtured a kind of memory of corruption.<sup>69</sup>

In the reception of these productions, the spectacularization of drug traffickers has been constantly criticized. This criticism has had an impact on the narratives of the latest productions, which have begun to privilege the voices of the victims of drug trafficking. For example, the Mexican series *Somos* (Netflix, 2021), addresses a massacre committed in 2011 by a Mexican cartel from the perspective of the victims. This is also the case of *Noticia de un secuestro* (Amazon Prime Video, 2022), which gave voice to the victims of Pablo Escobar who are the protagonists of the series. *Noticia de un secuestro* is based on the homologous book by Gabriel García Márquez and also managed to make visible the world behind those “victimizers”, generally young people of limited resources who do not necessarily have many opportunities to get ahead and that the world of drug trafficking is presented to them as an option, often impossible to avoid.

This shift in representation suggests a growing awareness of the need to contribute to the construction of a more empathetic historical memory, which reflects a significant advance in the way this part of the Latin American past is told. However, it is important to note that not all audiences perceive or value these new nuances, and, for now, *narconovelas* and *narcoseries* that have changed the focus represent a minority within this genre. In general terms, these productions enjoy great commercial success and high ratings, but they are also deplored, especially by authorities, who consider them “a school of crime”. In countries such as Mexico and Costa Rica,<sup>70</sup> bills have even been proposed to prohibit or regulate their broadcasting. In the debate on their social impact, the main argument against them is that *narconovelas* promote anti-values and encourage violence. In response to this claim, it has been emphasized that “the problem is cocaine and social inequality, not telenovelas”.<sup>71</sup>

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it addresses a central theme: the laundering of drug money through politicians and corporations.

69 Contreras, “Narco tráfico”, 26–31.

70 Esteban Arrieta, “Buscan erradicar narconovelas de la televisión costarricense,” *La República*, July 23, 2024, <https://www.larepublica.net/noticia/buscan-erradicar-narconovelas-de-la-television-costarricense>.

71 Clarin.com, “Narconovelas: Entre el rating y la polémica,” *Clarín*, March 27, 2014, [https://www.clarin.com/espectaculos/tv/Narconovelas-rating-polemica\\_0\\_SyfeLY09vXl.html](https://www.clarin.com/espectaculos/tv/Narconovelas-rating-polemica_0_SyfeLY09vXl.html).



## Telenovelas and TV series of memory about revolutionary movements

The five telenovelas and TV series of memory that I have classified under the category of “revolutionary movements” are Cuban, which is no coincidence considering that they were all made in the context of the Cuban Revolution and financed by Fidel Castro’s regime. The miniseries *En silencio ha tenido que ser* (Televisión Cubana, 1979), *Algo más que soñar* (Producciones Granma, 1985) and *De tu sueño a mi sueño* (Cubavisión, 1985), as well as the adventure:<sup>72</sup> *Memorias de un abuelo* (Televisión Cubana, 1999) portray different aspects of the Cuban Revolution. *En silencio ha tenido que ser* set out to “offer the public the fruitful history” of the first twenty years of the Cuban security organs in order to transmit “a message of high ideological value”<sup>73</sup> to the Cuban television audience. *Algo más que soñar* dealt with Cuba’s military intervention in Angola;<sup>74</sup> *De tu sueño a mi sueño* narrates, through a love story, the clandestine struggle of the young men who joined the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra and witnessed the cruelty and barbarities committed by the army of Fulgencio Batista’s dictatorship; Likewise, *Memorias de un abuelo*, based on the autobiographical novel by Enrique Acevedo González entitled “Descamisado”, which narrates his experience as a teenager when he joined the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra and fought in the guerrilla column commanded by Ernesto Che Guevara.

Only one of the productions is not related to Cuba but to the Uruguayan urban guerrilla group Tupamaros. It is *Los Comandos del Silencio* (1968), the oldest production of the whole set of telenovelas and series of memory that I present in this article. A viewer remembered it as follows:

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72 The so-called “aventuras” (adventures) was a Cuban television genre created in 1963 especially aimed at young people and teenagers, in which action fiction with political content was broadcast at 7 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

73 “Chivato” is a whistleblower. Comment by Boris the Bolshevik to the article published online: Cubadebate, “Murió Eduardo Moya, el director de *Los comandos del silencio* y *Algo más que soñar*,” April 5, 2016, [http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/04/05/murio-eduardo-moya-el-director-de-los-comandos-del-silencio-y-algo-mas-que-sonar/comentarios/pagina-1/#comment\\_content](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/04/05/murio-eduardo-moya-el-director-de-los-comandos-del-silencio-y-algo-mas-que-sonar/comentarios/pagina-1/#comment_content).

74 This is the so-called “Operation Carlota” (1975–1991), which occurred during the Angolan War of Independence and the subsequent Angolan Civil War. In this operation, the Cuban army deployed around 318,000 soldiers to fight alongside the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Joey Whitfield, “Narratives of Internationalism in Angola: Myths, “Testimonio”, Fiction,” *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 2, no. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter 2010): 231–48.

„I remember the series *Los Comandos del Silencio*. It was about urban guerrilla warfare. It was broadcasted at a time when all armed struggle was not yet classified as terrorism. That was imposed by the Yankees, especially after 9/11. There were even some scenes in which one of the protagonists executed with a knife his friend who had become a whistleblower“.<sup>75</sup>

This commentary, taken from an article in a Cuban digital portal, shows how the TV series (called *aventuras*) is still remembered almost fifty years after its first broadcast in the late 1960s, which evidences the lasting impact that television programs can leave in our memory. It also reflects how Cuba used entertainment as a propaganda tool. Through the “adventures” format, it targeted a youth audience, promoting the armed guerrilla struggle and turning the Tupamaros into protagonists and heroes of the small screen.

*Algo más que soñar* (1985) was produced by two lieutenants of the Cuban army with military assistance. It was filmed at the Film and Television Studios of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), which was part of the Film Section of the FAR's Training Department, created in 1961 with the purpose of „filming and preserving the historical, patriotic and military events” of the revolution.<sup>76</sup> The series narrates in 9 chapters the story of four young Cubans from their entry into the FAR until their participation in the Angolan War. Set in the 1980s, the plot takes place practically in the present of its viewers, but the triumph of the Revolution is constantly being recalled, as well as the sacrifices of the guerrillas who conquered the Sierra Maestra. The series very possibly served as a tool for recruiting students for the Armed Forces at the beginning of that decade.

This set of Cuban TV series reveals that there was no clear line between the treatment of the traumatic past and the glorification of the Cuban Revolution. The connection between historical fiction and memorial processes raises a discussion on the relationship between the production of telenovelas and TV series of memory and politics. In the Cuban case, it is clearly political propaganda financed by the state. However, this is not a singular case; in Colombia, there are also television fictions that have served similar purposes.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> “Chivato” is a whistleblower. Comment by Boris the Bolshevik to the article published online: Cubadebate, “Murió Eduardo Moya, el director de *Los comandos del silencio* y *Algo más que soñar*,” April 5, 2016, [http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/04/05/murio-eduardo-moya-el-director-de-los-comandos-del-silencio-y-algo-mas-que-sonar/comentarios/pagina-1/#comment\\_content](http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/04/05/murio-eduardo-moya-el-director-de-los-comandos-del-silencio-y-algo-mas-que-sonar/comentarios/pagina-1/#comment_content).

<sup>76</sup> EcuRed, “Estudios Cinematográficos y de Televisión de las FAR,” accessed November 11, 2021, [https://www.ecured.cu/Estudios\\_Cinematogr%C3%A1ficos\\_y\\_de\\_Televisi%C3%B3n\\_de\\_las\\_FAR](https://www.ecured.cu/Estudios_Cinematogr%C3%A1ficos_y_de_Televisi%C3%B3n_de_las_FAR).

<sup>77</sup> See in this book the article by Carolina and Galindo, Contreras, Müssemann, “Pasados traumáticos”.

## Telenovelas and TV series of memory about national political conflicts

Civil wars and internal armed conflicts are another theme addressed in telenovelas and TV series of memory. In this group I have classified seven productions from Colombia and Peru. For the Peruvian case the productions *La Captura del Siglo* (América TV, 1996), *Conversando con la luna – Perdonarse* (TV Perú, 2014) and *Nuestra Historia* (TV Perú, 2015).

In Peru’s recent history, the period between 1980 and 2000 is identified by two names, depending on the ideological perspective: “the era of terrorism in Peru” or “the Peruvian internal conflict”. This armed confrontation, which involved the Communist Party of Peru Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, the Self-Defense Committees and the Peruvian armed forces and police, was the longest and bloodiest in the country’s republican history, leaving a deep trauma in many sectors of society.<sup>78</sup> A key milestone in this conflict was the capture of *Sendero Luminoso* leader Abimael Guzmán in 1992. Four years later, in 1996, the miniseries *La Captura del Siglo* (*The Capture of the Century*) was released, which was, in fact, a “made-for-TV movie” presented in episodes on América TV. The script was based on the history and testimonies of the Special Intelligence Group (GEIN),<sup>79</sup> an elite unit of the Peruvian National Police, created within the National Directorate Against Terrorism (DINCOTE) with the objective of locating and capturing the leaders of the *Sendero Luminoso* and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. The miniseries tells the story of how this group of “anonymous heroes” was formed and pays tribute both to them and “to the innocent victims of that tragic war”, as mentioned in a warning in the first episode.<sup>80</sup> The episodes, available on YouTube for 15 years,<sup>81</sup> have generated some 700 comments that allow

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<sup>78</sup> Fabiola Arellano Cruz, “Musealización del conflicto armado interno: El ‘lugar de la memoria, la tolerancia y la inclusión social’ en Lima. Reflections on a controversial project,” in *Memoria y conflicto. Memorias en conflicto. Intercambios metódicos y teóricos de experiencias locales latino-americanas*, eds. Mónica Contreras Saiz et al. (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 2016), 187–188.

<sup>79</sup> It has also been presented as “a movie for TV”: “La captura del siglo”, accessed October 16, 2023, [https://www.filmaffinity.com/es/fullcredits.php?movie\\_id=987735](https://www.filmaffinity.com/es/fullcredits.php?movie_id=987735). On the Wikipedia page of the audiovisual producer Augusto Tamayo San Román, who worked as a consultant, it also appears as a “TV movie”, accessed October 16, 2023, [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusto\\_Tamayo\\_San\\_Rom%C3%A1n](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusto_Tamayo_San_Rom%C3%A1n). There is different information about its duration. Comments on YouTube indicate that it lasted almost 3 hours.

<sup>80</sup> “Cine peruano la Captura del Siglo” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO6hqshFTWA&list=PL310570380B6F027E&index=2>, accessed October 16, 2023.

<sup>81</sup> Link to the playlist, published on 26.04.2009, on Juan Condor’s channel,

us to get a closer look at their reception. Many remember having seen the miniseries on television and recall the events depicted, while others, especially young people, comment on not having lived through those moments and feel empathy for what their parents went through. The content of the miniseries invites the audience to question whether these events were addressed in school history classes. Several viewers say, puzzled, that they were never discussed. Others, however, claim to have studied them in school. Many comments praise the quality of the production and suggest that it should be rebroadcast on television. Over the past 15 years, some people have seen the series as a way to commemorate Guzman's capture. "Today September 12, 2024. Peru without terrorism"<sup>82</sup> commented one user recently. A Peruvian colleague pointed out to me in a personal conversation that Guzman's capture "is our September 12, just like September 11 in Chile".<sup>83</sup>

*Conversando con la luna*, a short telenovela format based on true stories submitted by the public, in its third season, aired in 2014, also addressed the era of terrorism and armed conflict in Peru. With the story titled "Perdonarse" (forgiveness), the short telenovela told in five chapters the story of Pedro Paucar, who, at the age of 9 in 1991, was forced to join the *Sendero Luminoso* when his mother was forced to turn him in as a combatant. Pedro managed to escape thanks to the help of a *Sendero Luminoso* militant, and was later helped by some nuns, whom Pedro made believe that he was an orphan, because he could not forgive his mother for giving him up to the *Sendero Luminoso*. Later, he was adopted and, as an adult, embarked on the path of forgiveness and the search for his biological family. A notable aspect of *Perdonarse* is that, through the character of Pedro's mother, it promoted the reading of the report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (published in 2003). In addition, after each commercial break, notices such as: "If you are a direct relative of a deceased or disappeared person, you suffered serious injuries, go to the Reparations Council" were broadcast along with the address and contact information with the purpose of disseminating the reparation mechanisms provided by the Peruvian State to the victims of the conflict. In this way, *Perdonarse* merged entertainment with an ongoing transitional justice process, opening a space for reflection on the aftermath of the conflict and the role of forgiveness in the reconstruction of the Peruvian social fabric.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO6hqshFTWA&list=PL310570380B6F027E>.

<sup>82</sup> Comment by @DARIELADIONICIAMELOFLORES to the first part of the series <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO6hqshFTWA&list=PL310570380B6F027E&index=1>. Video published on April 26, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> F. A., personal communication, October 4, 2023.

A year later, in 2015, TV Perú broadcast *Nuestra Historia*, which goes beyond the internal armed conflict. Through the story of five families from a middle-class neighborhood in Lima, it portrayed the changes in the social, political, cultural and idiosyncrasy of Peru from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. The creator of the series, Eduardo Adriázen, stated that the making of this series was important for young people to know “how their parents lived, how they suffered with terrorism”, and for older people – including himself – to serve as “a recounting of our lives and an evaluation of an era”. He also felt that the series was “an enjoyable way to create questions, curiosity, and for history to encourage dialogue for those younger than 40 years old.”<sup>84</sup> The entire series is available on TV Perú’s YouTube channel and the comments show that Adriázen’s purpose with the series was achieved. A history teacher left a comment stating:

“I am a History teacher... each year with 4th year high school kids we studied the 70s, 80s onwards...and I recommend you to watch this series and as homework I leave you the analysis/commentary of some chapters. You can’t help but want to watch the series again.... I’m going for my third time.”<sup>85</sup>

In fact, several comments are from schoolchildren who have come to it at the suggestion of their teachers. At the same time, many comments recount the intergenerational dialogue it triggered and the memories it revived. But the aspect that most caught my attention from the set of comments I randomly consulted is that many people considered it so good that they suggest it “should be on Netflix”. With this they are not only valuing the good quality of *Nuestra Historia* but also legitimizing Netflix as a platform to show good series and with a greater capacity to internationalize “their story”. There are comments from Peruvians living abroad that *Nuestra Historia* “should be broadcasted internationally” because many Peruvians who emigrated “do not know many things...”.<sup>86</sup> Others request a second part “from 2000 to 2020” because there are “so many conflicts and revelations that deserve to be captured by a national view”<sup>87</sup> not only approving this type of historical narration through fiction but denoting a need.

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<sup>84</sup> Plataforma\_glr, “Nuestra historia contada en serie de TV,” *LaRepública.pe*, November 16, 2015, <https://larepublica.pe/tendencias/896163-nuestra-historia-contada-en-serie-de-tv/>.

<sup>85</sup> Comment by @tesigoamando1 to the first chapter of *Nuestra historia* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=booU8W-n790>, video posted on September 4, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Comment by @susanalcalde3086 to the video last chapter of *Nuestra Historia*, video posted on December 24, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7dfpOHD80Y&list=PLtU1EVPSjC2BFUDIGRiq37vGM4sPnnZZN&index=1>.

<sup>87</sup> Comment from @mistervivor to the last chapter of *Nuestra Historia*, video posted on Decem-

Continuing with the Colombian case, it should be mentioned that the production of television fiction on the recent history of this country intertwines different types of conflicts, including the impact of drug trafficking in the Colombian historical evolution.<sup>88</sup> Several telenovelas and TV series of memory that I previously classified under the theme of drug trafficking could also be included in the category of “political conflicts”. In Colombia, it is impossible to narrate the history of drug trafficking without addressing the armed conflict, just as the conflict cannot be fully understood without connections to drug trafficking. Both phenomena, which sadly still persist, have left and continue to leave a trail of violence, violating the human rights of hundreds of people. Perhaps for this reason, fictions that portray the recent history of Colombia, marked by violence and drug trafficking, continue to occupy such a relevant place in our television.

I have identified a total of 16 productions that deal with political conflicts in Colombia. Of these, three deal with the period of *La Violencia*,<sup>89</sup> while the rest explore different aspects of the Colombian armed conflict.<sup>90</sup> However, only four of these 16 productions I have classified as “telenovelas and TV series of memory”. This classification is due to the fact that they use real names of public figures in their characters and/or include real historical images, which reinforces their intention to faithfully recreate the facts.

The first of these productions is *El Bogotazo*, broadcast in 1984, whose plot is set in the origins of *La Violencia*. The series narrates the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader of the Liberal Party, which took place in Bogotá on April 9, 1948. Gaitán, who enjoyed great popularity, was the victim of an assassination that, together with the persecution of Liberal Party sympathizers by the Conservative Party, unleashed a wave of violence that plunged the city into chaos known as “El

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ber 24, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7dfpOHD80Y&list=PLtU1EVPSjC2BFUDIGRiq37vGM4sPnnZZN&index=1>.

**88** If I disregard the third characteristic of my concept of *telenovelas and TV series of memory* – “the use of authentication strategies, such as incorporating real names of public figures for characters, archival footage, or filming at locations where the events occurred, among other techniques that lend a sense of plausibility” – we would have a total of 16 productions directly related to violence and armed conflict, and 19 related to drug trafficking. For more on these productions, see: Contreras, Müsemann, “Pasados traumáticos”.

**89** *La Violencia* was an undeclared war between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party in Colombia between approximately 1946 and 1965. It was characterized by a brutal war of extermination with a high degree of sadism and dehumanization, in which around 200,000 people lost their lives. The main victims of this conflict were peasants.

**90** On these productions see Contreras, Müsemann, “Pasados traumáticos”. In this volume the articles by Carolina Galindo, Franziska Entglert, Hannah Müsemann, delve into some of them.

Bogotazo”. This event marked a turning point, aggravating the violent confrontation between the two parties in different areas of the country.

*El Bogotazo* was part of the historical series *Revivamos nuestra historia* (Let us relive our history), produced by Eduardo Lemaitre & Cia. Ltda., owned by Colombian historian Eduardo Lemaitre. The script was based on several historical books<sup>91</sup> and included the collaboration of three history experts. This effort underscores the intention to document the facts as accurately as possible. The miniseries covers the period of April 7 and the days following Gaitán’s assassination, being the first Colombian fiction television production to integrate audiovisual and photographic material of the time as well as the destruction suffered by Bogotá. It also featured historical characters with real names, including the president and other political figures. Regarding its reception,<sup>92</sup> one viewer called the series an apology for violence in a letter sent to a television magazine. He stated that it was inconvenient to broadcast it, given that two months before it was broadcast a peace agreement had been signed between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC – EP) and the government. In his opinion, addressing the issue of political violence on television did not contribute “to the pacification of the country”. In the letter, he added:

“Will I be answered with the easy platitudes that you can’t cover the Sun with your hands and that he who ignores history is condemned to live it all over again? When will we be ashamed to no longer boast of our shamelessness?”

The magazine replied: “The answer is in your letter, even if you call it a commonplace”.<sup>93</sup> Curiously, this “commonplace” would become, 28 years later, the advertising claim of the famous TV series *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, aired in Colombia in 2012: “Who does not know his history is condemned to repeat it”. This phrase resonated strongly with audiences after the broadcasting of *Escobar*. This reader’s critique highlights a recurring tension in many societies that have

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91 “El Bogotazo, Memorias del olvido” (1983) by Arturo Alape, “De la República a la dictadura” (1955) by Carlos Lleras, “El nueve de abril en Palacio, horario de un golpe de Estado” (1948) by Joaquín Estrada, “Grandes fechas” (1979) by Abelardo Forero and “Así fue el nueve de abril” (1973) by Arturo Abella.

92 To gain some ‘glimpses’ into the reception of these series in 1980s Colombia, one option is the letters viewers sent to TV channels, production companies, or entertainment magazines. The most accessible are the publicly available entertainment magazines. Currently, *El Bogotazo* can be seen in the RTVCPlay web page of the Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia (RTVC), Sistema de Medios Públicos, Accessed June 17, 2023 <https://rtvcplay.co/series-ficcion/el-bogotazo/asesinato>.

93 Correo del Telespectador, “letter from Rodrigo Ramírez González dated June 3, 1984,” *Tele Revista*, 275 (1984):7.

experienced violent conflicts: the need for some to remember and the yearning of others to overcome a past marked by violence.

The following three productions address the internal armed conflict in Colombia: *Tres Caínes* (RCN, 2013), starring characters representing real leaders of the paramilitary organization; and *Comando élite* (RCN, 2013) and *El General Naranjo* (Fox Premium Series, Caracol, 2019), starring characters representing members of the security forces. *Tres Caínes* offered a version of the Colombian armed conflict from the perspective of three paramilitary leaders, based on testimonies given in the different processes carried out under the Justice and Peace Law.<sup>94</sup> Broadcast by RCN channel, this production generated controversy in Colombia. According to one of its directors, Carlos Gaviria, the relationship between “television and history” is particularly problematic, especially in a country like Colombia where, as he himself stated, “history is not yet defined, and it is not defined to the extent that the conflict has not ended”. To explain his position, Gaviria added:

“...If you take, for example, the case of Chile and Pinochet, there is already an official opinion on the matter; the good guys and the bad guys are defined. Everything is possible in life, but making a film where Pinochet is the good guy is difficult, the same with Videla in Argentina. This is very dangerous, because then television comes in to create and replace a vision of history, a version that is often imposed by economic or political interests, and sometimes they are not even political, but unconscious.”<sup>95</sup>

Gaviria pointed out one of the most critical aspects of the debate surrounding *Tres Caínes*: the power of television fiction to construct a narrative about historical events. Although screenwriter Gustavo Bolívar sought to portray the atrocities committed by the paramilitaries and the suffering inflicted on their victims, this good intention is overshadowed by the fact that the protagonists are Carlos, Vicente and Fidel Castaño, three recognized paramilitary leaders with an extensive criminal record. Although the series shows their criminal side, the Castaños are still the protagonists, played by well-known actors and praised by the public. Throughout the plot, the viewer accompanies them from the first episode to the end, getting to know their families and their stories, while the victims “come and go”, without giving the viewer time to generate an emotional connection with them. In addition, the first chapter narrates that the Castaño brothers decided to become paramilitaries after the kidnapping and murder of their father at the hands of the guerrillas,

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<sup>94</sup> The Justice and Peace Law was enacted in 2005 under the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. This law established a legal framework that facilitated the demobilization process of paramilitary groups in Colombia.

<sup>95</sup> Carlos Gaviria (Director *Tres Caínes*) Interview by the author, February 14, 2022, Bogotá, Colombia.



which, as audience studies and my own reception interviews have shown, mythologized the origin of the paramilitaries and, to a certain extent, justified their conversion into criminals.<sup>96</sup>

Organizations of victims of the Colombian armed conflict were deeply offended by the first chapters of the series, to the point that they organized a protest in front of the facilities of Canal RCN.<sup>97</sup> Outraged viewers also launched a campaign on Facebook and Twitter, urging the companies that advertised in *Tres Caínes* to withdraw their advertising.<sup>98</sup> However, the most paradoxical thing was that, at the same time, some viewers, especially from the areas most affected by the conflict, were grateful that the telenovela put the issue at the center of public discussion. In extreme cases, some even came to admire the paramilitary leaders, particularly Carlos Castaño. Despite the controversy, the ratings were not affected; according to the channel's reports in 2013, during this year an average of 29.3% of Colombian households tuned in to RCN daily to watch the prime-time telenovelas, among them *Tres Caínes*.<sup>99</sup>

In late 2013, in the same prime-time slot, RCN aired *Comando élite*, this time focusing on a special police intelligence group backed by the Colombian National Army. The team's mission was to capture Colombian guerrilla leaders, paramilitaries and drug traffickers. The series is structured around „targets“, who are criminals captured by the elite commando. In total, there are seven targets, whose characters correspond to real criminals and whose names are kept in the fiction. These include three guerrillas, a couple of drug traffickers and three narco-paramilitaries. In particular, the episodes dedicated to the FARC-EP guerrillas adopted a clearly „anti-guerrilla“ narrative, coinciding their broadcasting with part of the negotiation process that this guerrilla was carrying out with the government of President Juan Manuel Santos. The representation of the guerrillas in the series reinforced negative stereotypes precisely at a time when negotiations between the FARC and the government were beginning. This coincidence between the narrative of *Comando élite* and the peace process is a good example that underlines, in general terms, the tensions that can exist between television fiction and ongoing political events.

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96 Érika Castañeda, “La telememoria. Estudio de recepción de la serie Tres Caínes”, in *Televisión y construcción de lo público*, ed. José Pereira (Bogotá: Editorial PUJ, 2015).

97 Luis Eduardo Ospina Raigosa, “Respuesta social del movimiento de víctimas contra el canal RCN. Análisis del vídeo plantón No más Tres Caínes,” in *Semiótica. Comunicación, cultura y cognición*, ed. Neyla Graciela Pardo Abril (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2017), 271–290.

98 Facebook community “Noen3caines”, accessed May 30, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069964997435>.

99 Canal RCN, *Reporte de responsabilidad corporativa 2013. Canal RCN*. (Bogotá, Colombia, 2014), 33.

Following the line of putting police officers as protagonists, the Colombian-American production company Fox Telecolombia produced the series *El General Naranjo*, which would be broadcast on the subscription channel Fox Premium Series<sup>100</sup> between 2019 and 2021, and on the Colombian free-to-air channel Caracol in 2020. The series chronicles the professional career of Óscar Naranjo, who served as director of the Colombian National Police (2007–2012) and vice president of the country (2017–2018). During his career, Naranjo fought against drug cartels and guerrillas.<sup>101</sup> This series could also be classified as a series about drug trafficking, *El General Naranjo* goes further by addressing key events of the Colombian armed conflict, such as the Seizure and Retaking of the Palace of Justice in 1985,<sup>102</sup> the failed peace talks with the FARC in 2012, the paramilitary demobilization process (2003–2005) under the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, and Naranjo's role in the peace negotiations with the FARC between 2012 and 2016. In 2008, when Óscar Naranjo was the director of the police, he strongly criticized the series narrated from the perspective of drug traffickers,<sup>103</sup> with this series inspired by his life, came the opportunity to tell the story from the perspective “of the good guys” and although he did not agree with the way some events were told, he considers that the series makes a contribution to the memory of the policemen “who gave their lives to serve the country”.<sup>104</sup>

Telenovelas and TV series of memory about armed conflicts and civil wars demonstrate the power of fiction to reactivate debates around historical memory and transitional justice processes. In Peru and Colombia, these productions not only address the aftermath of violence, but also the need for reconciliation. While in Peru fiction is used as a means to reflect on forgiveness and the reconstruction of the social fabric, in Colombia the conflict seems to be transferred to the screen with the dispute over who should occupy the central place in the historical narrative.

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**100** This channel broadcasted across the United States and was one of the first cable networks to operate in Latin America until 2021. Felipe Llambías, “Murió Fox, parte de la historia de la TV en Uruguay y la región en el último cuarto de siglo, y nace Star”, *El Observador*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.elobservador.com.uy/nota/murio-fox-parte-de-la-historia-de-la-television-en-el-ultimo-cuarto-de-siglo-202121916250>.

**101** Fox Telecolombia acquired the rights to the book “El general de las mil batallas: historias del conflicto colombiano” by journalist Julio Sánchez Cristo for a TV adaptation. The same book was also published under the title “El cazador de la mafia” (2017, Planeta).

**102** See the article by Hannah Müsseman in this book.

**103** *El Tiempo*, Redacción, “General Naranjo condena serie de TV,” *El Tiempo*, Juni 8, 2008, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-2966190>

**104** Armando Neira, “Naranjo: ‘A la serie de televisión le ha ido muy bien, a mí no tanto,’” *El Tiempo*, Juni 17, 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/general-naranjo-habla-sobre-la-serie-y-el-caso-de-la-vicepresidenta-507592>.

## Telenovelas and TV series of memory about specific historical events

The category of “specific historical events”, broad and general, arises as a result of the thematic classification of three productions dealing with very specific historical events in recent Latin American history: the economic crisis experienced by Argentina in 2001, portrayed in the series *Vientos de Agua* (Canal 13, 2006); the Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom in 1982, the central theme of *Combatientes* (TVP, 2013); and the student massacre in Tlatelolco, Mexico, in 1968 which is the focus of the series *Un extraño enemigo* (Televisa for Amazon Prime, 2018–2022).

The first episode of *Combatientes* was broadcast on April 2, 2013 on Argentine Public Television (TPV), in commemoration of the National Day of the Veterans and the Fallen in the Malvinas War in Argentina, which is celebrated on that date. On April 2, 1982, Argentine troops landed on the Malvinas Islands with the aim of recovering sovereignty, taken away by Great Britain in 1833. The military dictatorship used this conflict to improve its image, but the final defeat only aggravated its deterioration. The Malvinas War was not only a trauma for Argentine soldiers, but also a tragic chapter in the country’s history.<sup>105</sup> The *Combatientes* series offered a choral narrative that followed the story of five fellow soldiers. As part of their preparation, the actors met with veterans of the war, thus delving deeper into the experience they sought to portray. One of the actors recalled:

„There is no other work that has marked me more than that; I lived it historically, and also with the meetings with the combatants. For us, it was a tribute to them. And the greatest satisfaction was when we presented the series at the Library of Congress, where we watched the whole thing with them. They were satisfied, they felt honored; for me that was the best gift I could have had.“<sup>106</sup>

*Combatientes* served as a tribute to the veterans, while at the same time offering an intimate look at their experiences and the traumas they faced after the war, thus contributing to the construction of the historical memory of this event. The series

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**105** The war lasted about two months, left 649 soldiers dead and more than 500 suicides motivated by after-effects and post-war trauma, <https://www.casarosada.gob.ar/slider-principal/50419-heroes-de-malvinas-2-de-abril-dia-nacional-del-veterano-y-de-los-caidos-en-la-guerra-de-malvinas>.

**106** Words by actor Lucas Ferraro. Matías González, “The Malvinas war on television: the memory of the series *Combatientes*,” *Elldigital*, April 1, 2023, <https://www.elldigital.com.ar/cultura/la-guerra-de-malvinas-en-la-television-el-recuerdo-de-la-serie-combatientes/>.

is available on several YouTube channels, where one of its chapters, published 11 years ago, has surpassed five million views,<sup>107</sup> reflecting the impact and reach it has had over time.

In the struggles for memory in Latin America, the Mexican case stands out for the relevance of the political memories of the 1968 social movement. The series *Un extraño enemigo*, produced by Televisa for Amazon Prime Video, in its first season, specifically addresses the student movement of that year. Following the commemorative function of many of the telenovelas and TV series of memory, the first season of *Un extraño enemigo* premiered on Amazon Prime's platform on October 2, 2018, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre, a tragic event that marked a turning point in the history of the Mexican student movement.<sup>108</sup>

With this series, I am interested in highlighting an aspect that is not often discussed but that can play a fundamental role in how these productions will be remembered: the launch campaign that precedes them, which in many cases defines the slogan with which they will be remembered. In the case of *Un extraño enemigo*, Amazon Prime hired the Mexican advertising agency Archer Troy, which, under the advertising claim “2 de octubre no se olvida?” (October 2nd will not be forgotten?) launched a comprehensive campaign covering various media, platforms and formats. One of the most impactful formats was “a unique experience” in which, on October 2, 2018, numerous people were summoned to the Plaza de las Tres Culturas (Tlatelolco). During the night, a helicopter flew over the square while lights and sounds symbolically revived the massacre, 50 years later. The concept behind the advertising strategy, called “The live trailer” (see figure 1), was that “the best way to remember history is to live it again”.<sup>109</sup> Although this initiative can be considered an act of collective memory, it could also be interpreted as a commodification of the memory of Tlatelolco, aimed at ensuring the commercial success of the series.

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**107** “Combatants – Full HD – Chapter 01”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3i9Ao5etWnc&t=124s>, video posted on April 3, 2023.

**108** The second season premiered on September 29, 2022, and focuses more on the relationship between drug trafficking and the public forces. There was another TV series about Tlatelolco called *Tlatelolco, verano del 68*, which was originally a film but, due to censorship, had to be adapted into a television series. Accessed October 12, 2023, [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tlatelolco\\_verano\\_del\\_68](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tlatelolco_verano_del_68).

**109** LatinSpots.com, “Lanzamientos – México. Archer Troy y Un extraño enemigo”, October 11, 2018, <https://www.latinspots.com/sp/noticia/archer-troy-y-un-extrao-enemigo/48705>.



**Figure 1:** This QR code provides access to the video documenting “The live trailer”, a multimedia experience created by Mexican advertising agency Archer Troy for the launch of *Un extraño enemigo in Mexico*.

In this research, I have been part of the audience and have considered my own viewing experience for my academic reflections. For those of us who do not know the history of Mexico of 1968 in depth, *Un extraño enemigo* makes an impact from the beginning, installing a narrative that attributes the responsibility for the Tlatelolco massacre to the ambition of corrupt politicians and police officers. Luis Echeverría Álvarez, who – according to the series – benefited politically from these events to become president in 1970, and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, appear under their real names. This narrative is told from the perspective of the protagonist, Fernando Barrientos, inspired by Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, who was the director of the Federal Security Directorate (DFS) during that period.

In the comments to the trailer on YouTube and Google reviews, viewers agree that the series is a good production, although some criticize that it “takes responsibility away from great political figures”. They also highlight the relevance of the topic, especially when comparing it to recent cases such as that of the missing students of Ayotzinapa in 2014. A striking detail is that many viewers mentioned that the quality of the series is comparable to that of Netflix productions, which reflects the growing competition among streaming platforms to attract Latin American audiences with stories in their language, based on real events.

This series, like other telenovelas and productions focused on memory that manage to circulate among international audiences, exemplifies how audiovisual products and advertising campaigns can shape the first interpretations of historical events and processes, especially among those who did not live through them or only know them superficially.

## **Telenovelas and TV series of memory about political figures**

Bolivian dictator and president Hugo Banzer, Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, Colombian humorist Jaime Garzón,

Argentine first lady Eva Perón and Mexican presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio are public figures closely linked to the recent political history of their respective countries. Each of them has been represented in historical fiction television productions.

The first of these productions was *Un militar soñador* (*A military dreamer*), broadcast in 1996 by the Bolivian channel Galavisión.<sup>110</sup> The miniseries deals with the biography of Hugo Banzer, who was a dictator of Bolivia between 1971 and 1978, and later elected president between 1997 and 2001. The title suggests an epic approach to the figure of Banzer and, given that its broadcasting coincided with his presidential campaign, it is plausible to think that it was a production with political propaganda overtones. In addition, considering that Galavisión's main audience was the elite,<sup>111</sup> the program could have been aimed at seeking political support from this sector.

Ten years later, in 2006, Rede Globo in Brazil paid tribute to one of the country's most beloved presidents, Juscelino Kubitschek, through the miniseries *JK*. In this production, Kubitschek is portrayed as a visionary, highlighting his legacy in the construction of the capital, Brasília, and the development of the automotive and home appliance industries. However, critics pointed out that the miniseries presents a positive image of the former president that is closely linked to the control he exercised over the media, an aspect barely explored in the plot. Furthermore, this image not only glorifies the figure of Kubitschek, but also his style of politics, which has been exploited by some politicians in their campaigns. Since the miniseries was aired in an election year, many wondered which candidate in 2006 would be the most favored to be associated with JK's legacy.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, the miniseries incorporates archival images to document the military coup of 1964, which marked the beginning of the civil-military dictatorship that would last until 1985. After the coup, Kubitschek was stripped of his political

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**110** Galavisión Canal 4 was a private regional channel in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and one of 35 private channels in Bolivia in 1984. In 1996, it merged with other channels to become Bolivisión, a free-to-air television station. Francisco Javier Fernández Medina, *Perspectivas de desarrollo de un espacio audiovisual en los países del Cono Sur de América Latina. Elementos para un análisis y diagnóstico de la televisión*. (PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra. 2004), 389. Information about this production was found at: Mónica Mamani, et al., "Realización de la telenovela corta *Cholita chuy mama churita* como propuesta de producción para la televisión universitaria de la ciudad de la Paz" (Bachelor's thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, 2017), 10. To date, I have not been able to find any additional information, nor have I located any of its episodes.

**111** Ana Paula Silva Ladeira Costa, *Flixo internacional de ficção: A telenovela Brasileira na Bolívia* (Master's thesis Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, 2008), 68.

**112** Gonçalo Júnior, "Academics point out historical excesses in romanticizing the former president," *Pesquisafapesp*, 121 (2001), <https://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/es/jk-2/>.

rights for having opposed the right-wing sectors that promoted the military intervention. In 1976, he died in a car accident, the circumstances of which remain an enigma, and many of his supporters still believe he was murdered by the dictatorship. The final chapter of *JK* shows shocking real-life footage of Kubitschek's funeral, where a crowd of supporters accompanied the funeral procession, transforming the burial into a popular demonstration against the dictatorship. In this last episode, the comments reflect the admiration for the former president and the nostalgia for a future that never came: “It was the only Globo miniseries that I wanted to watch again. A lesson in the history of a country that could have been so different...”<sup>113</sup> *JK*, beyond highlighting a key leader in the history of Brazil, invited reflection between politics, media and memory evoking both admiration and melancholy for a national destiny that could have been different.

When investigating the production of telenovelas and TV series that “tell the History”, the same history continues to be woven. A clear example of this is the history of the creation of the series *El Comandante*, which focuses on the life of former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and takes as a reference the work of Venezuelan writer and columnist Moisés Naim. The series was broadcast in 2017 for the first time by the Colombian channel RCN, although it was produced by the U.S. company Sony Pictures Television. Behind *El Comandante* lies a controversy that reflects the intricate relationship between entertainment and politics. Initially, the actors were told that the series would be distributed through streaming platforms, but RCN invested money in the production and ended up broadcasting it on its channel. Andrés Parra, the actor who played Chávez, was not aware of this change. According to him, had he known that the series would be aired on RCN, he would have turned down the role:

„Did I know that that channel was going to broadcast it? I didn't. This normally goes to a TV show Festival. For me, it was a series that should have gone directly to a streaming platform and it was always thought that way, it was worked out that way. It was a great disappointment for all of us. We were fooled!”<sup>114</sup>

Parra claims that RCN manipulated Chávez's character at the last minute and “destroyed him”. According to him, the scenes that showed the most human and kind side of Chávez, what Parra calls “the light zone” were eliminated from the final

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**113** Comment by @ingridlontra5644, to Chapter 47 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2F0FDzp33YE&list=PLv7Q8eQNOaW-f9PkmF7QKYOH07hrHOoef&index=46>, video published Juli 7, 2021. (Comment originally in Portuguese).

**114** Andrés Parra (actor Pablo Escobar, *El patrón del mal*, *El Comandante*), Interview by the author, October 10, 2022, Bogotá, Colombia.

edition. For the actor, the series originally had a balanced structure: the first episodes were a tribute to Chávez, showing his childhood in Barinas, his relationship with his grandmother, his excellence as a cultured and prepared military man and how, over time, power corrupted him, until his fall. “He was beautiful”, assures Parra. However, according to him, RCN portrayed him as a “gorilla” or a “mico mandante” (a bossy monkey), making the series serve their own interests, molding the public’s perception to see Chávez the way RCN wanted to show him.

Actress Stephanie Cayo, who played a journalist who writes a biography about Chávez, also commented on the failure of the series. In an interview, she pointed out that the reason for the failure was “much more complicated than what one imagines at first sight”, and also mentioned that RCN made a completely different edition of the original script.<sup>115</sup> For Parra, the intention of the project was not biased, since the objective was to show Chávez in all his complexity. According to him, Chávez would not have won the elections if he were simply the “monster” that some portray. “He must have had something”, concludes the actor, referring to Chávez’s capacity to inspire hope in his voters.

The series *El Comandante* reflects how the intervention of political and media interests can significantly alter the narrative of an audiovisual production. At the same time, it is part of a transnational story in which different actors come together to influence public perception through fiction, according to their own interests. Although the series was not a success in Colombia, it was later broadcast on the cable channel TNT, reaching audiences in the USA and several Latin American countries. I personally accessed the series through a Telegram channel, where it was published in April 2017. Currently, each episode averages 75,000 views. The creator of the channel, who clearly has an anti-Chávez stance, published a notice after the last episode inciting violence and revenge against Chávez followers. Thus, the reception of series such as *El Comandante* not only prolongs the story narrated in fiction in current reality, but also contributes to feed the political divisions and tensions that such narratives evoke.

The telenovela *Garzón, vive*, aired by RCN in 2018, portrays the life of Jaime Garzón, a prominent Colombian humorist, from his childhood until his assassination in 1999. The telenovela follows his trajectory through the media, politics and his work as a peace mediator in the Colombian armed conflict. Through humor and satire, Garzón criticized the country’s politics, revealing its deceptions and bringing Colombians closer to the harsh reality they lived. *Garzón, vive* is a tribute to his

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115 Orlando Bardales, “Stephanie Cayo: ¿Qué rol tiene en la serie sobre Hugo Chávez?,” *El Comercio Perú*, January 31, 2017, <https://elcomercio.pe/tvmas/series/stephanie-cayo-rol-serie-hugo-chavez-162054-noticia/>.



legacy. Behind its production are two great figures in entertainment and audiovisual production: Fernando Gaitán, creator of the world-famous *Betty, la fea*, who conceived the original idea, and Sergio Cabrera, renowned filmmaker and director of several historical fictions for television. Jaime Garzón, through television, discovered his ability to create memorable characters that captivated all types of audiences. He not only became an idol, but also one of the few people who dared to speak the truths that others kept silent. According to Cabrera, director of *Garzón, vive*, it is important for the new generations to know his story and his characters, which have endured over time.<sup>116</sup> Actor Santiago Alarcón, who played Jaime Garzón and gave life to 52 of his characters, expressed with emotion: “Garzón is the character I never wanted to be because I never wanted him to be killed”.<sup>117</sup> In many of these telenovelas and TV series of memory, members of their creative teams have been witnesses to the events they recreate, which inevitably impregnates the production with their own emotions in these products that transcend entertainment and form part of the historical culture.

Seventeen years after the murder of Jaime Garzón, the Colombian prosecutor’s office acknowledged that it was a State crime, although the case remains unpunished. A similar situation surrounds the assassination of Mexican presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, which occurred on March 23, 1994. This crime was adapted by Netflix in the series *Historia de un crimen: Colosio*,<sup>118</sup> launched on March 22, 2019, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the assassination. It is important to note that, long before this series, in 1996, just two years after Colosio’s death, the Mexican channel TV Azteca had already broadcast a telenovela about this event. It was *Nada personal*<sup>119</sup> which, although it never explicitly mentioned Colosio or his position, its plot was unmistakable for the public due to the obvious similarity with the real events. Unlike *Nada personal*, the Netflix production used

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**116** Reporteros asociados del mundo, “Garzón: la historia de un hombre increíble,” January 19, 2018, <https://www.reporterosasociados.com.co/2018/01/garzon-la-historia-de-un-hombre-increible/>.

**117** Santiago Alarcón (Actor *Garzón, Vive*) Interview by the author, October 28, 2022, Bogotá, Colombia.

**118** “*Historia de un Crimen*” is a series that has released three seasons so far, each focusing on a different crime. The first season centers on the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio. All seasons have been produced by the Colombian company Dynamo for Netflix.

**119** El Tiempo, Redacción, “Telenovelas, el Crudo espejo de un país,” *El tiempo*, Juni 22, 1997, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-598707>. In 2017 TV Azteca made a new version to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the first one which was very successful. Wikipedia (Hg.) “Nada personal (TV series)”, accessed June 9, 2023 [https://es.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nada\\_personal\\_\(serie\\_de\\_televisi3n\)&oldid=151738600](https://es.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nada_personal_(serie_de_televisi3n)&oldid=151738600); Digital, Capital, “¿Por qué fue tan exitosa Nada Personal?,” Capital Mexico, March 13, 2017, <https://www.capitalmexico.com.mx/show/nada-personal-porque-fue-exitosa-remake-telenovela-juan-soler-kika-edgar-valentino-lanus/>.

real names for its characters and included archival images, clarifying that, although it was “inspired by real events”, the events were fictionalized. In addition, it avoided the typical phrase “any resemblance is pure coincidence”, highlighting its intention to portray a tragic moment in Mexico’s history with a dramatic but deliberate approach.

This category of telenovelas and TV series of memory dedicated to political figures closes with *Santa Evita* (Star+, 2022), which tells the enigmatic story of the corpse of Argentina’s iconic first lady, María Eva Duarte de Perón. After her death in 1952, her body was embalmed and hidden for 16 years by opponents of Juan Domingo Perón, who feared she would become a powerful symbol against the regime. Although the series is not a traditional biography of Eva Perón, it chronicles the strange journey of her body while showing brief episodes of her childhood, youth and death.

An interesting way to analyze the reception of TV series and telenovelas is through videos posted on platforms such as YouTube, where some users comment on or summarize historical fictions. Many of these videos examine how faithful these productions are to reality. Reviewing the comments on a video about *Santa Evita*, made by a young Argentine youtuber, a generational clash becomes evident: young anti-Peronists and their parents, still defenders of Peronism, hold opposing positions. At the same time, this discussion reflects how productions centered on political figures tend to generate a “more political” response, revealing that the divisions of the past continue to strongly influence the present.

## Images of memory and the sources of telenovelas and TV series of memory

At the beginning of this article, I asked how to analyze what these telenovelas and TV series leave in the memory of their viewers. I start from the premise that these productions generate “memory images”, a concept that not only serves as a tool for analysis, but also reflects the interaction between the images seen and the memories, knowledge and personal interpretations of the viewer. This allows us to identify more precisely the memories transmitted and the historical narratives that accompany them. We understand memory images as visual, emotionally linked ideas that convey an interpretative framework about a specific past within a particular historical and audiovisual context.<sup>120</sup>

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120 “Memory Images,” GUMELAB. Accessed October 17, 2023. <https://www.gumelab.net/en/for-schung/zentrale-begriffe/index.html>

Through interviews and comments in social networks, we have investigated the “memory images” generated by telenovelas and TV series. Based on this evidence, we proposed four types: 1) *Images associated with specific historical characters, events and processes*, known from our own experience or other people’s accounts, such as Eva Perón, Augusto Pinochet, the Falklands War or the massacre of students in Tlatelolco. 2) *Images linked to cultural characteristics and recognizable idiosyncrasies*, such as brands of products, behaviors or attitudes, such as machismo. 3) *Fictitious images* created within the plot, such as characters, facts or invented elements. An example is the characters of the Chilean series *Los 80*, such as Juan Herrera and his youngest son Felix, or “la libretica” (small notebook) of Pablo Escobar’s character in *Escobar, el patrón del mal*. 4) *Images in tension between the plot and personal experiences*, which can lead to the rejection of the production without watching it, as it happened with some Chilean people who avoided watching *Los Archivos del Cardinal* when they assumed, only by the title, that it was about the dictatorship.

The sources that feed the creation of these memory images, which interact and dialogue with the spectator, are diverse and used by different professionals involved in the production process, such as scriptwriters, actors, directors, art directors, researchers and producers, each according to their specific role.

## Personal memory as a source for historical fiction

The creative teams of telenovelas and TV series of memory often use their own memories to shape characters and plots. These memories, by being inscribed in a broader social framework, cease to be personal when they are transformed into characters with whom an entire generation identifies. A clear example is the character of Felix in the Chilean series *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014). Rodrigo Cuevas, screenwriter of the series, built Felix based on his own childhood experience in 1982,<sup>121</sup> which resonated with many viewers who claimed to be “The Felix of their homes”. This became a fictional character, but with a memorial substrate, and is one of the images of memory that was installed by this TV series. Similarly, art director Rodrigo Bazaes, also of the same generation, gave a visuality to the scenography of the series inspired by his own childhood home, giving importance to what Bazaes calls “la patina” (the patina), the memory of objects that, with the passage of time,

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<sup>121</sup> Rodrigo Cuevas (screenwriter of *Los 80*) interviewed by the author, April 21, 2022, via Webex, Santiago – Berlin.

acquire their own history of many years that gives them a certain texture.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, in the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVP, 2027), screenwriters Marisa Grinstein and Liliana Escliar used their memories of the military dictatorship of the 1970s to develop authentic characters and plots, avoiding anachronisms and accurately reflecting the period.<sup>123</sup>

## Interviews with witnesses and social actors

Interviews with key people in the historical processes portrayed in telenovelas and TV series of memory are a fundamental source in the creation of scripts and the preparation of actors in their interpretations of historical characters. In this way, scripts and interpretations are interwoven in a palimpsest of testimonies, indirectly integrating real experiences into fiction. The variety of testimonies of different social actors is immense. For example, in the Argentine telenovela *Montecristo* (Telefe, 2006), the scriptwriters worked with the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to develop the psychological process of the main character, a woman born in captivity during the last Argentine dictatorship.<sup>124</sup>

Chilean actor Alfredo Castro, who played Salvador Allende in *Los mil días de Allende* (TVN, 2023), relied on private testimonies from Allende's family and professional circle to give greater depth to his character.<sup>125</sup> Rodrigo Cuevas, screenwriter of *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), recalled that “if we could get real protagonists of those events, we interviewed them”. In this context, journalists who worked during the 1980s in Chile were interviewed, such as Augusto Góngora, director of “Teleanálisis”, a semi-clandestine news program, and Fernando Paulsen, its editor, who shared their first-hand experiences of that period. In addition, interviews were conducted with human rights lawyers and even Pinochet's photographer,<sup>126</sup> which provided valuable information for the development of the series.

In *Garzón, vive*, (RCN, 2018), screenwriter Juan Carlos Pérez conducted some 100 interviews with people who knew Jaime Garzón and created a 500-page docu-

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<sup>122</sup> Bazaes, Interview.

<sup>123</sup> Stiletano, “Cuéntame”.

<sup>124</sup> Sueldo, “Montecristo”, 183.

<sup>125</sup> AFP, “Actor Alfredo Castro repasa la historia de Chile en ‘Los mil días de Allende’,” *Diario las Américas*, September 7, 2023, <https://www.diariolasamericas.com/cultura/actor-alfredo-castro-repasa-la-historia-chile-los-mil-dias-allende-n5342741>.

<sup>126</sup> Cuevas, Interview.

ment that he gave to actor Santiago Alarcón along with the audios, which were fundamental in the preparation of his interpretation of Garzón.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, Juan Camilo Ferrand and Alejandra López, screenwriter and researcher of *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), interviewed the widows of Colombian politicians Luis Carlos Galán and Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, murdered by order of Escobar, as well as the family of journalist Guillermo Cano, owner of the newspaper “El Espectador”, also murdered by Escobar.<sup>128</sup> In fact, the original idea of creating a series about his father’s murderer came from Camilo Cano, Guillermo Cano’s son, who wanted to pay tribute to all of Escobar’s victims, including his own family.<sup>129</sup>

The interviews also play a key role in the visual concept of the set design, costumes and makeup. Rodrigo Bazaes, art director of *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), said that when he could not find the necessary information in written documentation, he resorted to testimonials.<sup>130</sup> These contributions enrich the productions, endowing them with authenticity and allowing the fictional narratives to intertwine with the real stories, creating a deep emotional bond with the viewers.

## Cultural memory as a source

Many of the telenovelas and TV series of memory have had their producers buy the rights to the books on which they are based. In this way literature is another source. Andrés Wood, Chilean director of the series *Noticia de un secuestro* based on the book of the same name by Gabriel García Márquez, stated that the level of detail that García Márquez uses in his books – very precise descriptions and humanity – allowed him to imagine how the events were happening, thus becoming “a very rich source”.<sup>131</sup> Andrés Parra, in fact, was in direct conversation with Alonso Salazar, writer of the book “La Parábola de Pablo”, on which *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), was based.

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<sup>127</sup> Alarcón, Interview.

<sup>128</sup> Alejandra López (researcher for *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*), interviewed by the author, February 8, 2022, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>129</sup> Interview Juan Camilo Ferrand (screenwriter of *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*) interviewed by the author, January 25, 2022, Manizales, Colombia.

<sup>130</sup> Bazaes, Interview.

<sup>131</sup> Francesco Puig, “El secuestro real que noveló Gabriel García Márquez llega a la televisión,” *La Vanguardia*, August 12, 2022, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/series/20220812/8461806/noticia-secuestro-gabriel-garcia-marquez-llega-television.html>.

In addition to literature, the entire existing historical culture which, in turn, forms part of the cultural memory of a nation,<sup>132</sup> is used to create new interpretations and aesthetic visions of the past. Actors, especially those who have to prepare historical characters, turn to the film footage of all existing documentary and fiction productions, as well as to the media archive that these personalities have left behind. Alfredo Castro, for his interpretation of Salvador Allende in *Los mil días de Allende* (TVN, 2023), in addition to resorting to testimonies, worked with footage of Allende's speeches "to recreate the oratorical style of the leader and repeat his speeches comma by comma and silence by silence".<sup>133</sup> Andrés Parra, when he played Hugo Chávez in *El Comandante* (RCN, 2017), not only read biographies and books made by historians about Chávez, but also relied on an exercise that helped him a lot which was Chávez's TV program *Aló Presidente*.<sup>134</sup>

Consulting documentaries and their interpretations can lead to the creation of "memory images". A notable example is "la libretica" (small notebook), a distinctive detail of Pablo Escobar's character in *Los mil días de Allende* (TVN, 2023), played by Andrés Parra. In the series, Escobar would take a small notebook out of his shirt pocket to write down information, generally related to crimes. Parra incorporated this gesture after seeing it for a couple of seconds in a documentary about Escobar, deducing that someone who controlled 80% of the world's cocaine business, in an era without cell phones, pagers or iPads, probably kept a notebook at hand at all times. Although it was a simple gesture, it became a memorable element that even generated memes and numerous comments on social networks.<sup>135</sup>

## The press and archives in the service of fiction

Finally, the use of the press and archives is a key source for telenovelas and TV series of memory. The press is one of the most valuable tools for the creation of historical fictions about recent history as shown by the interviews conducted with researchers who contributed their work to series such as *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014) and *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012). The press not only guides the temporal structure, but also allows selecting the most mediatic events as

<sup>132</sup> Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 36–41.

<sup>133</sup> AFP, "Actor Alfredo Castro".

<sup>134</sup> Television program hosted by Hugo Chávez when he was President of Venezuela. The program ran from 1999 to 2012.

<sup>135</sup> Parra, Interview.

a context for the dramatic arcs of the characters. This source is complemented by audiovisual and sound archives, essential for reconstructing stories from the 20th and 21st centuries that have not been recorded in other ways.<sup>136</sup>

In *Los 80* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), online producer Patricio Pereira explained that they selected fragments from the audiovisual archive of the 1980s to integrate them into the scenes, and filming based on that material. Thus, the audiovisual archives not only serve as documentation for the creation of scripts and filming plans, but also as an authentication strategy to make the stories more real and credible. For example, in a scene where Claudia, the eldest daughter of the Herrera Family, is arrested, the production team searched the archives for a fragment of a woman being arrested “and we dressed Claudia, just like that person” replicating the environment, achieving a visual authenticity “from a fragment of archival image.”<sup>137</sup>

A similar case occurred in *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), when the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán was recreated. Editor Sandra Rodríguez shared that they used archival footage to faithfully recreate the scene, mixing real footage with filmed scenes. The recreation was so accurate that witnesses close to the event, who saw the series, asked on which newscast these images had appeared, not realizing that they were fictional. This example illustrates the power of fiction to generate realities so believable that even eyewitnesses cannot tell them apart.<sup>138</sup> The use of the press and archives as sources not only enriches the narrative, but also allows for the creation of deeply believable fictions. As technology advances, these tools are used in increasingly creative ways, contributing to the authenticity and emotional impact of productions.

## Conclusions

In this article, I have presented an overview of 55 years of production of telenovelas and TV series of memory focused on Latin America, along with some glimpses of their reception. A preliminary analysis of the historical themes addressed by these TV productions reveals their significant contribution to the historical culture of this region’s

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<sup>136</sup> Tatiana Duplat, “La televisión como un lugar de la memoria,” *Señal Memoria*, August 6, 2015, <https://www.senalmemoria.co/articulos/la-television-como-lugar-de-la-memoria>.

<sup>137</sup> Patricio Pereira (online producer of *Los 80*) interviewed by the author and Holle Meding, March 30, 2023, via Webex, Santiago – Berlin.

<sup>138</sup> Sandra Rodríguez (TV editor of *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*) interviewed by the author, February 14, 2022, via WhatsApp, Bojacá, Bogotá, Colombia.

recent past, although not all Latin American countries are equally represented. What makes these telenovelas and series so compelling lies in the remarkable “coincidences” among their plots and the real tragedies of the continent’s recent history.

Dictatorships and drug trafficking, as the most recurrent themes, suggest two great wounds still open in the recent history of Latin America, deeply “present in the present”. Both phenomena are closely linked to injustice, impunity and an exacerbated violence that acquires “spectacular” features. Many of the real events portrayed in these productions reinforce the popular idea that “reality surpasses fiction”. It is no coincidence that this phrase is frequently mentioned in interviews and comments on social networks.

Telenovelas and TV series of memory about dictatorships, especially those of Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, have sought to raise political awareness about democratic values, concentrating mainly on right-wing dictatorships. However, the televised representation of left-wing authoritarian regimes, which have also marked the history of the continent, is still a imminent issue. Many of the State crimes and human rights violations committed under these dictatorships remain unpunished. Some of these productions have, in a way, attempted to „do justice“, at least in fiction. Television series that have dealt with the dictatorship from the perspective of everyday family life, and combining different political positions in their characters, have bet on fiction as a means to promote values of dialogue and reconciliation.

For their part, telenovelas and TV series of memory that deal with drug trafficking have denounced, through their plots, the relationship between drug trafficking, law enforcement and politicians, thus consolidating a persistent image of corruption in the collective memory. Although the televised productions that denounce drug trafficking are a minority within the universe of productions on this topic,<sup>139</sup> they have managed to attract a significant audience both nationally and internationally. In turn, reaching a vast number of viewers has enabled many people in the continent to acquire a broader and more complex understanding of the phenomenon, and even come to interpret their own national realities in the light of the historical clues that these productions offer. One example is that of a Chilean viewer who, after watching the Colombian series *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), expressed compassion for the suffering experienced by Colombians and admiration for their resilience, noting that “they keep going despite all the difficulties they have had to face”.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, a Paraguayan viewer, after watching

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139 Approximately 75% of the telenovela and TV series about drug trafficking lack a historical or commemorative intent.

140 María Jesús Vera (Chilean viewer *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*), interviewed by the author,



the same series, compared Pablo Escobar to dictator Alfredo Stroessner, who ruled Paraguay from 1954 to 1989. He explained that Stroessner had stayed in power so long because, like Escobar, he “took care of his own”.<sup>141</sup> These interpretations offer a fascinating field of study for analyzing how viewing these TV series can complexify historical thinking and broaden viewers’ historical consciousness by helping them place their own life and historical memory in a broader context.

The extension of individual memory is evident in the comments accompanying the videos of these series’ episodes posted on YouTube. Many of these telenovelas and TV series serve a commemorative function, attracting audiences with a pre-existing interest – whether because they lived through the events, heard family stories, or were influenced by marketing campaigns. By commemorating coups d’état, assassinations, and massacres – while also paying tribute to the victims of dictatorships, armed conflicts, international wars, economic crises, and revolutions – these productions provide viewers with reference points for their own memories. This often sparks debates about the past and encourages further exploration.

These discussions, along with editorial decisions and challenges during production, are part of the same history being told. Therefore, instead of focusing on the classic discussion about whether what they tell is “true” or has a “pedagogical” value, it is more relevant to analyze how, why and in what context these productions are created, as well as what happens during their production and broadcast, and what implications they have on the understanding and evolution of the history they tell. Examples such as the threats received by the Colombian actor Julián Román for his role in *Tres Caínes* (RCN, 2023)<sup>142</sup> or the fear of the Argentinean crew of *El Pacto* (América Televisión, 2011) when facing external pressures<sup>143</sup> demonstrate how these stories of the past have an impact on the present. A shocking case occurred during the filming of *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012), in a neighborhood of Medellín, when there was a lack of extras to play hitmen (sicarios), neighbors were asked for help to get them. The extras that arrived were children between 8 and 10 years old. When asked why they sent children, the answer was: “That’s how it is here, the hitmen (sicarios) are that age”.<sup>144</sup> This anecdote reflects

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March 15, 2022, Santiago, Chile.

**141** Casual conversation with Paraguayan citizen in Asunción, October 27, 2019.

**142** Julián Roman (TV actor, *Tres Caínes*) interviewed by the author, February 25, 2022, Bogotá, Colombia.

**143** Perfil, Editorial Office, “Para el productor de El Pacto, Mike Amigorena estaba asustado.” *Perfil*, September 27, 2011. <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/espectaculos/para-el-productor-de-el-pacto-mike-amigorena-estaba-asustado-20110926-0030.phtml>.

**144** Mario Ruiz (TV actor, *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, *Tres Caínes*, *Garzón*, *Vive*) interviewed by the author, September 29, 2022, Madrid, Spain.

the harshness of the realities that these series try to portray and the continuity of these phenomena in daily life today.

Historical thinking, which is also a form of memory conveyed through images, is enriched by the “memory images” provided by telenovelas and TV series of memory. The sources behind their creation are, in turn, part of both historical culture and cultural memory. Sources play an important role both in the creation of strategies of authentication of reality (the available budgets, also, but that is a topic for another discussion), as well as in the creation of memory images. The search for the greatest possible verisimilitude is the sum of many efforts with the intention of achieving a precise impact on the audience. Throughout the article, I have provided several examples showing that the greater the level of verisimilitude, the greater the success – not only in terms of ratings, but also in increasing the likelihood of securing additional funding for future seasons.

From a preliminary analysis of the reception interviews and social networks, four main types of memory images were identified: those associated with historical characters and events, those linked to cultural traits, fictional ones created within the plot, and those that generate a tension between the narrative and the viewer’s personal experiences. These images are formed through a variety of sources, ranging from the personal memories of the creators and actors to direct testimonies of people involved in the historical events, as well as archival documents and literary sources. Interviews with social actors and the use of press and audiovisual archives contribute to the authenticity of the productions, making the fictional productions often almost indistinguishable from reality. The creation of these “memory images” is a collaborative process that involves multiple actors from the creative, historical and social spheres, and ultimately enriches the audience’s relationship with its own history.

Thanks to digital platforms, viewers of these productions are increasingly international, accompanying many Latin American migrants, something I can confirm from my own experience as a migrant. This enriches our historical consciousness by adding a greater “Latin American depth”. However, two phenomena are gaining momentum: the production of content for large global streaming platforms and the proliferation of miniseries of no more than eight episodes. As a result, producers face pressure to create stories that attract global interest, which carries the risk of standardizing narratives of the recent past, and focusing only on the issues “that sell,” rather than those that are really needed. On the other hand, the miniseries format is weakening the emotional connection viewers have with the characters, as there is less time to develop deep bonds.

Thus, while the miniseries on these platforms facilitate the internationalization of history, it also causes our histories to be diluted in the vast global streaming production. Before, all the attention was focused on the two prime time telenovelas

on national channels; nowadays, these productions can be lost as stated by actor Andrés Parra in the “river of oblivion” metaphor he used for these large platforms.

In short, telenovelas and TV series of memory have been part of the construction and dissemination of a historical memory in Latin America. Although they have succeeded in transmitting key history of the recent past to national and international audiences, it is important that they do not sacrifice depth and authenticity in favor of a global demand. The risk of our local narratives being diluted in the ocean of global content is real, but so is their capacity to enrich the dialogue on the historical wounds and current realities of the Latin American continent. The analysis of these productions offers a fertile field for research for several reasons: firstly, it fosters the creation of new methodologies; secondly, the exploration of creative processes and reception reveals unpublished dimensions about the historical phenomena they represent; and finally, they constitute an invaluable archive where diverse registers and visions of a shared past converge.

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# Portrayal of State Institutions in Colombian Telenovelas

## The Mediation of Citizenship

**Abstract:** Telenovelas have been shown to provide a historical framework for an ample viewership in Colombia. Despite being fictional narratives, recent telenovelas have been constructed upon important historical figures or events, that become easier to appreciate and engage with by audiences than journalistic articles or documentary films. In other words, telenovelas are fundamental for the development of a public sphere, as the lure of a narrative becomes more useful for prompting discussion of contemporary issues. Exploring *En la boca del lobo* (Teleset, 2014) and *Bloque de Búsqueda* (Teleset and Sony Pictures, 2016), two Colombian telenovelas that address the war against drugs of the 1990s, we take a look at how state institutions are presented for debate in the public sphere. The two works focus on opposite protagonists, either a member of the Cali cartel who opts to betray his criminal kingpin, in the former; or the main police squad tasked with capturing, disbanding or decimating drug cartels, in the latter. This audiovisual and textual analysis of the telenovelas is contrasted with focal groups and personal interviews with audiences and creators to establish the alignment between the portrayals and the social expectations about state institutions, or to ascertain whether telenovelas sway the audience's perception of them.

The importance of telenovelas for a social construction of citizenship by bringing certain issues to the public debate in a more comprehensible matter is thus established in the intersection of the shows' representations and the interpretation given in the mediation and decoding processes of the audiences. The analysis has shown that the representation of the telenovelas of the XXI century in Colombia create a contradictory sense of identity no longer based on the construction of a national imagined community, but in the collective configuration of a weak institutional State as its core premise.

**Keywords:** audiovisual representations; contemporary history; Colombia; State institutions; telenovelas of memory.

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**Resumen:** Las telenovelas han sido consideradas como capaces de proveer un marco de referencia histórico para una audiencia amplia en Colombia. Aunque sean narrativas de ficción, las telenovelas recientes han sido construidas sobre figuras y eventos históricos de relevancia, los cuales se hacen más fáciles de comprender por audiencias que los reportajes periodísticos o las obras documentales. En otras palabras, las telenovelas son fundamentales para el desarrollo de una esfera pública, dado que el atractivo de la narrativa se hace más útil para provocar discusiones contemporáneas.

Mediante una exploración de *En la boca del lobo* (Teleset, 2014) y *Bloque de Búsqueda* (Teleset and Sony Pictures, 2016), dos telenovelas colombianas que abordan el tema de la guerra contra las drogas en la década de 1990, dirigimos la mirada hacia la forma en que las instituciones del Estado son presentadas para generar el debate en la esfera pública. Las dos obras se enfocan en protagonistas opuestos: Un miembro del Cartel de Cali quien decide traicionar a sus jefes criminales, en la primera, o el escuadrón élite de la policía encargado de capturar, desbandar o reducir los carteles de la droga, en la segunda. Este análisis textual y audiovisual se contrasta con grupos focales y entrevistas con audiencias y creadores de estos productos para establecer la relación entre las representaciones y las expectativas sociales sobre las instituciones del Estado, o para reconocer si las telenovelas buscan direccionar las perspectivas que de estas tenga la audiencia.

La importancia de las telenovelas para la construcción de ciudadanía trae consigo ciertos temas para el debates público de una forma más comprensible y, por lo tanto, establece una intersección entre las representaciones de las telenovelas y la interpretación que surge en ellos procesos de mediación y decodificación de las audiencias. El análisis aquí presentado muestra que las telenovelas del siglo XXI crean un sentido contradictorio de identidad ya no basado en la construcción de un imaginario de nación como una comunidad imaginada, sino que tiene como premisa central la configuración colectiva de un Estado institucionalmente débil.

**Palabras clave:** Colombia; historia contemporánea; instituciones del Estado; representaciones audiovisuales; telenovelas de la memoria.



## Introduction

Colombia has positioned itself as a producer and exporter of telenovelas since the 1990s, competing in a market that was previously dominated by the large television production powerhouses of Brazil and Mexico, and the traditional Venezuelan production. The 1980s and early 1990s was characterized by the development of a national discourse through telenovelas, bringing stories from different parts of the country, often taking place in fictionalized settings. Even when their stories were taking place in a specific decade of the XIX or XX century, most telenovelas of the 1980s and 1990s engaged only vaguely with the events that were taking place during that time. Apart from a recurrent reference to the 1948 assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, telenovelas would take place somewhat removed from any link to the historical figures and places they referred to.

After the turn of the century, Colombian telenovelas have moved to present events of recent history as central to the stories being told, bringing about biopics of famous, – an infamous – characters of the 1990s to the small screen. With the rise of the *narcotelenovela*, – telenovelas whose main characters were drug lords or whose general background was built upon the story of the drug trade plight of the nation – by the mid – 2000s,<sup>1</sup> it did not take long before the lives of drug barons and their governmental counterparts became the stories that filled the television screens. Unlike the telenovelas of the previous century which seldom engaged with figures close to their time of production, these telenovelas were not only dealing with contemporary issues, but with situations that had taken place 20 years earlier.

With *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol 2012) and *Alias el Mexicano* (Fox Telecolombia 2013) two of the most feared drug barons of the 1980s and 1990s had their own telenovelas. It did not take long for different telenovelas around other figures of the time receiving their own television series, including the members of the Cali cartel through *En la boca del lobo* (Teleset 2014) and the police elite team tasked with capturing the Medellín cartel members in *Bloque de Búsqueda* (Teleset & Sony Pictures 2016).

Despite ample journalistic accounts, reports, and other non-fiction accounts of what happened during those years, it is telenovelas which bring these stories to a national audience and into the general narrative of the nation. The way these recent telenovelas present how both criminals and Colombian institutions carry out their business provides a discourse which is also incorporated based on the allure of the storytelling, which draws on emotions rather than analytical accounts

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<sup>1</sup> Omar Rincón, “Narco.estética y Narco.cultura en Narco.lombia,” *Nueva sociedad*, no. 222 (2009), 147–63.

to bring their points across. Gabriela Polit Dueñas claims that the television effect, which “makes us believe that what we watch is or was real, as if there were no mediation but a sort of automatic translation of the facts to the screen, [is] what guarantees the success of these TV series”.<sup>2</sup> As such, telenovelas are the lenses through which most Colombians make sense of recent history and determine motivations and responsibilities of those involved in the story. Thus, representations of institution define in no simple terms, the appropriation that audiences have on their agency in relation to those who participated in these events.

## Television in Colombia and the rise of the narcotelenovelas

Television is the national medium of Colombia. As opposed to radio, which was mainly local and commercial, and newspapers which only reached main urban centers and had a high requirement in literacy to be understood, it was television which, by the 1990s had reached most of the national territory with a limited offer of media. Telenovelas of the 1980s highest achievement, according to Jesus Martin Barbero, was that “they knew how to include in the stories the very diverse country and make with these stories a history for the common folk”.<sup>3</sup> Despite the increase in cable subscription in the 2000s and the new streaming services of the 2010s, national television consumption remains the norm, showing that cultural proximity between stories and audience remain fundamental to understand audiovisual consumption.<sup>4</sup> Reports of 2019 indicate that 90 % of the population own a TV set, and 64 % have access to subscription-based cable or satellite TV (which also carries

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2 Gabriela Polit Dueñas, “De cómo leer el narcotráfico y otras advertencias,” *Apuntes de Investigación del CECYP* 16, no. 24 (2014): 184. Our translation from the original in Spanish: “Es el efecto de la televisión de hacernos creer que lo que vemos es o fue la realidad; como si no hubiera una mediación sino una suerte de traslado automático de los acontecimientos hacia la pantalla, es lo que garantiza éxito a estas series”.

3 Omar Rincón. “Jesús Martín-Barbero: Television and Cinema that were able to Include the Country, Build its Memory, and tell its Story,” *Cuadernos de Cine*, no. 25 (2016): 36. Our translation of the original in Spanish: “Lo mejor que hizo la telenovela por este país fue una televisión que supo meter en los relatos al más diverso país y hacer con esos relatos una historia para la gente de común”.

4 Joseph Straubhaar, Melissa Santillana, Vanesa de Macedo Higgins Joyce and Luis Guilherme Duarte, *From Telenovelas to Netflix: Transnational, Transverse Television in Latin America*. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 250.

Colombian free-to-air private and public TV channels).<sup>5</sup> The latest study by CRC (Commission for Communications Regulation) points out that news and telenovelas are the most watched content of national TV channels distributed by cable or terrestrial digital television, reaching 75 % and 50 % respectively, whereas web apps and OTTs are used for consumption of movies and TV series, with 29 % mentioning they do not consume national TV production through these outlets.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, Colombian television audience of telenovelas remains high and distributed over the national territory with the consumption skewing towards the older demographic, with younger audiences consuming more online TV.<sup>7</sup> This is relevant because it shows the importance that telenovela still holds for the national imaginary and become central as an area of study for contemporary comprehension of history and its critical appraisal.

The beginning of the XXI century saw a shift away from narratives about elite educated aristocrats and working-class heroes to drug trafficking anti-heroes. After the successes of *Café* (RCN 1994) and *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (RCN 1998), both constructed upon working-class women falling for elite businessmen of power, trying to present the reality of the countryside farmer, in the former, and the underappreciated urban secretary, in the latter, they look now like a final call to the construction of a nation, that had started with the telenovelas of the late 1970s. They still included great amounts of innocence in their main characters, a naïveté that was essential to construct the sense of collective belonging. The move to narratives deeply rooted in drug crime was a shift that started with literature and film in the 1990s, finally permeating national television in the 2000s.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, the new representation of our nation had to come to grasps with the changing aesthetics and realities that telenovelas had been avoiding for a long time. Writing in 2009, Rincón argues that

The new and surprising style, tone and texture of the Colombian Telenovela recognize that we are living in a culture of drug trafficking in regards to aesthetics, values and references. We are a nation that appropriated the narco idea of rising from poverty by any means necessary: boobs, a gun, becoming corrupted, trafficking coke, becoming a guerrilla fighter, becoming a paraco (paramilitary) or becoming a member of the government.<sup>9</sup>

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5 DANE. “Indicadores Básicos de TIC en Hogares,” *Dane.gov.co*. <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/tecnologia-e-innovacion/tecnologias-de-la-informacion-y-las-comunicaciones-tic/indicadores-basicos-de-tic-en-hogares>

6 Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones. *El rol de los servicios OTT*. (Bogotá: CRC 2021): 36.

7 Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones, *El rol de los servicios OTT*: 43.

8 Rincón, “Narco.estética y Narco.cultura en Narco.lombia”. 57.

9 *Ibid.*

Rincón continues by listing all the contemporary telenovelas of the time to exemplify his point.<sup>10</sup> The 2000s was a coming to grips with a reality of crime, lawlessness, and corruption which showed that, unlike the previous telenovelas that based climbing social ladders on either work or aristocratic bloodlines, it was through a life of crime that many of the poor aspired to become middle or upper-class citizens. Yet the telenovelas of the Narco boom of the 2000s were loosely based on actual drug lords and were piggybacking on the excesses constantly presented in various forms of media, rather than trying to present the most infamous drug barons and their actions in the 1990s.

If the 2000s were filled with images of fictionalized Narcos, the 2010s presented a genre mixture between telenovelas, police dramas and biopics, by turning the production around the most infamous figures of the drug wars. *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol Televisión 2012) and *Alias el Mexicano* (Fox Telecolombia 2013) were examples of how the interest in portraying actual drug lords, rather than fictional ones, became the staple of the new decade. It was no longer an issue of presenting narco-culture, but actually engaging with the drug lords themselves, prompting criticism around exploiting the cruel past and justifying criminal activity, without lending a voice to the victims.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps as a reaction to these Telenovelas that *En la boca del Lobo* and *Bloque de Búsqueda* move the spotlight away from the drug lords themselves and to those who are fighting against them, whether as institutional heroes, in the former, or as a repenting snitch in the latter.

## History, memory and telenovelas

Telenovelas are shared narratives that create part of the comprehension of reality of those who watch them. Much like schools, museums and other forms of cultural consumption, they shape up the historical consciousness of the audience<sup>12</sup> since they provide contextual and narrative explanations for events, showcase values and promote recognition of a variety of actors and points of view. That is the reason why Martin Barbero considered them fundamental for the construction of the sense of nationhood, since they mediate collective reality. Following Benedict

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Omar Rincón. “Amamos a Pablo, odiamos a los políticos. Las repercusiones de Escobar, el patrón del mal,” *Nueva Sociedad* 255 (2015).

<sup>12</sup> Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Conciencia histórica, pensamiento crítico y telenovelas en Latinoamérica,” in *Escenarios para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico*, edited by Eugenia Varela Sarmiento (Bogotá: CEP-Universidad de la Salle, 2019): 51–86.

Anderson,<sup>13</sup> telenovelas shape the imagined community by providing common tropes and stories. With the allure of storytelling, they connect the dots. They serve as cultural memory, providing shared representations as a “result of a dynamic process through which the past is always reconstructed and represented within the framework of contemporary worries, interests and concerns”.<sup>14</sup> When these telenovelas anchor themselves in recent events, they serve as points of comparison and explanations for a series of disjointed events. It becomes easier to follow the narrative of human interactions than segregated and separated figures, media coverage or news snippets which have presented these events.

This constructive comprehension of a certain historical reality mediated by products such as telenovelas cannot be studied exclusively from the perspective of contents and their direct influence or effects upon an audience that assimilates the portrayed and novelized historical events. Cultural history and cultural studies have shown for decades that audiovisual consumption is framed by the social, economic and cultural configurations of complex historical processes in which the main categories of sense and meaning of concrete representations are interwoven.

Chartier informs us that the interplay between representations, culture and society are everchanging and contradictory relationships.<sup>15</sup> Day by day social groups revise and reinvent structures of thought and ideas and read in diverse forms the cultural product in a society. Consumption and reception of telenovelas or television series, thus, do not only present historical themes and contents, but also take part in the construction of categories and systems of collective representation within more complex configurations, which provide individuals and groups with ways to determine the reality value of the facts portrayed. Telenovelas based on real events or those that reconstruct historical facts within the recent history of a country, engage in dialogue with the spectators and their own judgment and representation schemes which are framed by larger collective representation frameworks.

Therefore, this analysis needs to focus on the study of the development of certain types of historical narratives present in audiovisual products.<sup>16</sup> If we think about these products that engage in dialogue around historical events and a type

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13 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

14 Janny Amaya Trujillo and Adrian José Charlois Allende. “Memoria cultural y ficción audiovisual en la era de la televisión en streaming. Una exploración en torno a la serie Narcos como relato de memoria transnacional,” *Comunicación y Sociedad* 31 (2018): 17.

15 Roger Chartier, *El mundo como representación* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2005).

16 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen. Film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

of “experimental thinking about the past”,<sup>17</sup> it is possible to ask from the narrative and formal canon about the ways of representing that have become mainstream in specific audiovisual practices, as the case of contemporary Colombian telenovelas that deal with the recent past or Latin American shows on the drug wars. The decoding of these television products is collectively developed upon a previous foundation that includes the spectators themselves: their knowledge, predispositions, ideas, ideologies, beliefs, and so on.

The importance is then placed, as Ferro highlights, on how audiovisual products enable for a study of a conscience of history evidenced in the representation of historical events and in the way the past is ideologically constructed by them.<sup>18</sup> If telenovelas and TV series are understood as ideological filters,<sup>19</sup> the focus of analysis expands to determine the communicative intention of networks, channels, producers and platforms to exploit specific audiovisual genres, formats and codes repeatedly used. Audiovisual products and media play a role as mediators of the process of representation of history. Although they do not reproduce reality nor history explicitly, they serve to provide a grasp of the way in which contemporary societies build and undertake specific representation modes and codes, linked to cultural and aesthetic models that are inscribed within larger ideological systems. In that sense, the question about the relevance of the portrayal of historical events through telenovelas and TV series is akin to that being made about cinema, where the “main issue is not to determine whether cinema falsifies, trivializes or hinders the historical truth, since film is not history, but rather how, why or what for does it do it”.<sup>20</sup> The question is not one of accuracy or distortion, but one about the conscious selection of particular viewpoints, events, voices and resources, and how that offers a particular mediation for our reflection upon our past.

The history of violence, drug trafficking and armed conflict in Colombia is, in this sense, a shared and collective narrative which seems to engender a feeling of community, beyond the apparent rejection that is occasionally levied against this type of identity narratives. The hypothesis presented here moves away from Martin Barbero’s claim about the importance of telenovelas in the construction of a sense of an imagined nation.<sup>21</sup> The representations and narratives in telenovelas and TV series of the 1980s and 1990s built on a sense of diversity and complexity in the

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17 Ibid.

18 Marc Ferro, *Historia contemporánea y cine* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1995).

19 Pierre Sorlin, *Sociología del cine* (México D. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985).

20 Goyeneche-Gómez, Edward, “Las relaciones entre cine, cultura e historia: una perspectiva de investigación audiovisual,” *Palabra Clave* 15, no. 3 (2012): 392.

21 Rincón, “Jesús Martín-Barbero”.

construction of characters, stories and contexts, to provide the public with a sense of the collective that reaches across geographic and class divides. The purpose, it seems, was to create collective narratives and myths that would make us understand ourselves as kindred inhabitants on the territorial space of the country. At the dawn of the new millennium, social, political and technological contexts reframe the debate around the meaning of the Nation.

Firstly, in the new millennium, due to the social, economic and cultural crisis unleashed by multiple violences, there is a collective sentiment in society to strengthen a right-wing political ideology, mainly embodied by the democratic security discourse during the government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2006 and 2006–2010). It was built upon the idea of a search for order that imposes a single-minded societal model with an authoritarian tendency, which seeks to evoke feelings and imaginaries, not around de Nation as a collective of people under one territorial and cultural boundary, but around the State, embodied by the institutional figures of the presidency, the police, the army and the general attorney. Secondly, the transformation of media structures, whether in information or entertainment, fostered the private duopoly of Caracol Television and RCN Television, corporations that produced and owned national free-to-air TV channels from 1998 onwards, and which were adjusting and assimilating to the dominant ideology in the country. Finally, during a hostile political climate, creatives seemed to find the history of drug trafficking and guerrillas a recurring theme that also coincided with a larger topic: war and conflict against organized crime.

In this context, the new narrative, from that of creating a sense of nation to one about strengthening the State, was moved towards a sense of imagined community wrapped around the institutions and its actors built upon a struggle and war against organized crime. Evidently, on the one hand, there is a careful selection of the facts and events that are represented, within specific time-bound social categories and historical processes: the State's fight against violence, cartel-led drug trafficking and the armed conflict against the guerrillas, leaving aside other historical issues of relevance. However, on the other hand, the political context produced a sort of moralist dichotomy in the construction of a history of the "good" belonging to the State and the "bad" as part of the criminal organizations.

The force of this opposition, ideologically legitimized by society, ended up concealing, for instance, in many TV series, telenovelas and other entertainment products, other realities in which the agents of the State were, actually, the criminals, corrupted officials, illegal actors, and so on. The narrative against drug trafficking and the guerrillas was sought to, at least partially, hide the impunity of those actors of the State and the government of the new millennium, mainly around the figure of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. It became impossible, for example, to produce TV series or telenovelas, at the time, based on the phenomenon of extrajudicial killings

by the army, known as the “false positives”.<sup>22</sup> It is in this context that entertainment products of the time need to be read, as they seemed to insist in repeating a representation formula regarding specific historical events which were aimed at strengthening, whether consciously or not, that country narrative.

Communicative mediation, by various types of media including traditional media outlets, social media platforms and audiovisual products, has been fundamental to collectively construct the timelines, with logical continuities, the representation of dominant social actors—clearly identifiable—, social categorizations of social class and institutional affiliation, and moral parameters about the facts or events portrayed. That is to say, audiovisual and other media products have been central to the construction of a social and historical contemporary memory<sup>23</sup> beyond the context of the stories and their validity as historical truth. This communicative and cultural memory<sup>24</sup> is articulated, in the Colombian case, around rather weak but effective narratives in building a thread focused on the value of information and newsworthiness, with a superficial and spur of the moment approach, as the base for the representation.<sup>25</sup> Penagos-Carreño goes further to claim that this is the current approach by traditional media outlets and social media platforms which would be structured in the communicative dimension of memory. This media memory is developed from the remembrances produced or elicited by media outlets as a form of narrated memory.

In the case of telenovelas of memory<sup>26</sup> there is a dual reading of memory. On the one hand, if a given common narrative is made upon certain categories, facts, actors and historical processes, there could be a memory regime that prompts given symbolic linkages that are enmeshed in society through these media products, beyond a demand for other types of tales and narratives. But, on the other

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22 ‘False positives’ was the name given to the illegal killing and extrajudicial killings of innocent people and petty criminals that were presented by army soldiers and officers as guerrilla fighter casualties in combat. This systematic activity of posing unrelated criminals or civilians as guerrilla members was carried out to claim rewards offered by the Army’s high command, which included lengthier leaves of absence and other substantial benefits.

23 Andreas Huyssen, *En busca del futuro perdido. Cultura y memoria en tiempos de globalización* (México D.F.: FCE: 2002).

24 Jan Assmann, “Communicative and cultural memory,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008): 109–18. See also Astrid Erll, *Memoria colectiva y culturas del recuerdo. Estudio introductorio*, (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2012).

25 Penagos-Carreño, Julián. *Mnemosine contra Epimeteo. El recuerdo y el olvido mediático en la sociedad contemporánea*. (Chía: Universidad de La Sabana, 2023).

26 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Narcotráfico y Telenovelas en Colombia: entre Narconovelas y telenovelas de la memoria,” *Hispanorama*, no. 157 (2017): 26–31.



hand, according to Penagos-Carreño,<sup>27</sup> it could be limited to providing a superficial or immediately fleeting effect that filters to the individual consumers of media as a memory detached from the social environment that does not become part of collective memory.

For both *En la boca del lobo* (Teleset 2014) and *Bloque de Búsqueda* (Teleset and Sony Pictures 2016), two telenovelas that address the war against drugs in Colombia in the early 1990s, it becomes relevant to analyse, precisely, the representation of national and governmental institutions, bearing in mind that these narratives seek to support the notion of a State at war with drug lords, but whose struggle becomes the place, the trope, the collective national consciousness that brings about public debate. These products enter a dialogue with the mediation processes of citizenship and the way they use, perceive and portray these institutions provide a given and contradictory sense of identity. These are products that can be studied from their narrative contrast. While *Bloque de Búsqueda* is completely aligned with the institutional perspective, seeking to honour the heroes of the war against drugs, achieving the ultimate goal of bringing down the world's most infamous drug lord, Pablo Escobar – the starting point of the telenovela which plays as a lengthy flashback –,<sup>28</sup> the main protagonist of *En la boca del lobo* is a criminal traitor, a morally contradictory and ambiguous character, which enables, according to the telenovela, the downfall of the Cali Cartel.

These two telenovelas are also framed by the surge of shows addressing real life drug lords and their actions, which started in the 2010s, following the trend in the 2000s of plots based very loosely on drug barons, but mostly of truly fictitious nature, eliciting what has been described as telenovelas of memory.<sup>29</sup>

## State institutions in Colombian telenovelas

*En la boca del Lobo* and *Bloque de Búsqueda* include a disclaimer before the intro in each episode.<sup>30</sup> The disclaimer seems contradictory. Both shows are clearly

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<sup>27</sup> Penagos-Carreño, *Mnemosine contra Epimeteo*.

<sup>28</sup> It is precisely because of the collective memory of this event, also played in *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, that the telenovela begins its first episode with the resolution of the plot. Similar to other biopics of renown public figures, by starting from the event that people know about, it builds a story around the characters getting to the point that is kept in the collective memory, as if to fill the consciousness gap about how this situation came to happen.

<sup>29</sup> Contreras Saiz, "Narcotráfico".

<sup>30</sup> *En la boca del lobo* begins with the following disclaimer, translated here into English: En la boca

structured upon the facts that took place during the war on drugs of the 1990s, but at the same time seem to be geared at preventing any backlash from any of those involved in the situations presented and any claim upon image and intellectual property rights associated with the narratives told. Yet it becomes even more surprising to see certain aspects regarding, on the one hand, the use of archival footage, and on the other, the specificity of mentioning institutions in the case of *Bloque de Búsqueda*, with an extra paragraph of the disclaimer ensuring that the representation of both the army and the police are not to be taken to tarnish their image.

Of course, the presence of such disclaimers is the first insight into what these shows are about: fractions of reality that are to be assumed as fiction, while at once anchored in a reality that is embedded in the archival footage included. The poetic license of delving with true facts, historical situations and real events is intermingled with a dramatization of the lives of real characters which are to be assumed as part of a fictionalized world. This in-between real and fiction is a confusing ambiguity that lends for the telenovelas to be at once readings of a historical reality and create a more coherent narrative of the historical memory than disjointed journalistic reports, documentaries and academic studies can provide. The use of archival footage from informative media provides a veil of verisimilitude which makes the past become a vehicle for a narrative that explains the present.<sup>31</sup>

Institutions in both telenovelas are portrayed as fragile, corrupt and too lenient on the criminals, particularly from the perspective of the politicians in government. Despite the heroic path that is provided for either the military, in *Bloque de Búsqueda*, and the one-man decision to break away from a life of crime, in *En la boca del lobo*, what becomes central is that political power is the culprit of crime,

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del lobo is a fiction TV series adapted freely from the book “AT THE DEVIL’S TABLE” by William C. Rempel. The characters and situations represented here, as well as the names used in this program are completely fictitious. Apart from the supplementary use of images from historical archives or real facts of public acknowledgement, any resemblance to names, persons, stories or other events associated with real people or situations is purely coincidental”. Whereas in the case of “Bloque de Búsqueda” the disclaimer goes even further by stating that “The characters, their names, institutions and the situations portrayed here are totally fictitious. Apart from the use of images taken from historical archives or real facts of public acknowledgement, any resemblance to names, entities, institutions, people, stories or other events associated with real people or situations are non-intentional and only coincidental. The police and the army represented in these TV series are fictitious and the facts dramatized in relation to them should not be associated with the real National Police and National Army of Colombia nor is there any intention to tarnish their image”.

31 Sergio Rodríguez-Blanco y Federico Mastrogiovanni, “Narrativas hegemónicas de la violencia. El crimen organizado y el narcotráfico entre el periodismo y las ficciones televisivas,” *Análisis. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura* 58 (2018): 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3098>.

by either oppressing, enabling or turning a blind eye to the crimes of drug lords and their ilk. The problem, thus, slides from the responsibility of the individual criminals and wraps around the ineptitude, corruption or cruelty of the institutions that represent the State.

Despite *Bloque de Búsqueda* being a gung-ho salute to the sacrifices of the police officers in the pursuit of bringing criminals to justice, and the level of bloodshed and cruelty displayed by Narco outlaws, it also exemplifies the government and its political institutions as unable to toe the line, willing to negotiate and concede to the indomitable power of the drug lords, while the heroic army and police officers put their loved ones in danger. It is striking, then, that the disclaimer clarifies that the image of the army and police is not meant to be tarnished by the TV series, when they are the ones presented mostly as heroic in their endeavours. The summary of this feeling is exemplified by a scene on episode number 52 when a dialogue between two police officers ends with one of them claiming “That’s the reason we are [as screwed] as we are in this country, Gardezabal, because bandits do as they please, and we, the law, work but with our hands tied”, referring to the government’s concession to the drug lords to suspend the extradition treaty with the US. The conversation between the Attorney General and General Vega in episode number 59 highlights, almost to a level of mockery, how the government seems to be unable to grasp the power of Pablo Escobar, and the disbanded police squad are called upon as heroes to save the day.

In the case of *En la boca del lobo* the aspect around the money provided by the Cali Cartel to the campaign of a presidential candidate, resembling the scandal known as *Proceso 8000*, which implicated President Ernesto Samper, was played with innuendo rather than directly claiming the knowledge and involvement of the President. As told by Rafael Noguera, main scriptwriter of the TV series, they were aware that they had to be very careful not to claim the fictitious President Sampedro was aware of any money coming into his campaign from the Cali cartel, because President Samper has been adamant about how Congress cleared him of any wrongdoing. Noguera states that “we had to beat around the bush ... Sony was very concerned, and they engaged a lawyer to ensure that in the four or five episodes where the campaign financing was mentioned, it was clearly stated that the money went into the campaign, but a doubt, rather than a claim, had to be made as to whether the candidate knew about it. We left a shadow of a doubt that, I believe, worked well”. Clearly, the whole incident and the way it is portrayed in the TV series adds to the common debate about the legitimacy of that government, and the suspicion that should be levied upon all institutions. Episode 35 begins with a public address by President Sampedro, followed by a conversation between Wilson and Manuel Ramírez. Wilson tells his father, Ricardo that “politicians [are] tie-wearing thieves” that have been constantly financed by the Cali Cartel. In a nutshell, they

describe all the governmental institutions as corrupt and untrustworthy, to the point that their own code of crime seems to be more respectable than any political system.

Asking to the other telenovelas of the decade, the audience is left with “loving Pablo, and hating politicians”.<sup>32</sup> Despite *En la boca del lobo* and *Bloque de Búsqueda* being told from the perspective of those set against the drug lords, the end conclusion is that our institutions are broken, and that there is more than crime to the drug lords, often clout with reasonable merits and values around respect, family and religion. Thus, it is the national institutions which are untrustworthy, whereas crime lords seem to behave along “expected” lines, despite them being reprehensible. In the end, it is a total distrust in the institutions that should prevail, because even heroes do not come unscathed dealing with them.

In a series of six focus groups with 55 people about *En la boca del lobo* carried out in 2014 before the product was ever broadcast, the people participating in the study claimed that it was interesting to see another telenovela about recent history, stating that “It has been overused, but it is good ... we already know about Pablo Escobar and [González Rodríguez] Gacha [from previous Telenovelas] it is good to learn as well about the Rodríguez Orejuela”,<sup>33</sup> exemplifying that this type of fiction is taken as an appropriate way to learn more about Colombian contemporary history, a source of historical information. Furthermore, those participating admitted that they felt this type of shows could have a negative impact on the image of the country abroad, while also praising it as an educational element about contemporary Colombian history and deeming it unsuitable to be watched with children, because of its content.

Carolina Barrera, one of the scriptwriters of *Bloque de Búsqueda*, acknowledges the importance of audiovisual representation of the past to better comprehend the present. She also recognizes the complex questions of the creative process from the perspective of the narrative construction, in which “evil characters” are always better characters than the “good” ones. For her, with the new millennium, TV series and telenovelas started to focus mainly on the “evil characters” who, in recognizable local contexts, provide identification by the audience based on cultural proximity.

Because of this, *Bloque de Búsqueda* tried to present the tale of this elite team away from a spotlight on Pablo Escobar. In the words of Barrera, they wanted to “tell the story of the downfall of Escobar without him”. This required for the script to focus mainly on the elite police squad, using other archetypes that would expand

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<sup>32</sup> Rincón, “Amamos.”

<sup>33</sup> Observatorio de Medios. *En la boca del lobo. Focus Group Report*. (Unpublished report, 2014): 19–20.

the frame of reference about state institutions in the 1990s facts that were amply known. In direct contrast to the telenovelas of the turn of the millennium, in both *En la boca del lobo* and *Bloque de Búsqueda* the viewpoint and central narrative thread was placed on specific characters who had a real counterpart, which enabled a positioning both for the fiction and for the events of the past being portrayed.

State institutions, like the police and governmental officers, are represented in a way that produces a contradictory effect related to the identity between citizens and the State. Those characters representing the State, as parts of the government or heads of institutions, are presented as weak and powerless in contrast to the strong and powerful criminals. Thus, the 1990s were shown as the decade of State institutions collapsing under the might of drug lords. This portrayal would seem to justify the political discourse of the beginning of the new millennium, centred on a sense of order, surveillance and the control of violence to be imposed by strong state institutions, promoting the ideology underscored by the policy of “democratic security”.

## Conclusion

The importance of telenovelas for the social construction of citizenship rests on their ability to bring some topics to the larger public in a way that is more comprehensible, by being construed upon a well-established genre, which simplifies interpretation. Although Telenovelas are never consumed in a cultural vacuum, and therefore receive mediations that are connected to the overarching themes and debates around them, they become part of the possibilities of interpretation available to contemporary audiences.

History is built by interpretation of sources regarding specific events, and the way those events are framed tells us about those that create and distribute the products, more so than about the events displayed in the programs themselves. However, under the guise of being as close as possible to the original sources, by the use of archival material, the actual or similar names to those portrayed, and connecting reasonably well with the public’s recollection of the events described, these telenovelas of memory present a form of engaging with a recent past. They describe how this past is understood in our present, and what the expectations, underlying assumptions and personal associations made by their creators are permeated through the stories told. Despite moving away from biopics focused on the criminals and their potential justifications to the snitch betraying the criminals or the police squad established to hunt them down, the common ground, despite the different viewpoints, remains a distrust in the government quite the opposite of the

discourse promoted for the 2000s by President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. If the nation was built upon the telenovelas of the 1980s and 1990s, as presented by Martín Barbero, and the following decades were supposed to present a construction of a sense of common governability by strengthening the State, what ends up coming out is quite the opposite, a disjointed, ill-conceived and corrupt form of government that renders institutions as weak, useless and incompetent when not blatantly criminal themselves.

This negative view on state institutions is a reflection, not of the past, but of our present state of affairs, and highlights that the drug war brought with it a destabilization of the social contract that is felt today. In a way, as informed by Rincón,<sup>34</sup> the Narco seems to be justified as a way to overcome systemic oppression, despite being destructive and promoting extreme violence. In opposition to these violent criminals, there are committed individuals within unstable and weak institutions, which render the general populace as unable to find anyone to trust to bring back a sense of justice and stability.

In Colombia, the context remains of a larger population that continues to consume national TV productions, and that, as exemplified by the focus groups, still enters a mediation with telenovelas to make sense of their current reality. If these telenovelas dress themselves as closer to reality than ever before, by including archival footage and claiming to be based on journalistic accounts, they represent the easiest access into comprehending the current memory of a recent historical past. They might elicit discussions that transcend roadcast consumption and expand a dialogue over other media spaces, such as Twitter threads or Facebook feeds, which might generate a more elaborate contemporary debates on their memory value.<sup>35</sup> However, by setting most of the underlying problems under the guise of a defective and weak State, they provide fodder for a distrust in political and democratic processes, undermining any effort to attain a more orderly and organized present or, at least, fostering a sense of powerlessness against the historical evidence of State corruption.

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34 Rincón, “Narco.estética.”; Rincón, “Amamos.”

35 Contreras Saíz, “Conciencia histórica, pensamiento crítico y telenovelas en Latinoamérica”. 80.

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Carolina Galindo

## Dos décadas. Dos momentos de una institución

El Ejército Nacional de Colombia en *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña*

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza de forma comparada la imagen del Ejército Nacional de Colombia en dos series de televisión emitidas durante dos momentos clave del conflicto armado colombiano: *Hombres de Honor* (1995) y *La Niña*, realizada en el marco de las negociaciones de La Habana que darían lugar a los Acuerdos de Paz de 2016 y 2017. A través del análisis del visionado de algunos de sus capítulos y de una revisión de comentarios de la red social YouTube, se examinan las representaciones de la institución castrense en dos momentos de su historia. Aunque ambas series responden a propósitos institucionales y de propaganda, evidencian transformaciones y persistencias en las representaciones de los militares en el público televidente colombiano.

**Palabras clave:** Colombia; conflicto armado colombiano; eduentretenimiento; Ejército Nacional de Colombia; imagen institucional; series.

**Abstract:** This chapter analyses the self-imagen of the National Army of Colombia in two TV-series ran during two key times of the Colombian armed conflict: *Hombres de Honor* (Men of Honor, 1995), and *La Niña* (The Girl), produced during the peace negotiations in Havana prior to the 2016–2017 Agreements. Through analytics on YouTube comments, as well as a review of some episodes, it examines the representations of the military in two moments in its history. Despite both series respond to institutional propaganda, they show transformations and persistence in the image of the military in the Colombian audiences.

**Keywords:** Colombia; colombian armed conflict; edu-entertainment; institutional image; National Army of Colombia; TV-series.

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**Nota:** Agradezco los aportes de los estudiantes del semillero Ciudadanía, democracia y conflictividad social de la Universidad del Rosario para la investigación preliminar. Muy especialmente, quiero reconocer el apoyo de María José Forero y de Daniela Soacha en los procesos de búsqueda de revisión de prensa y visionado, fundamentales para la construcción de este artículo, así como a los entrevistados y entrevistadas que contribuyeron con sus testimonios.

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“Entre lo que el contacto bélico te hacía y lo cansado que te dejaba, entre las cosas tremendas que veías u oías y lo que personalmente perdías en todo lo que se hacía pedazos, la guerra hacía un sitio para ti que era todo tuyo. Encontrarlo era como escuchar música esotérica, no la oías básicamente a través de todas las repeticiones hasta que tu propio aliento se incorporaba y se convertía en otro instrumento, y por entonces ya no era sólo música, era experiencia. Vida-como-película, guerra-como-película (de guerra), guerra-como-vida; un proceso completo si llegabas a completarlo, un camino claro a recorrer, pero lúgubre y duro, y no facilitaba las cosas el saber que habías puesto los pies en él tú mismo, deliberada y (hablando con más precisión) conscientemente”.

(*Michael Herr, Despachos de guerra*)

1995 fue un año particularmente desafiante para el Ejército Nacional de Colombia. Por un lado, la institución militar enfrentaba a diferentes actores en el marco del conflicto armado a lo largo y ancho del territorio nacional. Por otro, era evidente ante la opinión pública del país una división interna del mando militar y un cuestionamiento por parte de éste al gobierno de Ernesto Samper en el contexto del llamado *Proceso 8000*.<sup>1</sup> En efecto, dicho escándalo produjo la renuncia del ministro de Defensa Fernando Botero Zea en medio de acusaciones de corrupción y afectó sensiblemente las relaciones entre el Ejecutivo y la cúpula militar. De esta manera, se advertía una cierta separación entre los oficiales que apoyaban al presidente Samper (como fue el caso del general Manuel José Bonnett) y los que se alinearon en una tendencia más crítica hacia el gobierno, representada por el general Harold Bedoya Pizarro, quien fue retirado del servicio activo en 1997.<sup>2</sup> Aunque fue posible para el gobierno mantener finalmente el control sobre las Fuerzas Militares, el cuatrienio estuvo marcado no solamente por dicha controversia sino también por el inicio de una serie de ataques de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) que golpearía fuertemente la moral de la fuerza pública en los años siguientes como fueron los casos de Puerres, Las Delicias, La Carpa, Patascoy, El Billar, Miraflores y Uribe.

Casi dos décadas después, en medio de las cuales se presentaron importantes cambios en las Fuerzas Armadas generados en el contexto del Plan Colombia y

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1 Se conoce como Proceso 8000 a la investigación realizada por el Cámara de Representantes de Colombia al expresidente Ernesto Samper Pizano (así como a algunos políticos, periodistas y otros funcionarios) en la que se acusaba al mandatario de haber recibido dineros del Cartel de Cali para la financiación de la campaña presidencial de 1994. Aunque finalmente la investigación fue archivada, el proceso judicial y el escándalo político que trajo consigo generó un fuerte ambiente de polarización política en el país y afectó seriamente las relaciones diplomáticas especialmente con los Estados Unidos.

2 Andrés Dávila Ladrón de Guevara et al., “El ejército colombiano durante el periodo Samper: paradojas de un proceso tendencialmente crítico,” *Colombia Internacional*, no. 49–50 (2000): 173.

de la Política de Seguridad Democrática implementada durante los ocho años de gobierno de Álvaro Uribe Vélez, un acontecimiento particular puso de nuevo a las Fuerzas Armadas en el centro de la opinión pública: en una decisión inédita en la historia reciente del país, el gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos estableció que, por vez primera, militares y policías activos participaran formalmente en el proceso de paz que se negociaba entre el Estado colombiano y las FARC en La Habana (Cuba). La inclusión de miembros de la fuerza pública fue, sin duda alguna, un factor clave en el éxito de las negociaciones que culminarían en los Acuerdos de Paz de 2016–2017.<sup>3</sup>

De manera paralela al desarrollo de cada uno de los momentos descritos arriba, fueron emitidas dos series de televisión que dieron cuenta de una visión muy particular de las Fuerzas Militares: *Hombres de Honor* (1995–2000) y *La Niña* (2016), respectivamente. El objeto central de este artículo es el de examinar de forma comparativa las imágenes de la institución castrense representadas en estas producciones y sugerir algunos efectos de dichas imágenes en procesos de construcción de memoria histórica y formación política alrededor del conflicto armado en el país. Para el cumplimiento de este propósito, se realiza en primer lugar una breve descripción del contexto de producción de ambas series para luego analizar las imágenes del ejército presentadas en cada uno de los seriados. Finalmente, a través de algunos elementos derivados del visionado de las series, revisiones de prensa, así como de comentarios publicados en la red social YouTube, se presentan algunos hallazgos relacionados con la posible incidencia de estas series en procesos de formación política.

## Los contextos de producción: de los “Hombres de Acero” a los *Hombres de Honor*

De manera previa a la producción de la serie *Hombres de Honor*, a finales de la década de los ochenta había comenzado a gestarse desde el Ejército Nacional un particular proceso de promoción del servicio obligatorio a través del uso de la música, la historieta y otros medios de comunicación. Desde la sede de la IV Brigada del Ejército en Medellín (en medio de uno de los peores momentos de la guerra librada entre el Estado colombiano y el cartel de drogas de la capital antioqueña) se desarrolló una estrategia de comunicación basada en la producción de canciones en ritmos populares, especialmente aquéllos preferidos por la audiencia juvenil y en su difusión en emisoras comerciales dirigidas a este público. Este

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<sup>3</sup> Pizarro, Eduardo, *De la guerra a la paz. Las Fuerzas Militares entre 1996 y 2018* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2015), 25–6.

programa denominado “Hombres de Acero” se desarrolló en tres fases (desde 1989 hasta 1997) y tuvo como objetivo “representar la imagen y la habilidad del soldado colombiano”.<sup>4</sup> De los productos contemplados en las diferentes etapas de esta estrategia, vale la pena destacar la grabación de varios discos de acetato de canciones del ejército<sup>5</sup> en diferentes ritmos, su difusión en distintos festivales de música y emisoras, la creación de un circo, así como la publicación de la historieta en la prensa nacional que tuvo una corta duración. Por razones que se desconocen aún, la idea de una serie de dibujos animados en televisión no se llevó finalmente a cabo.

Dentro esta iniciativa, vale la pena destacar el enorme éxito obtenido por la canción “Hombres de acero”, la cual, a ritmo de heavy metal,<sup>6</sup> fue grabada por miembros del ejército y lanzada en la emisora Veracruz Estéreo de Medellín. Muy pronto pasó a ocupar durante varias semanas los primeros lugares de sintonía en las emisoras de música joven como 88.9 en Bogotá y otras ciudades del país. La canción estuvo acompañada de un videoclip que mostraba a soldados reales en labores de inspección, de combate y de “acción cívica”<sup>7</sup> en diferentes regiones del país. La letra de la canción es una clara invitación a los jóvenes a hacer parte del Ejército:

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4 “La fase I dio a conocer la formación física y técnica del soldado para cumplir su misión con profesionalismo y eficiencia; la fase II mostró al soldado en el ejercicio de sus capacidades operativas y en su labor de ayuda y apoyo a la comunidad. Y la fase III se dirige a la imaginación y sentimiento. Resulta el carácter épico y mítico del soldado colombiano en una historia que además de los periódicos, aparecerá en una serie de dibujos animados en televisión” (Fausto Pérez, “Los hombres de acero varían sus armas de combate,” *El Tiempo*, enero 25, 1997, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-547630>).

5 Sobre este punto, quisiera destacar el magnífico trabajo realizado por el proyecto “Biblioteca musical de la paz”, el cual recopiló una serie de las músicas producidas por los excombatientes (pertenecientes a diferentes grupos, incluido el Ejército Nacional de Colombia) y víctimas del conflicto armado colombiano. El material producido por esta iniciativa puede consultarse en: <https://www.bibliotecamusicalpaz.com/>.

6 En su estudio sobre la mítica serie sobre la Guerra de Vietnam *Misión del deber*, Ivo Ritzer sugiere el impacto psicológico que pudieron tener en el público las escenas de las luchas en el campo de batalla musicalizadas al ritmo de canciones en su mayor parte pertenecientes al género del rock and roll de la época. Véase: Ivo Ritzer, *Wie das Fernsehen den Krieg gewann. Zur Medienästhetik des Krieges in der TV-Serie* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 106.

7 En otro lugar, he dado cuenta, basada en los estudios de David French sobre el ejército británico, de los efectos de la Acción cívica (representada en programas de apoyo a la construcción de infraestructura, servicios de salud y educación a la población civil en regiones apartadas) como un pilar más de políticas de estrategia antsubversiva implementadas por las fuerzas armadas de países como Perú y Colombia. Ver: Carolina Galindo, “*Security versus Democracy. A Story in two Voices: Peru and Colombia*” (PhD diss., Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2019), 144.

“¡Atención! ¡Firmes! ¡Vamos corriendo! Al trote... Izquierdo, dos, tres, cuatro...(bis) Todas las mañanas cuando sale el sol (bis) La tropa entera quiere gritar (bis) ¡Vengan civiles, vengan a trotar! (bis) ¡Que en hombres de acero se convertirán! (bis) No hay que estar armados hasta los dientes, para proteger el mundo y ser valientes...Sólo con disciplina y entrenamiento, haremos de Colombia un país fuerte...Miren mis manos y mis músculos dicentes, forjando un hombre diferente...Siempre ágil y de acero, mi servicio es lo primero...Ser un soldado es un orgullo, a la defensa de lo mío y lo suyo...En las tropas que comandan la verdad, legiones de servicio y de bondad...Hay que ayudar al país, dondequiera a la bandera servir...Sin caer en la vergüenza, y tomando conciencia...¡El ejército es nuestro fin!

Izquierdo, dos, tres, cuatro...(bis) ¡Miren, miren! (bis) ¡Aquí va! (bis), lo mejor (bis), los soldados (bis) de Colombia (bis)...Uy uy uy...Izquierdo, dos, tres, cuatro... Pista, pista, que vengo trotando (bis)...Uy uy uy...Hoy juntos vamos a trabajar, por nuestro pueblo hay que luchar...A la defensa de nuestro hogar, no vamos nunca a fallar...Siempre unidos, amigos míos, en esta hora primera, juntos hagamos patria... ¡El ejército nos espera!Hay que ayudar al país, dondequiera a la bandera servir...Sin caer en la vergüenza, y tomando conciencia... ¡El ejército es nuestro fin!<sup>8</sup>

Unos años más tarde, algunos oficiales y otros civiles que trabajaban de manera cercana al Ejército plantearon la idea de realizar una serie de ficción basada en las historias de combate vivida por los miembros del ejército. Se buscaba entonces “que la gente *del común* conociera de manera diferente al ejército” en el marco de la estrategia de *Acción Psicológica* destinada a “ganar la guerra sin hacer un solo disparo”.<sup>9</sup> De acuerdo con la información suministrada en una serie de entrevistas (que se mantienen bajo anonimato por solicitud de los entrevistados y entrevistadas) realizadas a antiguos oficiales que estuvieron relacionados con el proyecto, la idea en un principio no fue acogida por la cúpula militar, por lo cual puede decirse que quedó “archivada” hasta que el general Harold Bedoya Pizarro asumió el comando general del Ejército. Este cambio en el mando constituyó un ambiente propicio para la gestación del proyecto, pues años antes el propio Bedoya había impulsado la creación del programa Hombres de Acero durante su periodo como comandante de la IV Brigada en Medellín.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Canción transcrita por la autora. El video original realizado para la difusión se puede encontrar en: Mauricio Pérez, “Hombres de acero”, sin fecha, disponible en YouTube, video, 5:27, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9Lw\\_bw-jhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9Lw_bw-jhY).

<sup>9</sup> El Tiempo, enero 25, 1997, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-547630>. La letra en itálica es de la autora.

<sup>10</sup> En una entrevista presentada en el capítulo conmemorativo número 20 de la serie, señala el general Bedoya: “*La experiencia adquirida durante veinte capítulos fue extraordinaria. Cumplimos con los objetivos de mostrarle [y] contarle a los colombianos lo que hacen nuestros soldados en todo el territorio nacional, especialmente en el cumplimiento de su servicio militar obligatorio. También nos ha permitido dar una respuesta a muchos colombianos que nos han pedido que continuemos saliendo con el programa de los sábados y en esta forma no solamente mostrar nuestra labor sino*

Con el aval de la comandancia, se realizó entonces la producción de una serie de episodios “piloto” que permitieron posteriormente conectar como productor asociado a Caracol Televisión. La vinculación de esta productora (y del patrocinio del Grupo Empresarial Santo Domingo, propietario de la misma) permitió darle una inyección económica a este proyecto, pues si bien se utilizaba la infraestructura del Ejército para el desplazamiento hacia las diferentes regiones del país y se tuvo el apoyo inicial del trabajo voluntario de un libretista, de algunos actores profesionales,<sup>11</sup> así como el de una pequeña productora privada, era necesario contar con equipos y asesoría técnica mucho más especializada para la elaboración de los libretos, la dirección y todos los componentes del proceso de realización.

El primer capítulo de la serie fue emitido el 26 de agosto de 1995 por la Cadena Uno<sup>12</sup> en el horario de los sábados a las 4 p.m. y no tardó mucho en constituirse en un fenómeno de audiencia y en un caso particular en la historia de la ficción televisiva colombiana, pues tuvo una duración de cinco años (hasta 2000) en cinco temporadas. Posteriormente se presentaron diferentes repeticiones a lo largo de los años hasta que se constituyó nuevamente en un fenómeno de audiencia durante la pandemia del COVID-19 a través de YouTube. Sobre este último auge de la serie, hablaremos con detalle más adelante.

El éxito de *Hombres de Honor*, reflejado no solamente en su audiencia y en los niveles de atención que logró captar en la prensa especializada de la época, se explica por diferentes razones. La primera de ellas es que la serie reprodujo los esquemas propios de la ficción televisiva de guerra<sup>13</sup> basados en la experiencia norteamericana en Corea y Vietnam, la cual a través de comedias como *M\*A\*S\*H\** (CBS 1972–1983) y *Los Magníficos* (NBC 1983–1987) o dramas como *Misión del Deber* (CBS 1987–1990) o *Playa Infernal* (ABC 1988–1991) había “conquistado” durante

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*mostrarle la geografía, mostrar las comunidades y mostrar nuestros hombres haciendo muchas cosas en beneficio de Colombia*”. *Hombres de Honor*, capítulo 21, dirigido por Jairo Cañola García, emitido en 1996 por Caracol. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_imXEaz51hE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_imXEaz51hE).

**11** Este fue el caso de actores como Andrés Felipe Martínez y de Oscar Borda, quienes realizaron los papeles del capitán Mauricio Bermúdez y del sargento segundo Eduardo Benítez, respectivamente.

**12** Es importante recordar que, para esta época, la televisión colombiana aún se encontraba estructurada bajo un modelo mixto de oferta controlado por el Estado, el cual decidía los tipos y horarios de programación de los programas que eran producidos por 24 programadoras privadas en dos canales de propiedad pública (Cadena Uno y Canal A). Este modelo cambiaría con la apertura hacia la creación de canales privados en 1997 y el ingreso de operadores por cable. Sonia Rojas, “Después de 20 años: así se ve la TV privada en Colombia,” tesis para maestría en periodismo, Universidad del Rosario, 2018, 6.

**13** La ficción televisiva de guerra tiene sus orígenes en la serie *The Gallant Men*, producida por ABC en 1962, la cual recreaba las experiencias de un comando militar norteamericano durante la II Guerra Mundial (Ritzer, *Wie das Fernsehen*, 28).

casi dos décadas (en diferentes momentos) la audiencia colombiana de los fines de semana. La ficción televisiva de guerra comprende generalmente dos momentos: uno “transversal” que da cuenta del desarrollo individual de cada uno de los personajes a lo largo de la trama y uno que podríamos llamar “coyuntural”, que responde a un acontecimiento o escenario preciso al que se enfrentan o en el que sitúan los personajes en un capítulo específico.

Una segunda razón puede encontrarse en el hecho que esta producción llegó a casi todos los rincones de la geografía nacional<sup>14</sup> – ignorados incluso por la prensa nacional y regional – en los que se mostraba no solamente los paisajes colombianos, sino también a “personas del común”, a actores naturales, a soldados provenientes de todo el país, que interactuaban con reconocidos actores profesionales, recreando historias (unas más verosímiles que otras) alusivas al conflicto armado. Se advierte entonces un claro mecanismo de identificación en el público televidente de la época con los personajes, los lugares y las situaciones presentadas en la serie, que (sumado a la reducida oferta televisiva del momento) lo constituyeron en uno de los programas preferidos del público, especialmente en zonas de provincia.

## Los contextos de producción: *La Niña y la apuesta por la reconciliación*

Un poco más de veinte años después del estreno de *Hombres de Honor*, en abril de 2016, se emitió el primer capítulo de la serie *La Niña*, cuyo último episodio salió al aire unos días antes de la ceremonia final de la firma del Acuerdo de Paz en Cartagena entre el estado colombiano y la guerrilla de las FARC. *La Niña* se transmitió en una sola temporada compuesta por 86 capítulos, de lunes a viernes en el horario *prime time* de las 9 pm.<sup>15</sup> Desde un comienzo, se ubicó siempre en las primeras posiciones de sintonía en Colombia y obtuvo la mayor parte de los premios India Catalina (los más importantes de la televisión nacional), así como una nominación a los Premios Platino del Cine Iberoamericano.

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<sup>14</sup> Un capítulo emblemático de la serie fue grabado incluso fuera del país, exactamente en la península del Sinaí, lugar donde el ejército colombiano viene desarrollando labores de apoyo como parte de una fuerza multinacional, desde hace más de treinta años.

<sup>15</sup> Una aclaración importante: aunque en 2011, el director colombiano Colbert García realizó la película *Silencio en el Paraíso*, basada en el caso de los falsos positivos, la relevancia de *La Niña* radica en el hecho que se trató de una ficción televisada de amplio alcance reflejado en sus índices de sintonía.

*La Niña* narra la historia de Belky Bustamante, una adolescente reclutada en su niñez por la guerrilla y que luego de hacer parte de sus filas durante varios años (en los que se gana la confianza y el cariño de un alto comandante) es capturada por el ejército e ingresa a un programa de reincorporación. A lo largo de la trama, Belky enfrentará diversos desafíos como el desencuentro con su familia de origen, la relación romántica que establece con un desmovilizado de grupos paramilitares, la validación de sus estudios básicos para poder ingresar a la carrera de medicina y las dificultades personales y sociales que debe sortear para cumplir con su gran sueño de ser médica. En medio de dichas dificultades, Belky sufrirá igualmente la persecución de antiguos compañeros de la insurgencia y de un coronel del ejército, de quien sufrió torturas y abusos sexuales y que busca asesinarla para garantizar su silencio. De manera paralela, la serie pone en evidencia las luchas de los excombatientes contra su pasado y contra la estigmatización. En resumen, *La Niña* rescata el lado humano de los diferentes rostros del conflicto armado colombiano y muestra caminos a seguir en materia de reconciliación.

Al igual que *Hombres de Honor*, *La Niña* se enmarca en un contexto muy particular de producción y emisión como lo fue la última fase de negociación de los Acuerdos de La Habana. En diferentes entrevistas concedidas a medios de comunicación, Juana Uribe (una de las guionistas de la serie) confirmó que la historia se basaba en la experiencia real de una excombatiente, la cual llegó a Caracol Televisión por medio del ex director de la Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, Alejandro Eder. De forma inmediata, Uribe intuyó la pertinencia y el éxito que podría alcanzar la idea de realizar una serie sobre dicha experiencia, por lo cual contactó tiempo después a la protagonista de los hechos, así como recibió el aval del canal para dar inicio al proyecto. Es importante señalar que, según Uribe, la protagonista de los hechos se involucró directamente en el proceso de elaboración de los libretos. Por su parte, Eder señaló que parte de las utilidades recibidas por la serie se dirigieron a la financiación de los estudios de medicina de la protagonista, los cuales fueron culminados (según informaciones de prensa) en 2022.<sup>16</sup> Hasta el día de hoy su identidad se mantiene oculta a la opinión pública. Un año después de *La Niña*, el canal RCN (el más fuerte competidor de Caracol TV) buscó replicar esta experiencia con la serie *No olvidarás mi nombre*, basada igualmente en la reconstrucción de experiencias reales de víctimas y combatientes del conflicto armado.

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<sup>16</sup> Mario Baos, “La joven excombatiente que inspiró la serie ‘La Niña’, de Caracol TV, se graduó de medicina,” *Blue Radio*, mayo 31, 2022, <https://www.bluradio.com/nacion/la-joven-excombatiente-que-inspiro-la-serie-la-nina-de-caracol-tv-se-graduado-de-medicina-rg10>; María José Medellín Cano, “La Niña, una serie para el posconflicto,” *El Espectador*, abril 23, 2016, <https://www.elespectador.com/entretenimiento/cine-y-tv/la-nina-una-serie-para-el-posconflicto-articulo-628743/>.



Pese a su clara intención pedagógica alrededor de la reconciliación y de las motivaciones de los diferentes actores, así como el reconocimiento recibido por la serie en el *Media for Social Impact Summit* de las Naciones Unidas, ésta no contó con los altos índices de popularidad y debate generados por *La Niña* en su momento.

## **Héroes de la patria, manzanas podridas y ciudadanos en uniforme: continuidades y cambios en la imagen del Ejército Nacional de Colombia en *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña***

Desde algunos años previos a la emisión de *Hombres de Honor*, se advertía un cierto cambio en la narrativa televisiva producida sobre el conflicto armado y sobre la violencia generalizada experimentada en el país desde mediados de los años ochenta. A partir del final de esta década, algunos guionistas buscaron en el espacio de las series de ficción (diferentes del formato de la telenovela enmarcado en Colombia entre el drama y la comedia) una alternativa o forma de resistencia para superar la representación tradicional de la violencia colombiana.<sup>17</sup> De esta manera, los autores de seriados como *Cuando quiero llorar no lloro* (conocido popularmente por el nombre de sus protagonistas *Los Victorinos*), *La alternativa del escorpión*, *El fiscal* (analizados cuidadosamente en el trabajo de Quiñones Cely), entre otros, buscaron “revelar las dimensiones de la violencia que, desde su punto de vista, era necesario explicar y profundizar, visibilizaron su posición como autores y actores sociales y su comprensión del público y de «lo público»”.<sup>18</sup>

*Hombres de Honor* se distanciaba considerablemente de esta tendencia. Como se señaló arriba, la serie dio continuidad a una estrategia de difusión y exaltación del trabajo del Ejército Nacional de Colombia que, sin esperarlo, terminó constituyéndose en un fenómeno televisivo. Como se advierte en algunas de las entrevistas, los y las oficiales que hicieron parte de la idea original y de la fase inicial del proyecto nunca previeron el éxito que un programa más bien institucional

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<sup>17</sup> Sobre este particular, ver: Beatriz Quiñones Cely, *Violencia y ficción televisiva: el acontecimiento de los noventa* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Artes, 2009), 80.

<sup>18</sup> En este orden de ideas, Quiñones Cely hace referencia a una entrevista a Carlos Duplat, guionista y director de series como *Amar y Vivir* y *Los Victorinos*, en la que el realizador señala que “... Para que esa recreación de la violencia le aporte algo al televidente, es necesario mostrarla en su contexto, en sus causas, en su proceso y en sus consecuencias...”. Quiñones Cely, *Violencia y ficción televisiva: el acontecimiento de los noventa*, 81.

(pero escrito en lenguaje de ficción) tendría en el público televidente: “Jamás se hizo con esa intención...buscábamos que la gente conociera de manera diferente al ejército...y también darle *moral*<sup>19</sup> al combatiente, mantener la *moral* dentro de las propias tropas”.<sup>20</sup> Si bien *Hombres de Honor* narra acontecimientos reales del conflicto combinados con elementos de ficción como el romance, la intriga o los conflictos familiares; no tenía la intencionalidad de problematizar, sino más bien de mostrar al soldado y al oficial como “héroes de la patria”. De esta manera, el *héroe* se constituyó como la imagen por excelencia del militar transmitida en *Hombres de Honor*.

La figura del *héroe* emerge entonces en una serie televisiva que se muestra como una “recreación idealizada, casi mitológica, de la institución militar, en tanto se constituyó como narrativa sobre los valores militares fundamentales y la lógica propia del Ejército Nacional”.<sup>21</sup> De esta manera, se advierte entonces una doble contingencia propia de la figura del héroe. Por un lado, el héroe, en palabras de Jonathan A. Allan (citado por Kitchen) encarna una “representación espectacular de la masculinidad caracterizada por su musculatura, su fuerza, virilidad y estatus profesional”.<sup>22</sup> Por el otro, señala Johan Alexander Forero, “el soldado es representado... como el sujeto que es capaz de dar su vida por el otro; este personaje se transforma en el sujeto sentí-pensante que siempre antepone su propio bienestar para convertirse en el vehículo del bienestar del otro”.<sup>23</sup> Este sentimiento de altruismo se encuentra enraizado igualmente desde una masculinidad militar definida por Aaron Belkin como “un conjunto de creencias, prácticas y atributos que posibilita a los individuos – hombres y mujeres – a afirmar la autoridad sobre la base de relaciones afirmativas con lo militar o con las ideas militares.”<sup>24</sup> Lo militar se asocia

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19 La “moral” se entiende aquí como la capacidad de resistencia de la tropa, especialmente de los soldados y oficiales de más bajo rango, para persistir en la lucha, en medio de las adversidades representadas por el conflicto armado, las crecientes arremetidas por parte de la guerrilla y de las críticas en la opinión pública hacia la institución militar.

20 Entrevistada 1. Exoficial del Ejército de Colombia, participante en el equipo de producción. Entrevista realizada en Bogotá por la autora, el 17 de mayo de 2023.

21 McAllister Andrade, Juan Camilo y Jairo Clavijo Poveda, “Imagen militar, capitales en juego y tanatopolítica: la serie televisiva del Ejército de Colombia *Hombres de Honor*,” *Universitas Humanística*, no. 88 (2019): 3.

22 Kitchen, Veronica, “Veterans and military masculinity in popular romance fiction,” *Critical Military Studies* 4, no.1 (2018): 37

23 Forero Medina Johan Alexander, “‘Hombre de Honor’: cambiando la imagen de las FMMM en la televisión colombiana,” Tesis para licenciatura en Artes Visuales, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (2018): 89.

24 Kitchen, “Veterans and military masculinity in popular romance fiction,” 37.

igualmente con el coraje, la resistencia física y emocional, así como con la lealtad a la institución<sup>25</sup> y al respecto de las jerarquías.

Una síntesis de esta doble contingencia se ve fielmente representada en los capítulos 19 y 20 titulados “Operación Colombia”, cuyo protagonista es el soldado Salazar. Al principio de esta historia, Salazar es un soldado débil, sensible y emotivo, que llora con facilidad. Sin embargo, el soldado Sotomayor<sup>26</sup> lo aconseja para que tenga mayor “carácter”. Salazar tiene la oportunidad de ser maestro de escuela, un sueño que albergaba hacía tiempo. Sin embargo, su timidez lo intimida frente a sus pequeños alumnos. Los guerrilleros ponen una bomba al lado de la escuela y, al percatarse de ello, Salazar la desactiva. En ese momento recupera su dignidad y valor frente a los niños. Por esta razón, Salazar se descubre a sí mismo como un hombre divertido y extrovertido en un extremo molesto, lo que genera un conflicto con sus compañeros del ejército. Finalmente, un enorme número de disidencias y criminales llega a la zona donde se encuentra la compañía. Salazar arriesga su vida en medio de un tiroteo y muere. “Él murió como un héroe, el destino lo quiso así”, dice su compañero Sotomayor.

La entrega y el sacrificio del héroe en pos del bien común logrado a través de la derrota del enemigo (la guerrilla) es una constante en todos los capítulos de la serie. En *Hombres de Honor* es clara la identificación de la amenaza interna como el problema central que deben enfrentar los militares. Y este enemigo representa la antítesis de la ética y de la estética militar. Los guerrilleros o bandoleros (en la serie no se hace una distinción precisa de la diferencia semántica e histórica entre estos dos términos) representan lo incivilizado, lo corrupto, son seres que buscan cualquier pretexto para matar, para hacer daño. Jerónimo, el antagonista del capítulo 28 titulado “El fantasma” (representado por el reconocido actor Sebastián Ospina), de aspecto descuidado, con vestimenta campesina, ríe a carcajadas mientras dispara

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25 En este sentido, es importante recordar que la institución militar es quizás la que presenta mejor los rasgos de las instituciones *totales* estudiadas por el sociólogo Erving Goffman. En su análisis sobre los militares colombianos a la luz de este concepto, destaca Elsa Blair su “aislamiento del mundo exterior dentro de un espacio cerrado, promiscuidad entre reclusos, *totalización* de los espacios y las necesidades del recluso por la institución, *entrega total* a la institución”. Blair, Elsa, *Conflicto armado y militares en Colombia. Cultos, símbolos e imaginarios* (Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, 1999), 147.

26 Es muy sugerente la forma como se construye a lo largo de la serie el personaje del soldado Sotomayor. En el comienzo de la trama es un joven de clase media y con un buen nivel educativo, pero rebelde y fiestero. Es obligado a prestar el servicio militar y esta experiencia transforma su vida. La institución conquista su corazón, por lo que este personaje busca reafirmar el imaginario que concibe al ejército como una institución “redentora” o reformadora de jóvenes con dificultades de adaptación.

abiertamente contra la compañía de soldados. Jerónimo representa el mayor reto del capitán Rivera, pues se ha constituido en un mito (se autodenomina “El iluminado del demonio”) que tiene un gran poder sobre las personas del pueblo. Encontramos aquí una representación de la lucha “entre el bien y el mal”. Y el mal es (a la mejor manera de la mitología judeocristiana) derrotado por el bien: después de una serie de engaños, Jerónimo cae en su propia trampa y es abatido por el sargento Benítez en la iglesia del pueblo. Una vez más, el riesgo y valentía de los hombres de la compañía liderada por el capitán salvan al pueblo de la tiranía del enemigo.



**Imagen 1.** *El héroe*: personaje Capitán Francisco Rivera, *Hombres de Honor*, interpretado por el actor Juan Carlos Gutiérrez.

Esta representación del héroe daría un giro importante veinte años después. Como ya se había señalado antes, en 2016 otra serie sobre el conflicto armado vería la luz en el horario *prime time*. Sin embargo, la protagonista no solamente era una excombatiente de la guerrilla, sino que, además, había sido víctima de tortura y abuso sexual por parte de un coronel del ejército. En este sentido, la serie *La Niña* mostraba abiertamente otra faceta de la institución militar en la ficción televisiva colombiana más reciente. Esto fue posible por varias razones. Una de ellas tiene que ver con el hecho que, durante los veinte años de diferencia existentes entre *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña*, el ejército colombiano había experimentado importantes reformas en el contexto del plan de ayuda militar respaldado por el gobierno de Estados Unidos, más conocido como el “Plan Colombia” y la Política de Seguridad Democrática, columna vertebral de los ocho años de gobierno del expresidente Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010). Aunque estas reformas representaron un “espaldarazo” a la fuerza pública, la institución militar fue protagonista de una de las controversias políticas más importantes de los últimos tiempos, relacionadas con violaciones sistemáticas a los derechos humanos. Uno de los casos más emblemáticos al respecto es, sin duda alguna, el conocido como los “Falsos positivos”.<sup>27</sup> Este caso abrió

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<sup>27</sup> Este caso hace referencia a una serie de desapariciones y ejecuciones extrajudiciales cometidas entre 2007 y 2008. En octubre de este último año salió a la luz pública el hecho que diferentes grupos de jóvenes residentes en sectores marginales de diferentes regiones del país fueron reclutados con la promesa de obtener empleos temporales bien pagados, luego asesinados a sangre fría y

un amplio debate a nivel nacional e internacional sobre los límites de las acciones militares en el marco del conflicto armado y actualmente es investigado bajo el nombre “Asesinatos y desapariciones forzadas presentados como bajas en combate por agentes del Estado” (Caso 03) por parte de la Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz. A este escándalo, se sumaron otras iniciativas como la reapertura de investigaciones sobre las desapariciones cometidas durante la Toma del Palacio de Justicia en 1985, la puesta en marcha de la Ley de Víctimas y la consecuente creación del Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, las cuales abrieron un camino no solamente en materia judicial, sino también alrededor de la memoria colectiva sobre el papel de la institución militar durante la confrontación armada vivida en el país en las últimas décadas.

Una segunda razón se asocia directamente con la presencia de militares activos durante las negociaciones de paz creó un ambiente propicio para hablar públicamente de temas considerados como tabú por parte de la institución militar, de otros actores armados y de las propias víctimas. Al respecto, la productora de *La Niña* sugirió que, aunque era delicado contar que cuando el Ejército capturó a la protagonista, el general a cargo de entregarla [llamado en la serie *coronel Luis Barragán*] abusó de ella sexualmente, no dudó en que un episodio tan fuerte tenía que aparecer y que el público debía asumir su cuota de madurez señalando que “No es un ataque contra el Ejército. Un general, entre muchos, que obró mal, no habla de todos”.<sup>28</sup>



**Imagen 2.** La manzana podrida: personaje Coronel Luis Barragán, *La Niña*, interpretado por el actor Diego Vásquez.

A partir del escándalo de los “Falsos positivos” se ha adoptado en los últimos años en la opinión pública colombiana el apelativo de *manzanas podridas* para hacer

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presentados por el ejército como miembros de la guerrilla caídos en combate. Los casos investigados involucraron alrededor de 1416 víctimas que han producido la condena de 21 militares a penas que oscilan entre los 37 y 52 años de cárcel. Sin embargo, la mayor parte de los asesinatos relacionados con este escándalo siguen en la impunidad.

<sup>28</sup> “Detrás de La Niña,” Revista Semana, mayo 06, 2016, <https://www.semana.com/gente/articulo/television-la-nina-una-historia-de-conflicto-y-reinsercion/472622/>.

alusión a los soldados y oficiales que participaron en el caso y que luego se ha hecho extensivo a todos aquellos partícipes en otras acciones denigrantes cometidas igualmente por miembros de la fuerza pública.<sup>29</sup> Este apelativo ha sido ampliamente criticado en la medida en que se ha usado como un eufemismo para evadir las responsabilidades de otros actores e instituciones en dichos casos, bien sea por acción o por omisión. La *manzana podrida* se muestra como la excepción y el caso desviado dentro de la generalidad de la conducta esperada de los miembros de la institución. Pese a este uso indiscriminado, consideramos pertinente, para efectos de esta investigación, su uso para tipificar personajes como el coronel Barragán (y sus cómplices como el oficial Rigoberto Varón), los cuales logran mostrar, en efecto, otra cara de la institución militar y constituyen una ruptura clara en relación con la imagen del héroe de los *Hombres de Honor*. Barragán y sus hombres otros no solamente cometen violaciones contra los derechos humanos, sino que hacen igualmente uso de su poder, posición en el ejército y capacidad de influencia para obstaculizar las investigaciones en su contra. Hasta el último momento, Barragán jamás aceptará sus acciones o mostrará un mínimo arrepentimiento por ellas. Por el contrario, se considera a sí mismo como un héroe de la patria traicionado por miembros de la propia institución militar.

Aunque *La Niña* pone en evidencia la existencia de las *manzanas podridas* en la fuerza pública, la presencia (y centralidad) de un personaje como el coronel Barragán no significa necesariamente que la serie adopte una única postura, abiertamente crítica frente a la institución militar. En contraste con Barragán, emerge la figura del coronel Javier Álzate quien encarna una segunda imagen que identificamos como la del *ciudadano en uniforme*, la cual corresponde a un modelo normativo que comprende aspectos políticos, sociales y éticos. Desde este modelo, el personal militar está constituido por ciudadanos maduros, que deben ser tratados como tales por sus superiores. Las acciones del militar se basan en valores democráticos, orientados por el compromiso de defender un orden social. Si bien los soldados están más motivados y están más capacitados para la lucha, la mayoría están convencidos de la superioridad de dicho orden social y todo cuestionamiento o amenaza a dicho orden [y sus valores] debe ser considerado como un peligro o como un enemigo.<sup>30</sup> En otras palabras, se es primero ciudadano antes que soldado y héroe. El soldado es un *ciudadano en uniforme*.

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29 Entre éstas llama particularmente la atención el abuso sexual cometido por un grupo de soldados contra una niña indígena de doce años de edad en el municipio de Pueblo Rico (Risaralda) en junio de 2020.

30 Nina Leonhard, "Towards a new German military identity? Change and continuity of military representations of self and other (s) in Germany," *Critical Military Studies*, 5, no.4 (2019), 307–8.



**Imagen 3.** *El ciudadano en uniforme:* Coronel Javier Álzate, *La Niña*, interpretado por el actor Juan Sebastián Aragón.

Pero el coronel Álzate no es solamente un *ciudadano en uniforme* que busca defender el orden democrático. En el cumplimiento de este objetivo debe proteger igualmente a la institución del peligro de las propias manzanas podridas que socavan seriamente la estructura y los valores del ejército, como es el caso del coronel Barragán. En este sentido, una figura como la del coronel Álzate respondería también a lo que Deborah Ballard-Reisch denomina el proceso de la expiación de la culpa y la redención de los combatientes.<sup>31</sup> A través de la relación (profesional primero y filial después) que desarrollará con Belky a lo largo de la historia, el coronel Álzate no solamente se confrontará con el lado oscuro de la institución, sino que tendrá igualmente la oportunidad de la redención personal y colectiva a través de la búsqueda de justicia que lidera en contra de las acciones de las que fue víctima la excombatiente de parte de sus propios compañeros de armas.<sup>32</sup>

De esta manera, identificamos entonces tres imágenes del ejército colombiano en dos seriados de ficción correspondientes a dos momentos clave del ejército y

<sup>31</sup> Deborah Ballard-Reisch, "China Beach and Tour of Duty: American Television and Revisionist History of the Vietnam War," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 25, no.3 (1991), 135. En su análisis de las series *Misión del deber* y *Playa Infernal*, la autora muestra que en diferentes momentos (que incluyen el retorno a casa) los personajes, a través del autoexamen, reconstruyen su propia historia para racionalizar sus experiencias en Vietnam con el fin de purgar la culpa por librar una guerra carente de un propósito claro. En dicho proceso, la humanización del enemigo [los vietnamitas] por parte de los oficiales norteamericanos jugará un rol clave. Sobre esta última cuestión, ver igualmente: Ritzer, *Wie das Fernsehen*, 99.

<sup>32</sup> En este proceso de redención del coronel Álzate lo acompañan igualmente dos instituciones propias del status-quo de la cultura política colombiana: la Iglesia Católica y el Estado. La primera, representada en la figura del Padre Rivas oficiará como un apoyo fundamental a la reincorporación de Belky y de Manuel, su pareja sentimental. Al respecto, es importante destacar el rol central atribuido a representantes de la Iglesia Católica en las telenovelas latinoamericanas, especialmente como protectores o confidentes de los protagonistas. El culto al catolicismo y el respeto a sus preceptos es igualmente un rasgo característico en *Hombres de Honor*. Por otro lado, el personaje de Tatiana Toquica, trabajadora social que representa a la Agencia Colombiana de Reincorporación evidencia las "bondades" de la infraestructura del Estado para la atención a los excombatientes. Gracias al caso de Belky, el coronel Álzate y Tatiana Toquica establecerán una relación sentimental que se desarrolla a lo largo de la historia y que será fundamental en el proceder del militar.

del conflicto armado colombiano. Mientras que en *Hombres de Honor* predomina el imperativo del héroe, en el que se entremezclan la virilidad y el altruismo; *La Niña* dará paso a dos caras que se confrontan dentro de una misma institución: la *manzana podrida* y el *ciudadano en uniforme*. Como ya se había señalado, esta dicotomía dista de ser una crítica frontal a las fuerzas armadas en la medida en que el *ciudadano en uniforme* ratifica los valores de la institución y logrará, luego de muchas dificultades, separar la *manzana podrida* del conjunto del ejército. Al igual que en la ficción mítica de *Hombres de honor*, el “bien” siempre vence.

## **A manera de conclusión: ¿Qué nos sugieren estas imágenes del ejército en relación con la formación política de dos generaciones de colombianos?**

Una vez se han identificado algunas imágenes de los miembros de la institución castrense, es necesario revisar los posibles efectos de estas representaciones en la percepción del público sobre el conflicto armado, sobre sus actores y sobre algunas instituciones en el país, es decir, en términos de la *formación política* del televidente. Entendemos aquí a la formación política como un proceso por medio del cual los sujetos incorporan ideas, valores, sentimientos alrededor de los miembros, grupos, asociaciones y situaciones que hacen parte de su experiencia como miembro de una comunidad. Este proceso reviste dimensiones tanto informales como formales y comprende una variedad de espacios que van desde la familia, pasando por los entornos escolares, vecinales, medios de comunicación, iglesias, hasta llegar a estructuras más amplias como partidos políticos y movimientos sociales. En el marco de esta aproximación a la formación política, es importante tener en cuenta igualmente dos consideraciones importantes: 1) *Lo político* se entiende como una categoría amplia. Esto quiere decir que estamos examinando sus dimensiones más allá de lo estatal. En lugar de hablar desde el Estado, hablamos más bien desde la *comunidad política*.<sup>33</sup> 2) La *formación política* se desarrolla en tanto en escenarios democráticos como no democráticos, es decir, no necesariamente (a diferencia de un modelo basado en *la civic education* norteamericana) está destinada a la promoción y consolidación de un sistema democrático.

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33 Desde esta perspectiva, articulamos a esta concepción discusiones más recientes desde ámbitos como el feminismo, el cual considera que “*Lo personal es político*”.



Para revisar entonces el posible efecto de estas imágenes del ejército en los procesos de formación política de los televidentes de *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña*, se ha realizado una revisión de los comentarios presentados en la red social YouTube a diferentes capítulos de las dos series objeto de estudio. Sobre este punto es necesario retomar en extenso las reflexiones de Eva Gil Pons alrededor las transformaciones experimentadas en las formas de ver televisión con la incursión de las nuevas tecnologías (especialmente en los últimos quince años) señalando que:

“Del rol tradicionalmente pasivo, el usuario ha pasado a adoptar una actitud activa hacia los contenidos de televisión. No sólo decide qué y cuándo ver estos contenidos<sup>34</sup> [...] la red plantea un nuevo entorno comunicativo en el cual las tradicionales relaciones entre las industrias de los medios de comunicación y los consumidores se ven profundamente afectadas[...] Internet se convierte en el espacio en que los fans realizan los procesos de codificación/ descodificación de la serie a través de los debates generados en los blogs y foros, los comentarios de los capítulos [...] se observan distintos procesos de descodificación del texto base, por parte del fan. Por un lado, la descodificación del texto, que se relaciona con la manera en que el espectador consume e interpreta el texto, tiene lugar en los blogs y foros en lo que publican los comentarios de la serie, abren debates sobre los temas que se abordan en ella, comparten hipótesis acerca de las diversas tramas, etc. El espectador-fan puede cuestionar el significado del texto, dialogando con él y aportando nuevas interpretaciones del mismo, llegando incluso a producir una lectura opuesta del texto”.<sup>35</sup>

En este orden de ideas, presentamos a continuación algunos hallazgos del ejercicio exploratorio basado en la revisión de comentarios que sobre las dos producciones de televisión se han publicado en los últimos años en YouTube. Como ya se había señalado, aunque *Hombres de Honor* se emitió originalmente en 1995, se advierte un nuevo “boom” de la serie a través de la repetición de sus capítulos en esta red social, especialmente durante la pandemia del COVID 19. Sorprende significativamente el número de visionados por capítulo, así como los comentarios publicados en el blog de la red. En lo que respecta *Hombres de Honor*, en la revisión realizada sobre una muestra de quince capítulos escogidos de manera aleatoria, es posible identificar algunas tendencias (mayoritariamente a favor de la serie y/o de la institución militar), entre las cuales se destacan las siguientes, acompañadas de algunos ejemplos que se transcriben de la forma original en la que se encuentran publicados:

Una imagen positiva del ejército nacional, reflejada en comentarios que rescatan el papel de la institución en la protección de los ciudadanos y de las instituciones:

“Glorioso Ejército Nacional adelante en la defensa del país contra esos vándalos Dios los Bendiga”<sup>36</sup>

“Que vivan los soldados de Colombia carajo gracias por defender la patria. Vencer o morir. Paso de bensedores”<sup>37</sup>

“Me encanta ese programa: HOMBRES DE HONOR...Ojala el servicio militar volviera a ser obligatorio y recogieran más de una lágrima que andan por ahí sueltos y les enseñaran a respetar los taitas, porq aya si los vuelven hombresitos”<sup>38</sup>

“A un militar le toca ser amigo, hermano, maestro, consejero, padre, médico, héroe, y tener que privarse de su familia, de navidades, de reuniones familiares, esta serie a veces me ha hecho llorar”<sup>39</sup>

“Ellos si son héroes de verdad. Me siento orgullosa de los soldados de mi Colombia. A ellos todo nuestro respeto y agradecimiento”<sup>40</sup>

Una influencia directa en la decisión de prestar el servicio militar o de hacer carrera en la institución. Sin duda alguna, este es uno de los comentarios más reiterativos en todos los capítulos analizados.<sup>41</sup>

“No me perdía un capítulo de este programa. Y quería pertenecer al ejército cuando fuera mayor de edad. Sueño que cumplí. Me siento muy orgulloso haber pertenecido al EJERCITO DE COLOMBIA”<sup>42</sup>

“Cuando era niño me gustaba bastante ver este programa todos los sábados no perdía ningún capítulo. También a medida que iba creciendo me motivaba más a pertenecer al Ejército Nacional y pues apenas salga del colegio espero entrar a hacer parte de esta institución que

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41 También es sugerente esta alusión a la influencia de la serie en la decisión para prestar el servicio militar encontrada en otros espacios. En un artículo sobre la serie publicado un año después de su lanzamiento en la Tele Revista del periódico El Espectador, se señala lo siguiente: *“Tanto para el Ejército como para los actores ha sido una experiencia valiosa. Y aunque aún no hay un estudio que compruebe qué tanta eficacia ha tenido el dramatizado para la imagen del Ejército nacional, lo cierto es que su buen rating, la acogida que tienen en cada región, sumado al incremento de aspirantes al Ejército presentado en el último año, los hace pensar que la experiencia ha valido la pena y que el esfuerzo debe continuar”*. Ver: Claudia Beltrán, “Hombres de Honor. Testimonio de muchas luchas,” *La Tele Revista*, agosto 10, 1996. Igualmente, en el marco del proyecto “Biblioteca musical de la paz”, algunos de los entrevistados hicieron alusión al impacto de la serie en su decisión de ingresar al ejército. Agradezco al director del proyecto, Rafael Quishpe, haber compartido algunos de estos testimonios.

42 Comentario de @danielrobledo2842 al capítulo No. 22 de *Hombres de Honor*, “Mi lanza por siempre”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oekd6H9-Us0>, video publicado el 23 de diciembre de 2014.

se encarga por defender a Colombia y también espero servirle a mi patria como soldado del Ejército Nacional de Colombia”<sup>43</sup>

“Fue una gran serie por haya en los años 1996 y gracias a este programa me fuy a pagar servicio milita”<sup>44</sup>

“Estos manes alimentaron mis sueños e iluciones cuando apenas era un niño. Y no conocía el sufrimiento en la vida. Lástima que nunca pude portar ese glorioso uniforme. LA VOCACIÓN SI QUE LA TENÍA”.<sup>45</sup>

“Creci.. Viendo.. Hombres d honor.. Mi sueño. Era cumplir los 18 y pertenecer y vestir ese uniforme.. Gracias Dios x cumplir los sueños... Más capítulos x favor”<sup>46</sup>

“Mi niñez la viví en el campo, en medio de las montañas, Junto a mis primos y hermanos. La mayoría de mis primos, mi hermano mayor y mi persona préstamos servicio militar. Y nuestra inspiración fue esta gran serie”<sup>47</sup>

Una crítica abierta a la institución, en la medida en que muestra un discurso único sobre el accionar de sus hombres:

“En qué capítulo les ponían las botas al revés a los civiles para hacerlos pasar como guerrilleros?”<sup>48</sup>

“Jajaja desde cuándo un militar habla por radio con la mamá y desde cuándo le celebran a uno los cumpleaños en el ejército 39:28 mucha ficción”<sup>49</sup>

“Jajaja ja ja ja esta gente es boba en este programa muestran solo el 1 % de la realidad que se vive en el ejército”<sup>50</sup>

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43 Comentario de @johanluna9653 al capítulo No.1 de *Hombres de Honor*, “Un nuevo amanecer”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoPPesQEM40>, video publicado el 5 de abril de 2014.

44 Comentario de @jhonmondragon4430 al capítulo No. 25 de *Hombres de Honor*, “Otra Cara del Soldado”, en <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDWlVcNrmkU>, video publicado el 5 de enero de 2015.

45 Comentario @duvanelagroman1437 al capítulo No.10 de *Hombres de Honor*, “El silencio del dolor”, en: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A\\_aSNuz2pJQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_aSNuz2pJQ), video publicado el 25 de mayo de 2014.

46 Comentario de @dictamarmontilla3809 al capítulo No. 17 de *Hombres de Honor*, “La informante” en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyMEWsqgkAA>, video publicado el 19 de septiembre de 2014.

47 Comentario de @andrescol4914 al capítulo No. 19 de *Hombres de Honor*, “Operación Colombia” en: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_8RgASFI4o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_8RgASFI4o), video publicado el 16 de noviembre de 2014.

48 Comentario de @jove6765 al capítulo No. 30 de *Hombres de Honor*, “No sólo sueños” en: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ\\_rfgqyDbg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ_rfgqyDbg), video publicado el 3 de octubre de 2015.

49 Comentario de @marlonsantamaria592 al capítulo No. 11 de *Hombres de Honor*, “Amigos”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8li0ZIgvRA&t=61s>, video publicado el 25 de mayo de 2014.

50 Comentarios de @julianalbert6257 al capítulo1 “Un nuevo amanecer”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoPPesQEM40>, video publicado el 5 de abril de 2014.

“Por qué unos soldados que deben ser mayores de edad salen con unas colegialas poniéndolas en riesgo? Cómo es que estos dos no acabaron en un calabozo?”<sup>51</sup>

“cuando sale el capítulo de los falsos positivos?”<sup>52</sup>

De otra parte, la institución militar es una de las pocas (si no la única) que llega a los rincones más apartados del país, a la llamada “Colombia profunda”. Este alcance es valorado de forma altamente positiva por el público, el cual ve representados en imágenes y situaciones sus lugares de origen y residencia:<sup>53</sup>

“Wow apareció Nariño que emoción un saludo desde pasto Nariño me siento orgulloso de que mi departamento salga en una serie muy buena”<sup>54</sup>

“Mucha serie realizada por el glorioso Ejército Nacional. Bacano que subieran los capítulos grabados en Leticia que tienen como nombre „Deber Antes Que Vida“”<sup>55</sup>

Con respecto a los comentarios sobre *La Niña* si bien, se advierten referencias críticas a la serie, tienen un mayor peso las alusiones reflexivas alrededor de la memoria sobre el conflicto armado. Veamos algunos de ellos:

“No quisiera sonar cursi . . . pero con honestidad, esta serie me tocó el corazón . . . de solo pensar que los horrores que se relatan en la serie ocurren en realidad . . . el momento en la presentación donde se ve al hermanito de Belky con ataque epiléptico y ella – pequeña – corriendo a socorrer a su hermano, uff! . . . y pensar que es una historia real . . . finalmente, la letra de la canción . . . no . . . es demasiado. Me parte el corazón”<sup>56</sup>

“Una de las mejores novelas Colombianas, resalta el dolor de las familias, niños, niñas y jóvenes reclutados, seres que son sacados a la fuerza del seno de su hoja; para enfrentarse a un mundo lleno de sangre, dolor, incertidumbre, mala vida y muchas cosas más.”<sup>57</sup>

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51 Comentario de @philbertmill2 al capítulo 16 de *Hombres de Honor*, “El secuestro”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3voAJ3X-aGc>, video publicado el 13 septiembre de 2014.

52 Comentario de @Robertdavidfutbolero1930 philbertmill2 al capítulo 16 de *Hombres de Honor*, “El secuestro”, en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3voAJ3X-aGc>, video publicado el 13 de septiembre de 2014.

53 Esta idea también se encuentra en la nota de la Tele Revista mencionada arriba: “Esta mezcla de ficción y realidad es la constante de este seriado que buscando veracidad al relato ha recorrido el país, especialmente en las zonas más marginadas y neurálgicas”.

56 Comentario de @robertodechile9173 al capítulo No. 1 de *La Niña* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOWLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016.

57 Comentario de @Lorenapenasarmiento8860 al capítulo No. 1 de *La Niña* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOWLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016.

“Los que se quejan de que si es otra narconovela o serie...viví una de las épocas más duras de este país, conocí muchas cosa de niños y niñas o adolescentes que fueron reclutados por las farc y nunca volvieron, posiblemente terminaron en alguna montaña de las selvas colombianas, también el terror de la llegada de los paramilitares que hicieron más atrocidades que la misma guerrilla. Pienso que esta serie muestra la realidad así nos duela”.<sup>58</sup>

“No hay como un País libre de revolución pido a Dios que no haya esto en mi País no es nada bueno que se lleven a nuestros hijos a la fuerza sin poder hacer nada no existen los derechos humanos aquí”<sup>59</sup>

“la niña. novela con muchos errores” Respuesta de @Dante Magno: “Cierto, hacer quedar bien a los genocidas de las guerrillas y no nos muestran todo el mal que han hecho y además culpan de cosas al estado y a las autodefensas que son héroes de la patria y que no matan a nadie”<sup>60</sup>

“ustedes caracol no les gustaría dejar peor el nombre de Colombia????? no se si no piensan o solo hacen las cosas por hacerlas midiendo el rating...pero muchos pelmasos estúpidos... primero escobar...el cartel de los sapos...etc...etc...”<sup>61</sup>

Si bien esta primera exploración plantea la necesidad de realizar una indagación más profunda basada en las posibilidades que nos ofrecen la ciencia de datos en general y el análisis de redes en particular, es posible establecer a partir de la aproximación propuesta aquí dos conclusiones. La primera de ellas se relaciona con la persistencia de una imagen heroica de la institución militar en la mayor parte de la audiencia de *Hombres de Honor*, que contrasta con la polarización que se evidencia en el público de *La Niña* alrededor de las responsabilidades de los diferentes actores en el conflicto armado colombiano. Aunque sigue imperando la lógica de “los buenos y los malos”, ya se advierte en una parte de los comentarios una cierta distancia crítica en las reflexiones sobre el conflicto. A partir de esta primera conclusión, se deriva una segunda relacionada con las posibilidades que ofrecen estas series en la comprensión de los procesos de formación política. Retomando las distinciones realizadas por el sociólogo John B. Thompson entre la “experiencia vivida” y la “experiencia mediática”,<sup>62</sup> una revisión de estas producciones nos ha

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58 Comentario de @andresvilla8075 al capítulo No.1 de 1 de La Niña

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOwLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016.

59 Comentario de @YeuxYoutube al capítulo No. 1 de La Niña <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOwLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016.

60 Comentario de @GiovanniVillacis al capítulo No. 1 de La Niña

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOwLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016 y respuesta de @Dante Magno en los comentarios del mismo video.

61 Comentario de @CHCH al capítulo No. 1 de La Niña

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YagNOwLSxJc>, video publicado el 17 de mayo de 2016.

62 La experiencia vivida es definida por Thompson como aquella “que adquirimos en el transcurso

permitido dar cuenta de la forma como los colombianos y las colombianas hemos forjado una posición política en relación con el conflicto, basada en nuestra propia experiencia, así como también en las imágenes y los mensajes que sobre la experiencia de los otros nos ha brindado la ficción televisiva. Una revisión crítica de la forma como se reproduce esta experiencia podrá darnos luces para el establecimiento de lineamientos futuros de una formación política (que involucra a niños y adultos por igual) dirigida a una lectura crítica del pasado y a la sanación de las profundas heridas producto de un conflicto armado interno de larga duración.

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temporal de nuestras vidas diarias; es inmediata, continua y, en cierta medida, pre-reflexiva, en el sentido de que por lo general precede a cualquier acto explícito de reflexión. La experiencia vivida, tal y como la concibo aquí, también supone una experiencia situacional, en el sentido de que la adquirimos en los contextos habituales de nuestras vidas cotidianas. Es la actividad habitual de nuestras vidas cotidianas y encuentros con los otros en contextos de «interacción cara a cara» la que nos proporciona el contenido de nuestra experiencia vivida”. En contraste, la experiencia mediática es aquella adquirida “a través de la interacción mediática...los acontecimientos experimentados a través de los *media*, para la mayoría, están alejados espacialmente (y quizás también temporalmente) de los contextos habituales de la vida cotidiana”. John B. Thompson, *Los media y la modernidad. Una teoría de los medios de comunicación* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1998), 293.

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Franziska Englert

## Through the Eyes of a Child

Caracol's Attempt to Challenge Guerrilla Representations in *La Niña*

**Abstract:** Latin American telenovelas serve as agenda setters and importantly influence social imaginaries about social issues. Therefore, their analysis is crucial to adequately grasp the mediatic discourse on current political debates in Colombia. Against this backdrop, this article examines the imprints that the peace agreement between the government and the FARC-EP left on Colombian telenovelas. More specifically, it scrutinizes the depiction of the guerrilla protagonist in the prime-time telenovela *La Niña* (Caracol, 2016), which constitutes a decisively shift in the way guerrilla combatants are portrayed in Colombian telenovelas. Based on an analysis of the telenovela's text as well as expert and focus group interviews, I explore the nature of the telenovela's child soldier protagonist Belky and argue that she was strategically designed to raise empathy towards ex-combatants. Therefore, I contend that *La Niña* belongs to a new subtype of Colombian telenovelas produced as a tool of directed societal change in order to foster reconciliation after the signing of the peace agreement.

**Keywords:** child soldiers; colombian conflict; guerrilla; telenovelas.

**Resumen:** Las telenovelas latinoamericanas sirven para marcar la agenda e influyen de manera importante los imaginarios sociales sobre asuntos sociales. Por lo tanto, su análisis es crucial para comprender adecuadamente el discurso mediático sobre debates políticos actuales en Colombia. En este contexto, este artículo examina las huellas que el acuerdo de paz entre el gobierno y las FARC-EP dejó en las telenovelas colombianas. Más concretamente, analiza la representación de la protagonista guerrillera en la telenovela prime-time *La Niña* (Caracol, 2016), que constituye un cambio decisivo en la forma de retratar a los combatientes guerrilleros en las telenovelas colombianas. Basándome en un análisis del texto de la telenovela, así como en entrevistas a expertos y a grupos focales, exploro la naturaleza de Belky, la niña soldado protagonista de la telenovela, y sostengo que fue diseñada estratégicamente para despertar la empatía hacia los excombatientes. Por lo tanto, planteo que *La Niña* pertenece a un nuevo subtipo de telenovelas colombianas producidas como herramienta de cambio social dirigido para fomentar la reconciliación tras la firma del acuerdo de paz.

**Palabras claves:** conflicto armado colombiano; guerrilla; niños soldados; telenovelas.

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## Introduction

In 2016, just as the Colombian government and the leftist guerrilla group FARC-EP were searching ways to re-incorporate former combatants into civilian life in the course of historic peace negotiations, one story of reintegration was already being narrated on national television screens. Packaged in the leading TV genre – the telenovela – the prime-time television program *La Niña*<sup>1</sup> told the story of the Colombian conflict through the eyes of a child soldier.

While telenovelas are often belittled as shallow sources of entertainment, this denigration does not do their cultural importance justice. Telenovelas are the most important mass cultural phenomenon in Latin America. They serve as agenda setters since they dictate the topics to be discussed and how to discuss them. In short, telenovelas do not only have the potential to impact attitudes, values and meanings but fundamentally shape peoples' world view.<sup>2</sup> Throughout their history, telenovelas have tackled virulent social dilemmas and interwoven these with the melodramatic story lines that dominate the genre.<sup>3</sup>

Given telenovelas' important role in influencing social imaginaries, their analysis is crucial to adequately grasp the mediatic discourse on issues and actors in Latin America. Against this backdrop, this article explores the imprints the peace agreement with the FARC-EP left on Colombian telenovelas. I argue that *La Niña* constitutes a hiatus within the history of Colombian telenovelas and a decisive shift in the way guerrilla combatants are portrayed in them. I trace the origins of *La Niña*'s characters and plot to unveil how they were meticulously designed to show facets of guerrilla fighters that had so far been absent from Colombian TV screens. I argue that the telenovela aimed to spark empathy towards former guerrilleros in the audience in order to, in a down-stream objective, make them more willing to receive ex-combatants within society after the signing of the peace agreement. As I will show, the most crucial cinematic mean employed within the telenovelas to achieve these goals was the choice of the child soldier protagonist.

For my analysis, I draw on Toplin's methodic approach to analyze historical Hollywood films<sup>4</sup> and adapt it to the genre of telenovelas. Toplin argues that critical judgements that rest solely on the interpretation of the finished product – a film

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1 *La Niña*, directed by Rodrigo Triana, written by Juana Uribe, aired Apr-Sep. 2016, on Caracol Televisión.

2 Joachim Michael, *Telenovelas und kulturelle Zäsur* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 354–6.

3 Thomas Tufte, "The Telenovela," in *The Television Genre Book*, ed. Glen Creeber (London: Palgrave, 2015), 87.

4 Robert Toplin, *History by Hollywood* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

or in in this case, a telenovela – are superficial and lack dimension.<sup>5</sup> Instead, he suggests to step “behind” and “around” a movie to achieve a nuanced interpretation and criticism. By stepping behind the product, Toplin aims to incorporate the creative process and production of the movie, while by stepping around it, he puts attention to the social and political environment at the moment of its release.<sup>6</sup>

In this vein, my analysis of *La Niña* goes beyond merely interpreting the plot of the telenovela. I draw on a number of interviews with telenovela key actors, namely people involved in the production of *La Niña*, which I conducted during my field work in Colombia in 2019. These interviews allow me to step behind the telenovela and learn more about the ideas, motivations and goals of those who shaped the content, plot and dramatization. Furthermore, I conducted 5 focus group interviews with people which had in their majority watched at least one episode of *La Niña*. These interviews allow me to step around the telenovela since they give me insights into interpretations, questions and debates it sparked within the audience. This element of stepping around the telenovela is rounded off by incorporating ratings and TV articles on *La Niña*.<sup>7</sup>

## Background – Peace Negotiations, TV and telenovelas

To a higher degree than in other genres, reality plays an important role in telenovela fiction. On the one hand, social reality off-screen is always a referent for the telenovela narrative; on the other hand, watching telenovelas is an important element in everyday-practices of significant parts of Latin American society.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, a telenovela like *La Niña* can only be adequately understood against the political, societal and mediatic backdrop at the moment of transmission. To that end, I provide a short overview over the socio-political environment, as well as the Colombian media landscape and telenovela universe.

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<sup>5</sup> Toplin, *History*, 226–7.

<sup>6</sup> Toplin, *History*, 2–3.

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed information on the interviews and material, see Franziska Englert, *The Transition will be Televised – Telenovelas, Reconciliation and Transitional Justice in Colombia* (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2022), 38–46.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Lourdes Motter and Daniela Jakubaszko, “Telenovela e realidade social: algumas possibilidades dialógicas,” *Comunicação & Educação* 12, no. 1 (2007): 57, DOI:10.11606/issn.2316-9125.v12i1p55-64.

## Conflict and peace efforts

*La Niña* was aired in what was regarded a moment that could change the course of Colombian history: after more than 50 years of violent internal struggle, the Santos administration had entered in peace negotiations with the guerrilla FARC-EP.<sup>9</sup> These negotiations were about to culminate and the final peace agreement would be subject to a popular referendum in October 2016, only 2 weeks after the finale of *La Niña* was shown on Colombian screens.

The peace agreement was considered an important milestone in ending the violent internal conflict that can be traced back to Conquista and violent colonial rule:<sup>10</sup> Getting the biggest and oldest Colombian guerrilla FARC-EP to lay down their weapons was a crucial step towards peace in the country. The peace agreement on the one hand sought ways to deal with the past and ensure truth, justice and non-repetition. On the other hand, it stipulated the provisions of how former combatants would re-incorporate into civilian life.

## Narconovelas and memory telenovelas

TV continues to be the most important mass medium in Colombia, with Caracol being one of the two most powerful TV channels in the country. In general, the Colombian media landscape is characterized by media concentration, multimedia entanglements and oligarchic structures.<sup>11</sup> This situation constitutes a threat to objective media content and plurality of information.

The telenovela continues to be one of the most popular and important genres in Colombia.<sup>12</sup> Telenovelas whose plots are set in the recent national past and explore societal issues are no novelty in Colombia. Since 2007, audiences witnessed the rise of narconovelas, telenovelas that depict drug trade in Colombia and its repercussions.<sup>13</sup> Narconovelas are not defined only by their topic but the specific

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9 Renata Segura and Delphine Mechoulan, „Made in Havana. How Colombia and the FARC Decided to End the War,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2017): 30–1, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2969332>.

10 Anika Oettler, “Introducción. Imaginando la reconciliación,” *Ideas Verdes* 9 (2018): 5, [https://co.boell.org/sites/default/files/20180913\\_ideas\\_verdes\\_9\\_web\\_ok\\_1.pdf](https://co.boell.org/sites/default/files/20180913_ideas_verdes_9_web_ok_1.pdf).

11 Andreas Hetzer, “Die Massenmedien als Teil der oligarchischen Herrschaftsstruktur,” in *Kolumbien heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, ed. Thomas Fischer, Susanne Klengel and Eduardo Pastrana Buelvas (Frankfurt a. M.: Vervuert), 541–54.

12 Mauricio Rodríguez (Caracol Rating department), interviewed by the author, 23.02.2019, Bogotá – Colombia.

13 Hugo Benavides, *Drugs, Thugs and Divas. Telenovelas and Narco-Dramas in Latin America*,

aesthetic rooted in narco culture; an ethics of pompous lifestyle and status symbols.<sup>14</sup> Since the protagonists of narconovelas are mostly notorious drug lords or their hitmen, the stories are told from the point of view of perpetrators. In many cases, this resulted in a certain endearment of the audience with the thugs, or even in their glorification as criminal master minds. Though these aspects sparked societal controversy around telenovelas, they were extremely popular.<sup>15</sup>

Over time, the subgenre mutated and focused more and more on the life histories of notorious Colombian drug lords, blurring the line between fiction and reality. Especially televised biographies like *Escobar, el patrón del mal*<sup>16</sup> morphed between historic document and fiction. Contreras Saiz refers to these telenovelas representing national history characterized by a high degree of authenticity as “telenovelas de la memoria”<sup>17</sup> and argues that they play an important role in the collective memory.<sup>18</sup> In the same vein, Erlick sums up the importance of narconovelas for the national memory: “It is a way of remembering; it is a way of understanding; it is a mirror to society past and present.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the producers’ obsession with drug related stories, the guerrilla was hardly the topic of Colombian telenovelas. While guerrilleros would sometimes come up in the course of the plots, they were never the main characters and were normally presented as greedy, heartless, stupid and blinded by ideologic delusion.

It is against this backdrop that the analysis of the telenovela *La Niña* gains its striking interest. In the following section, I state the most important key facts about the production and provide a short synopsis. Afterwards, I turn to closely examine the telenovela’s protagonist and her condition as a former child soldier. Most importantly, I will provide several explanations on why the telenovela key actors chose this rather unusual protagonist and which implications this might have had on the telenovela’s societal importance.

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(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 15.

14 Omar Rincón, “Narco.estética y narco.cultura en Narco.lombia,” *Nueva Sociedad* 222 (2009): 148, <https://nuso.org/revista/222/drogas-en-america-latina-despues-de-la-guerra-perdida-que/>.

15 Erlick, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Contexts*, 118–38.

16 *Escobar, el patrón del mal*, directed by Laura Mora and Carlos Moreno, produced by Juana Uribe and Camilo Cano, aired May–Nov. 2012, on Caracol Televisión.

17 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Narcotráfico y telenovelas en Colombia: entre narconovelas y telenovelas de la memoria,” *Hispanorama* 157 (2017): 27–8.

18 Contreras Saiz, “Narcotráfico,” 30–31.

19 Erlick, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Contexts*, 138.

## Analysis of *La Niña*

*La Niña* consists of 86 episodes of 45 minutes (without commercial breaks) which were aired between 26.04.2016 to 16.09.2016 by Caracol. The telenovela was broadcasted at the prime-time slot from 9 pm to 10 pm on weekdays.

### Armed conflict and Reintegration through the eyes of a child

*La Niña* tells the story of a former child soldier recruited against her will who tries to re-adapt to society. The story is set before the peace agreement, roughly in 2013. The guerrillera and protagonist Belky is apprehended by public forces and as she is underage (15 at that time), she is not arrested but incorporated into the Demobilization program. With help of the program, she manages to catch up on the formal education she missed. Eventually, her dream comes true and she enrolls as a medicine student in a private university. However, adapting to the university environment proves to be just as difficult as re-connecting with her family. In this vein, *La Niña* sheds lights on a number of struggles that former child soldiers face when re-integrating into society, such as Post-Traumatic Stress-Disorder (PTSD) or stigmatization. Like in almost any telenovela, *La Niña*'s protagonist is also a star-crossed lover. Her relationship with a former paramilitary (a child soldier himself) is burdened with Belky's trauma that stems from sexual violence inflicted on her by military coronel Barragán. Belky first seeking vengeance and later justice for this abuse – with Barragán trying to silence her – is one of the central driving tropes of the telenovela. The plot sets out to explore the telenovela's tagline "Is there life after war?".<sup>20</sup>

### Just a child

The fact that Belky is a former child soldier is of utmost importance in the telenovela. This can already be seen by the fact that it is titled "*The Girl*", establishing the protagonist first and foremost as a child – rather than as a guerrillera. My focus groups interviews indicate that this strategy was successful: when asked what *La*

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<sup>20</sup> In Spanish: "Existe la vida después de la guerra?"

*Niña* was about, one of the participants summed up: “Well, *The Girl* was precisely that. A girl. Who at a very young age was taken by the guerrilla.”<sup>21</sup>

Parting from there, the telenovela explores the tension between guilt and innocence inherent in the complex actor of the child soldier. Child soldiers, more than any other actors involved in war, seem to paradoxically combine responsibility and victimhood and therefore are among the most complicated actors to grasp within the Colombian conflict. As Derluyn et al. put it: “the notion of ‘child soldiers’ often defies emotional and moral senses, due to the conflicting sub notions of childhood and warfare, whereby the ‘child’ is perceived as particularly vulnerable, as opposed to the ‘soldier’ who is regarded as inherently damaging”.<sup>22</sup>

The use of child soldiers in military combat is a worldwide phenomenon. A child soldier is defined in by the United Nations as any person below 18 years of age recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity. The notion is not limited to children taking direct part in hostilities.<sup>23</sup> Enlisting children is forbidden under both Colombian national law and International Law: Article 44 of the Colombian Constitution prohibits recruiting children under 18 for combat. In International Law, the age limit is even lower and recruiting children under 15 is a war crime according to Article 8, b (xxvi) and Article 8 e (vii) of the Rome Statute.

Notwithstanding, child soldiers have been a common phenomenon in the Colombian armed conflict amongst all armed factions. In 2014, Human Rights Watch estimated that at least one in every four combatants in the Colombian armed groups was underage. For 2006, the total number of child soldiers in Colombia was estimated between 11,000 and 14,000, with an average age of accession between 12 and 14 years.<sup>24</sup> For the case of the FARC-EP, which is alluded to in *La Niña*, the 2012 comprehensive U.N. report on the involvement of minors and adolescents in Colombian armed conflict states that roughly 50 % of adult combatants were inducted as minors.<sup>25</sup>

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21 Focus Group 3, Interview by the author, 16.04.2019, Bogotá, Colombia; translated by the author.

22 Ilse Derluyn et al. „Victims and/or perpetrators? Towards an interdisciplinary dialogue on child soldiers, *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 15, no. 28 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-015-0068-5>.

23 United Nations, *Paris Principles*, General Assembly resolution 48/134, 1993, p.7.

24 COALICO y CCJ, *El delito invisible. Criterios para la investigación del delito de reclutamiento ilícito de niños y niñas en Colombia*, Versión ampliada y actualizada, (Bogotá 2013), 24, <https://coalico.org/publicaciones/informes-de-situacion/el-delito-invisible-2/>.

25 Evan Fagan and Evan Owens, “The FARC and Child Soldiers: A Question of Reintegration – So Near, Yet So Far” (2016), Council on Hemispheric Affairs, <https://coha.org/the-farc-and-child-soldiers-a-question-of-reintegration-so-near-yet-so-far/>.

*La Niña* is based on the life history of a former child soldier and heavily marketed this “true story” aspect to enhance the telenovela’s authenticity. The telenovela key actors confirmed that they had deliberately chosen this story to produce what in their understanding was the first telenovela about the Colombian conflict. Juana Uribe related that she had desired to produce a telenovela about the conflict for quite some time, but she had not found the right story yet. However, when she learned about the life history of the girl *La Niña* is based on, she was immediately intrigued and sure that this was the right spin to bring the conflict to the screen.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly enough, the story was pitched to her by the then president of the Colombian Reintegration Agency (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, ACR), marking a close proximity of this government entity with *La Niña* from the beginning.

## Establishing innocence

So, why choose a child soldier? Juana Uribe named two reasons in our interview. First, to vindicate the figure of the child soldier and second, to circumvent audience rejection of a guerrilla protagonist.

Juana Uribe explained that child soldiers – and especially the challenges they face – were a subject that most Colombians were unaware of. Therefore, she wanted to save the hundreds of children from societal oblivion. At the same time, she hinted at the stigma child soldiers face, especially when trying to re-integrate into society. Indeed, interestingly enough, child soldiers (associated with either criminal group) suffer massive stigmatization in Colombia since society tends to perceive them rather as perpetrators than as victims.

According to the child soldier NGO COALICO,<sup>27</sup> the victimhood of child soldiers has historically been denied in Colombia. The recruitment of minors has been naturalized to a point where both many communities and even the child soldiers perceive themselves primarily as perpetrators.<sup>28</sup> The societal discourse puts the focus on the supposed voluntary joining of children into the armed forces. Indeed, children become part of armed groups not only as the result of forced recruitment. In many instances, they join due to a perceived lack of opportunities, to escape

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<sup>26</sup> Juana Uribe (scriptwriter *La Niña*), interviewed by the author, 06.02.2019., Bogotá – Colombia.

<sup>27</sup> Coalición contra la vinculación de niñas, niños y jóvenes al conflicto armado en Colombia.

<sup>28</sup> COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 108.



extreme poverty or domestic violence, after suffering forced displacement or they are lured into the groups by false promises.<sup>29</sup>

In the same vein, the FARC-EP claimed that child soldiers allegedly joined voluntarily and argued that they gave the children protection from dysfunctional families and severe poverty.<sup>30</sup> However, this discourse is highly problematic since it ignores the responsibility of the armed groups who unlawfully recruit the children and glosses over the impacts the recruitment has on children's lives.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, it was only with the Victims Law (Ley 1448) passed in 2011 that child soldiers were officially considered as victims of the conflict in Colombia. Notwithstanding, COALICO underlines that this change of the judicial scenario had little implications on the social imaginary.<sup>32</sup> Against this backdrop, the choice of protagonist of *La Niña* must be acknowledged as a tool to widen societal knowledge about child soldiers, and especially to gradually change their societal position into being accepted rather as victims than as perpetrators.

Moreover, the telenovela key actors underlined that they chose a child soldier protagonist to make the spectators willing to watch the telenovela altogether. Juana Uribe made it very clear that only a child soldier protagonist offered her the unique opportunity to make the audience fall in love with a guerrillera. She stated that spectators have a “sweet spot” for children and that only by choosing an innocent guerrillera, people would be willing to engage with the story.<sup>33</sup> Thus, choosing a child soldier was a deliberate decision by the telenovela producers to circumvent audience rejection.

Given the prejudices against children who joined armed groups voluntarily, it is only plausible that the scriptwriters of *La Niña* chose a protagonist who was forcefully recruited. In fact, Belky's recruitment is even more complex and pivotal to establish her as a likeable character: while Belky is alone on the finca with her little brother, guerrilla troops come to the property and want to take the boy. Belky tries to dissuade them from doing so since he suffers from epilepsy. However, the guerrilleros unyieldingly insist on taking him. To spare her brother, Belky suggests to go with the guerrilla instead, which they eventually agree to. Thus, paradoxically, Belky only ends up in the armed organization out of noble reason, trying to protect her little brother. Importantly, the recruitment scene is prominently placed within

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<sup>29</sup> COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 25–6; 114–5.

<sup>30</sup> Fagan and Owens, “The FARC and Child Soldiers.”

<sup>31</sup> COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 115–6.

<sup>32</sup> COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 109.

<sup>33</sup> Uribe, Interview.

the pilot episode, enabling the audience to establish empathy and form a connection with Belky right from the beginning.

Besides the emotionally compelling recruitment scene, other elements of the pilot are meticulously designed to convince spectators that Belky is an unusual guerrillera, making it easy to emotionally engage with her. Throughout the first episode, Belky is presented as a moral exemplar. Moral exemplars are members of the perpetrator group who acted morally, e.g., by saving neighbors or strangers during civil wars.<sup>34</sup> Belky is shown trying to stop a guerrilla attack that could hurt civilians and children, trying unsuccessfully to escape the guerrilla and even saving the life of Manuel, a former paramilitary, in the first episode. Thus, spectators are left with no doubt that Belky is a good person after watching the pilot episode. This can be seen as a deliberate strategy because “information about moral exemplars modify the moral image of the perpetrator group, which leads to an increase in forgiveness intentions toward that group particularly.”<sup>35</sup>

## A guerrillera as a victim

Belky is not presented as a perpetrator but strikes the audience as a victim of the armed conflict. She is victimized on two levels: she suffers the infringement of her rights subsequent to her recruitment and is victim of sexual violence by hands of Coronel Barragán.

Though the scenes that depict Belky's life in the guerrilla are short, the telenovela makes clear how she suffered. COALICO underlines that child soldiers experience a number of rights abuses, including diseases and injuries, forced family planning, loss of formal education, as well as emotional trauma by witnessing torture and combat<sup>36</sup> and lack of healthy social ties, which stunts their identity development.<sup>37</sup> All these aspects are taken up in *La Niña* to some degree. However, the telenovela focusses on the rape Belky suffered by Coronel Barragán, representative of the military and State authority. Throughout great parts of the telenovela,

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34 Marta Witkowska et al., “Fostering Contact After Historical Atrocities: The Potential of Moral Exemplars,” *Political Psychology* 40, no. 3, (2019): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12529>.

35 Beneda et al., “Change in Perceived Outgroup Morality Increases Forgiveness in Post-Genocide Settings – Study of Moral Examples,” *Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* 25, no. 2 (2018): 205, 10.4473/TPM25.2.3.

36 COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 25–6.

37 COALICO and CCJ, *El delito invisible*, 172.

Belky suffers from PTSD due to the attack, which greatly impacts her daily life and takes a great deal of counseling with a therapist to overcome.

This double victimization is very important for the telenovela. It is crucial to note that Belky is not only a victim of the guerrilla, but also of the military. Interestingly enough, Belky is recuperated from the guerrilla already in the pilot; the comandante responsible for her recruitment dies in an early episode. In contrast, Belky's desire to seek justice for what Barragán has done to her dominates the telenovela narrative almost until the end. This leaves the spectator with the impression that Barragán is the main villain of the telenovela, which was also frequently expressed by the focus group interviews.<sup>38</sup> Thus, interestingly enough, *La Niña* features not only an unusual – guerrilla – protagonist, but also an unusual – military – villain.<sup>39</sup>

On the one hand, Juana Uribe expressed that she felt that Belky's individual fate of double victimization represented the country Colombia being victimized by two forces. On the other hand, I argue that the fact that Belky has suffered so many abuses in her short life makes the audience forget that she is actually member of a perpetrator group. She is seldomly shown in the guerrilla uniform, and hardly shown breaking the law at all: only in the first episode, the audience witnesses her collecting the guerrilla "extortion money" from a shop owner. However, the scene is short and Belky uses no violence or force. Thus, though Belky is a former guerrillera, the telenovela in fact does not show her doing any harm. In consequence, the audience is compelled to perceive her solely as a victim.

However, *La Niña* does not succumb to the mistake of reducing Belky to a passive victim. As I have argued elsewhere, she transitions from victim to survivor in the course of the telenovela.<sup>40</sup> The telenovela highlights that many ex-combatants are indeed traumatized by incidents that happened in the course of the armed conflict. Yet, it does not show Belky as social pariah, but as a resilient woman who manages to overcome her PTSD with help of therapy. In this sense, the telenovela depicts the nuances and complexities of the emotional legacies of war and shows understanding for Belky's emotional distress without stigmatizing her as broken.

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<sup>38</sup> Focus group 3, Focus group 4, interview by the author, 20.04.2019, Zipaquirá – Colombia; Focus group 5, interview by the author, 24.04.2019, Bogotá – Colombia.

<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that with Coronel Alzate, *La Niña* also features a military avenger figure and shows certain heroization of the Armed Forces.

<sup>40</sup> Englert, *Transition*, 183–7.

## An unusual guerrillera

The fact that Belky is an unusual (ex)guerrillera does not stop with her recruitment but is especially salient during her demobilization process. After being caught by public forces, Belky undergoes the national Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) program. DDR is a security measure that aims to reintegrate former combatants into civilian life. These programs entail not only giving in weapons but especially aim to transform combatants into civilians.<sup>41</sup> For the analysis of this aspect of *La Niña*, it is vital to disentangle the ACR's engagement in the telenovela.

My interviews have evidenced that *La Niña* is the product of a loose private-public partnership between Caracol and the ACR. Juana Uribe stated that since the protagonist undergoes a DDR program, the telenovela would have to feature the Agency and thus sought contact to learn more about the process in order to portray it adequately in the telenovela.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, J. Mitrotti expressed that the telenovela was a good way to explain the DDR program to wide audiences, to enhance its legitimacy and to make people aware of the difficulties former fighters face after laying down their weapons.<sup>43</sup>

Ex-combatants often suffer societal rejection. McMullin underlines that generalized assumptions within DDR discourse commonly label former fighters as threat to the State and distinctly different from the rest of society. Consequently, ex-combatants are societally perceived as “armed, angry, and apolitical”.<sup>44</sup> In the same vein, Carranza-Franco underlines that both authorities and society tend to doubt former fighters' willingness and capacity to leave the war behind.<sup>45</sup> In short, ex-combatants are generally perceived as a problem for society and rather useless, commonly summed up under the statement “they only know how to shoot”.

This discourse is challenged in *La Niña*. In contrast to the stereotypes often attached to demobilized, Belky turns out to be a bright student, hard-working and self-sufficient. She is very invested in her university education and manages to

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41 Lars Waldorf, “Just peace? Integrating DDR and transitional justice,” in *Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding on the Ground. Victims and ex-combatants*, ed. Chandra Lekha Sriram et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 62–4.

42 Uribe, Interview.

43 Joshua Mitrotti (former Head of Colombian Reintegration Agency), interviewed by the author, 01.04.2019, Bogotá – Colombia.

44 Jareme R. McMullin, “Integration or separation? The stigmatisation of excombatants after war,” *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 393, doi:10.1017/S0260210512000228.

45 Francy Carranza-Franco, *Demobilisation and Reintegration in Colombia. Building State and Citizenship*, (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.

keep up with her peers despite the unequal circumstances regarding education, financial resources and social class. She even finishes the semester top of her class and wins a scholarship. Although the scholarship covers her tuition, she still works as the Dean's assistant to help her parents make ends meet.

Belky's career choice strikes the audience as unusual: she decides to study medicine. Doctors are among the most prestigious and respected professions, often nicknamed "angels in white"; perceived as dedicating their lives to helping other. This job aspiration presents a sharp contrast to Belky's past as a guerrillera, labelled as terrorists and murderers in Colombian public discourse. This friction is taken up in the telenovela when Belky's mother ridicules her aspirations in episode 2 and wonders what many spectators might be thinking: how could someone who has kidnapped, extorted and brought fear over people become a doctor? How could she explain that suddenly she got a taste for being good? However, *La Niña* does not present a guerrilla's past and a doctor's future as mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, in several instances the plot even conveys the idea that Belky makes an especially good doctor due to her experiences in the guerrilla.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the telenovela undermines the idea that former combatants are useless for society. Instead, *La Niña* proposes that they might provide skills that are helpful for society and suggests that they can be a valuable addition to their community, if society is willing to accept them.

## Discussion – Pop culture with a purpose?

This short analysis of key aspects of the telenovela shows that in the development of the plot of *La Niña*, nothing was left to chance. The protagonist and its point of view, the plot and the moment of airing were by no means coincidental but meticulously planned by the channel and the ACR. As stated initially, telenovelas have an overwhelming cultural importance in Latin American societies. They mirror societal developments and help audiences to make sense of current social and political issues. Therefore, the fact that one of the leading Colombian TV channels chose to bring the totally novel point of view of a guerrilla child soldier to the screen at prime-time is significant.

The interviews with the telenovela key actors have evidenced that *La Niña* was produced with a very specific goal in mind: Belky's story was not put on the TV screen merely to entertain the audience, but to prepare Colombians for the societal

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<sup>46</sup> Englert, *Transition*, 190–4.

challenge to come after the signing of the peace agreement – learning to live together. The peace agreement stipulated the re-integration of a significant number of former guerrilleros – almost 13,000 individuals<sup>47</sup> – into civilian life. *La Niña* anticipated this situation and proposed the audience possible scenarios of handling that task.

Telenovelas offer interpretative frameworks as they provide information and orientation about pressing public issues.<sup>48</sup> With *La Niña*, the producers aimed to acquaint audiences with the complex life histories of ex-combatants, to spark empathy with guerrilleros, and raise public understanding for the difficulties they encounter after laying down their arms. This should, in turn, help to fight societal ostracization of former fighters. R. Triana underlined that the telenovela had the goal to make reluctant parts of society understand the necessity to open up a space in society for ex-combatants in order for the peace agreement to have an actual effect.<sup>49</sup>

Telenovelas provenly have the capacity to modulate values and behaviors by putting examples in people's living rooms.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, by watching Belky's classmates learn to accept her past, spectators could learn how to peacefully co-exist with former guerrilleros. Given this goal, the choice of protagonist of *La Niña* is by no means arbitrary or trivial. Confronting the audience with a moral exemplar, a likeable and good-hearted character is a promising way to make the spectators willing enough to engage with the telenovela for it to achieve its desired goals. In short, the producers and the Colombian DDR agency seized the possibilities of the telenovela to serve as a socializing and educational tool.

## A turning point on Colombian screens

The telenovela *La Niña* is closely tied to the societal and political momentum of the culminating peace process with the FARC-EP. Within this panorama, *La Niña* was produced strategically to foster emotions favorable for peaceful co-existence with

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47 Viviana García Pinzón, "Kolumbien: Zwischen Friedensdividende und dem Schatten der Gewalt," *GIGA Focus Lateinamerika* 2 (2020), <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/de/publikationen/giga-focus/kolumbien-zwischen-friedensdividende-und-dem-schatten-der-gewalt>.

48 Mar Chicharro Merayo, "Telenovelas and society: Constructing and reinforcing the nation through television fiction," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2013): 212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549412467178>.

49 Rodrigo Triana (director *La Niña*), interviewed by the author, 05.04.2019, Bogotá – Colombia.

50 Michael, *Telenovelas*, 354–6.

ex-guerrilleros. Therefore, I argue that *La Niña* belongs to a new subtype of Colombian telenovelas produced as a tool of directed societal change in order to foster reconciliation. As I have stated elsewhere, at the same time, *La Niña* is a reflection of the brief glimpse at a peaceful future that the peace negotiations meant. Just as the peace talks were a watershed moment in Colombian politics, *La Niña* marked a turning point in Colombian telenovela fiction. After bloodthirsty narconovelas had glorified perpetrators for years, a telenovela that humanized ex-guerrilleros and took a victim's point of view meant a turn of the tide in the private TV channels editorial line towards the conflict.<sup>51</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of this article to assess the telenovelas impact or reception, it should be stated that *La Niña* was a smashing commercial success. The telenovela was the most successful fictional program aired in Colombia in 2016 and reached an average rating of 11, with an audience share of 33.9%.<sup>52</sup> That means that *La Niña* reached 5,5 million Colombians every night. The fact that this rather unusual telenovela was so popular is highly relevant, as Rincón underlined: “When a story is converted into a telenovela and is successful, it is because the society is already ‘disposed’ to having this story become public.”<sup>53</sup> Put differently, when Colombian society was willing to welcome a former child soldier in their living room every night, this indicates a certain willingness to welcome former guerrilla combatants into society, or at least to consider this a viable possibility.

## Shades of grey

However, to curb the enthusiasm on *La Niña*'s impact on peace and reconciliation in Colombia, there might be a third reason for the producers to choose a child soldier protagonist. This aspect was not voiced by the telenovela key actors, but rather by opponents of the telenovela I interviewed namely a former high-ranking member of the FARC-EP and the State Crimes victims' NGO MOVICE.<sup>54</sup> They suggested that the focus on the child soldier would serve to societally demonize the FARC-EP as child abductors. This aspect should not be disregarded. Indeed, Juana

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<sup>51</sup> For a more detailed description of the concept of reconciliation telenovelas, see Englert, *Transition*, 343–69.

<sup>52</sup> Rodríguez, Interview.

<sup>53</sup> Omar Rincón, “Our Telenovela, Ourselves,” *ReVista* 17, no. 1 (Fall 2017), <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/telenovelas-fall-2017>

<sup>54</sup> Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado

Uribe also referred to the forceful recruitment of minors as the FARC-EP's "Achilles heel" which society would have a hard time forgiving.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, the focus group interviews suggest that vindicating the figure of the child soldier came with an increased awareness of the criminal responsibility of the recruiters. The focus group participants underlined how the telenovela made them see that many guerrilleros ended up in the troops because they had no choice. Thus, they frequently differentiated between foot soldiers (whether joined voluntarily or forced, as minors or adults) often identified by them as victims, and guerrilla comandantes, which they identified as perpetrators.<sup>56</sup> This suggests that the telenovela might have made the audiences see nuances, individual stories and the so-called "shades of grey" within the guerrillera. As Wirkowska states: "Stories of moral exemplars may create a more heterogeneous image of the perpetrator group, resulting in the perception of its contemporary members as more likeable and trustworthy partners for dialogue."<sup>57</sup> Thus, the telenovela could have served to vindicate guerrilla foot soldiers, while at the same time prolong the societal disdain towards guerrilla comandantes and leaders. In this vein, *La Niña* would not have served to spark empathy with top-rank comandantes, but maybe to create a more open mind towards foot soldiers.

## Telenovelas as educational tools

In summary, there is no doubt that with producing *La Niña*, Colombia's private channel Caracol was not producing yet another ordinary telenovela. The content, the point of view of the storytelling and especially the choice of protagonist are unusual for Colombian television, and the timing of the airing was no coincidence. The telenovela was designed to have a concrete impact on spectators: acquaint them with unknown realities of the conflict, undermine their stereotypes against former combatants, spark emotions favorable for reconciliation and thus potentially make them more receptive towards ex-guerrilleros. Consequently, *La Niña* was designed as "pop culture with a purpose"<sup>58</sup> and stands in a fairly long tradition of

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<sup>55</sup> Uribe, Interview.

<sup>56</sup> Focus Group 2, interview by the author, 07.04.2019, Bogotá – Colombia, Focus Group 3, Focus Group 4.

<sup>57</sup> Wirkowska et al., "Fostering Contact," 579.

<sup>58</sup> Virginia Lacayo and Arvind Singhal, "Pop Culture with a Purpose! Using Edutainment Media for Social Change," last modified 2008, [https://www.academia.edu/7620270/Pop\\_Culture\\_with\\_a\\_Purpose\\_Using\\_edutainment\\_media\\_for\\_social\\_change](https://www.academia.edu/7620270/Pop_Culture_with_a_Purpose_Using_edutainment_media_for_social_change)



telenovelas being used to transmitting values and promote behaviors associated with desirable outcomes, such as health and education.<sup>59</sup>

To that end, the telenovela offers a simple formula for the reintegration of ex-combatants: if everybody collaborates and does their part, lasting peace and reconciliation can become true. In this vein, the telenovela does not voice any criticism towards the national DDR program and presents it as the best – if not only way – for combatants to overcome their past and participate in society.

## Conclusion: Modelling reconciliation in the living room

This article has scrutinized the popular Colombian prime-time telenovela *La Niña*, aired in 2016 with a special emphasis on analysis of the choice of protagonist. I aimed to step “behind” and “around” the telenovela to provide a deeper, more nuanced analysis that surpasses the simple analysis of the finished product. To that end, I drew on self-conducted interviews with telenovela key actors and focus groups to unveil the motivations and goals that shaped the production of the telenovela and to gain insights into its reception and societal impact. These findings enriched the analysis of *La Niña*’s narrative and character set up.

I have shown that *La Niña* was strategically designed and produced to tell a story that had not made it to the TV screens in Colombia before: a story of forced recruitment of minors, of leaving the war behind with hard work and dedication, of contributing to society as an ex-combatant, about the complexities and grey zones of the Colombian armed conflict. The protagonist Belky was meticulously designed to arouse the sympathies of the audience. Her being a child soldier conveys notions of her innocence and victimhood, which made it possible for the audience to be charmed by her and accompany her successful reintegration into civilian life.

I have highlighted that telenovelas play a far more important role in Latin American societies than shallow entertainment or mere escapism. Quite the contrary, telenovelas serve “as a theoretical framework for daily life, a mechanism through which to express collective desire and also to reflect on the great problems and challenges of the common folk”<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, the importance of a telenovela like *La Niña* should not be underestimated. An abundant body of research suggests that fictional

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<sup>59</sup> See e.g., Arvind Singhal et al. eds., *Entertainment-Education and Social Change, History, Research, and Practice* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Rincón, “Our Telenovela”.

programs, and especially telenovelas, do indeed shape spectator's attitudes, values and behaviors toward the topics dealt with.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, "reconciliation telenovelas" offer a great potential to open societal debate about the armed conflict and promote peace and reconciliation in Colombia. As Rincón underlines: "Thus, in the telenovela, we can see what we are becoming and where we are going as a collective community and as a culture."<sup>62</sup> In this vein, *La Niña* was indeed a watershed moment in Colombian private television and marked the abandonment of the uncritical demonization of the guerrilla towards a more open and nuanced treatment of the combatants. Thus, the telenovela aims to prepare society to learn to live together with ex-guerrilleros after the signing of the peace agreement and can be seen as fictional embodiment of the political momentum of the culminating peace negotiations.

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<sup>61</sup> See e.g., Singhal et al., *Entertainment-Education*.

<sup>62</sup> Rincón, "Our Telenovela".

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## “Aquel Palacio en Llamas” – Licencias narrativas para explicar lo inexplicable

La representación de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en telenovelas y series sobre la historia colombiana

**Resumen:** La Toma del Palacio de Justicia por parte del grupo guerrillero M-19 y la Retoma por parte del Ejército entre el 6 y el 7 de noviembre de 1985 en Bogotá es un hecho traumático en la historia reciente colombiana y sigue siendo una herida abierta hasta hoy. Los hechos dejan muchas ambigüedades, pero también inmensos vacíos que se pueden cubrir fácilmente con la ficción. Partiendo del papel que pueden desempeñar las telenovelas y las series en procesos memoriales, el artículo analiza las distintas formas de representar los hechos históricos sobre la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en dos series y una telenovela que retratan la historia reciente de Colombia y que son consideradas *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria*. Serán comparados los respectivos capítulos de las producciones *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015–2017), *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol TV, 2012) y *El General Naranjo* (Fox Telecolombia, 2019–2020) con el objetivo de analizar si las narrativas pueden funcionar como memorias protésicas, según Landsberg, para personas que no hayan vivido los hechos. Para esto, primero se examina la narrativa audiovisual respecto a la supuesta conexión de la guerrilla M-19, Pablo Escobar y el Cartel de Medellín para tomarse el Palacio de Justicia y la representación de las diferentes víctimas, teniendo en cuenta diferentes fuentes históricas. En segundo lugar, se estudia las impresiones de la audiencia de las producciones, usando Twitter como fuente de recepción. Ya que los hechos no suelen ser las tramas principales en las telenovelas y series sobre la historia colombiana, el artículo profundiza el rol que pueden jugar las narrativas para establecer una memoria colectiva de estos. Se comprueba si la duración de los hechos en la trama ficcional, las emociones transmitidas y la identificación con los personajes juegan un rol clave en el establecimiento de la Toma

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y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en la memoria de la audiencia y su función cómo memoria protésica.

**Palabras clave:** Colombia; memoria; Palacio de Justicia; Pablo Escobar; telenovelas.

**Abstract:** The Palace of Justice siege by the guerrilla group M-19 and its subsequent counterattack by the military between 6 and 7 November 1985 in Bogotá can be considered as traumatic event in recent Colombian history that remains an open wound to this day. These events leave many ambiguities, but also significant gaps that can easily be filled with fiction. Considering the role that telenovelas and series can play in memorial processes, the article analyses the different ways in which historical events related to the siege and the counterattack of the Palace of Justice are portrayed in two series and a telenovela that show the recent Colombian history and that are considered as telenovelas and series of memory. The respective episodes of the productions *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015–2017), *Pablo Escobar, the Drug Lord* (Caracol TV, 2012), and *General Naranjo* (Fox Telecolombia, 2019–2020) will be compared in order to analyse whether the narratives can function as prosthetic memories, according to Landsberg, for people who have not experienced the events themselves. To this end, the audiovisual narrative will be first examined regarding the alleged connection between the M-19 guerrilla group, Pablo Escobar, and the Medellín Cartel in the siege of the Palace of Justice, as well as the representation of the different victims, taking into account different historical sources. Secondly, the audience's impressions of the productions will be analysed, using Twitter as a source of reception. Since these historical events are usually not the main plots in telenovelas and series about Colombian history, the article explores the role that narratives can play in establishing a collective memory of these events. It investigates whether the duration of the events in the fictional plot, the emotions conveyed, and the audience's identification with the characters play a key role in establishing the siege and the counterattack of the Palace of Justice in the audience's memory and their function as prosthetic memories.

**Keywords:** Colombia; memory; Palace of Justice; Pablo Escobar; telenovelas.

## Introducción

Existen memorias que no necesitan ser recuerdos personales. Según Landsberg, la memoria puede transformarse en una memoria protésica, con la cual las personas pueden apropiarse de memorias de otras generaciones sin haber vivido en ese tiempo.<sup>1</sup> La memoria se puede transmitir a través de narraciones y también gracias a imágenes que circulan en periódicos, libros, películas, series o telenovelas. Así, la memoria colectiva se establece y une a personas dentro y fuera de las fronteras nacionales. Al mismo tiempo, la memoria colectiva puede estar conectada con un trauma de una sociedad. Como destaca Aleida Assmann, el recuerdo siempre necesita de un impulso, que puede intensificar el trabajo memorial después de traumas colectivos.<sup>2</sup>

Este artículo se enfocará en la representación en series y telenovelas de un hecho traumático de la historia colombiana, que “[...] sin duda constituye uno de los dos hechos más vergonzosos y graves de la historia del país en la centuria precedente”.<sup>3</sup> Se analizará la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia que tuvo lugar entre el 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985 en Bogotá. Este es un hecho alrededor del cual interactúan diferentes verdades, como incluso aclaró la Comisión de la Verdad sobre los hechos del Palacio de Justicia en su informe de 2010, al decir que no pretendía “[...] desconocer ni controvertir las múltiples versiones que sobre tan execrables hechos se han construido durante años. Cada una de las víctimas tiene *su propia verdad* [...]”.<sup>4</sup> Por la gravedad de los hechos es importante referirse a estos hechos como “Toma” y “Retoma” del Palacio de Justicia, como también lo hace la Comisión de la Verdad en sus informes, a pesar de que representantes de los militares como el coronel Plazas Vega se refieren a estos hechos como un “asalto” y una “recuperación del edificio”, tratando de ocultar su responsabilidad. Las palabras “toma” y “retoma” serían supuestamente una “forma perversa [creada] por los enemigos del Estado colombiano, para poner en el mismo plano a las tropas institucionales con los terroristas”.<sup>5</sup> Por ende, a lo largo del artículo se utiliza la denominación

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1 Con la palabra protésica, la autora hace referencia a la prótesis. Véase Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic memory: The transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture* (Nueva York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 8.

2 Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlung des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Beck, 1999), 18.

3 Jorge A. Gómez Gallego, José R. Herrera Vergara y Nilson Pinilla Pinilla, *Informe final: Comisión de la Verdad sobre los hechos del Palacio de Justicia* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2010), 23. En adelante se mencionará abreviadamente como Comisión de la Verdad.

4 Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 419.

5 Luis Alfonso Plazas Vega, *¿Desaparecidos? El negocio del dolor* (Bogotá, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Gato Azul, 2011), 280–1.

“Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia” para referirse a los hechos de forma veraz y completa, sin reducirse a una sola “Toma”. Se usa el término “Toma del Palacio de Justicia”, cuando se hace referencia a los planes y acciones del M-19.<sup>6</sup>

Este artículo reflexionará sobre cómo las diferentes representaciones de este hecho histórico en telenovelas y series pueden funcionar como un impulso para el trabajo memorial de un pasado traumático. Se discutirá cómo este hecho histórico se ha transformado en una memoria protésica gracias a la reinterpretación en series y telenovelas que pueden contribuir a diferentes versiones del pasado. El análisis se centrará en las producciones *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015–2017), *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (Caracol, 2012) y *El General Naranjo* (Fox Telecolombia, 2019–2020), donde se representa como parte de la trama la Toma del Palacio de Justicia de manera diferente. A pesar de ser un hecho histórico traumático que se representa en las narrativas ficcionales, en las entrevistas que se llevaron a cabo en el marco del proyecto GUMELAB con espectadores y espectadoras en Colombia y en Estados Unidos, la representación de la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia no suele ser lo que más se recordaba de las telenovelas y series mencionadas.<sup>7</sup>

Por lo tanto, el artículo analizará las diferentes narrativas que proponen las tres producciones teniendo en cuenta las especulaciones y los vacíos que siguen abiertos hasta hoy sobre los hechos. La representación de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia varían en cada producción, tanto en su duración como en la representación de los actores involucrados, además de poner el énfasis en diferentes aspectos de la historia. Se postula que existe una relación entre la duración y la importancia dentro de la trama, así como su función como memoria protésica por el efecto que pueda tener en la audiencia. Esta hipótesis se probará durante el análisis, teniendo en cuenta las reacciones en Twitter sobre *Narcos*, *El General Naranjo* y *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*.

A continuación, se presentará un breve resumen sobre el papel que las telenovelas y las series pueden jugar en la formación de memorias colectivas y el conocimiento del pasado en general. En segundo lugar, se presentará una breve síntesis sobre la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia. En tercer lugar, se rastrearán las diferentes narrativas del hecho histórico en los respectivos episodios de las tres producciones, ampliándolo con las impresiones de la audiencia obtenidas en la red social Twitter. Finalmente, se reflexionará sobre los efectos que estas diferentes

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<sup>6</sup> Debido a la gravedad del suceso, los acontecimientos del caso también se indican en mayúsculas.

<sup>7</sup> Imágenes más definidas, que son recordadas por su representación audiovisual, son por ejemplo la muerte del director de *El Espectador*, Guillermo Cano Isaza, la muerte del ministro de justicia, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, o hechos ficticios como la homosexualidad del narcotraficante Pacho Herrera o la mamá de Pablo Escobar.



narrativas pueden tener en una audiencia global y nacional. Se discutirá su aporte a una versión del pasado y su función como memorias protésicas.

## Telenovelas y series como portavoces de la memoria

La televisión es considerada como una de las herramientas más eficaces para comunicar la historia a un público amplio.<sup>8</sup> Contrario a la forma en que los libros de historia o películas<sup>9</sup> transmiten el pasado, la televisión, debido a su lugar en la casa, permite que “[...] los mundos imaginarios que nos desvela fluy[a]n directamente dentro y se mezcl[e]n con el flujo de la vida cotidiana, tanto que atenúan la separación entre las dos órdenes de la realidad.” Por lo tanto los contenidos “[...] conserva[n] una resonancia más duradera en esta misma vida con la que incesantemente se mezcla”.<sup>10</sup> Hoy en día, no se trata solamente de la televisión lineal, sino también de aquellos contenidos que se encuentran en las plataformas de streaming. A lo largo del artículo se indagará en series y telenovelas<sup>11</sup> que retratan el pasado traumático reciente colombiano, lo cual la mayoría de la audiencia puede recordar, ya sea por recuerdos propios o por relatos de generaciones mayores. Gracias al uso de material de archivo en la trama y la reconstrucción de lugares históricos, igual

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8 Gary R. Edgerton, “Introduction: *Television as Historian. A Different Kind of History Altogether*,” en *Television histories: shaping collective memory in the media age*, coords. Gary R. Edgerton y Peter C. Rollins (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 1.

9 En los estudios culturales de la memoria son especialmente las películas las que son más investigadas como portavoces y formadoras de una memoria colectiva. Erll y Wodianka hablan del *Erinnerungsfilm*, que puede activar recuerdos de la audiencia por ver una historia. Ya que ese concepto hace más referencia a películas que a series y telenovelas, se trabajará con el concepto de telenovelas y series de la memoria, el cual se explicará más adelante. Véase Astrid Erll y Stephanie Wodianka, “Einleitung: Phänomenologie und Methodologie des ‘Erinnerungsfilms’,” en *Film und kulturelle Erinnerung: Plurimediale Konstellationen*, coord. Astrid Erll (Berlín: de Gruyter, 2008), 2.

10 Milly Buonanno, *El Drama Televisivo: Identidad y contenidos sociales* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1999), 54.

11 Mientras que una telenovela suele tener entre cien y doscientos episodios dependiendo de su contexto nacional, la trama de una serie es más condensada y puede tener entre diez y trece episodios. La telenovela suele emitirse por la televisión abierta en la hora estelar durante los días de semana, logrando un alcance masivo (véase en José Cabrujas, *Y Latinoamérica inventó la telenovela* (Caracas: Alfadil, 2002), 179–81.) Gracias a plataformas de streaming, la repercusión global se multiplicó más aún. Una serie puede tener varias temporadas y es pensada para formatos de streaming o de compra de DVDs, y no siempre es exhibida en la televisión abierta (véase en Inmaculada Gorrillo, *La hipertelevisión: géneros y formatos* (Quito: Ediciones Ciespal, 2009), 138–41.)

que al uso de nombres reales o fácilmente reconocibles, estas producciones presentan los hechos con veracidad, razón por la cual se entienden como *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria*.<sup>12</sup> En general, las tramas que se basan en hechos reales parecen ser una fórmula de éxito,<sup>13</sup> ya que abren más fácilmente la identificación entre la audiencia y los personajes cuando ya existen algunas memorias o ideas sobre el pasado. Adicionalmente, siguiendo a Gordillo, las telenovelas que se basan en hechos reales son consideradas como parte de un “modelo realista”. El autor destaca que en estas producciones los personajes tienen más matices y no se dejan clasificar fácilmente en buenos y malos. Al final de la trama, se restablece una justicia, que implica un tono más moralista.<sup>14</sup> Gracias a la trama melodramática y la identificación con los personajes, las telenovelas y las series que abordan temas controvertidos pueden tener un efecto significativo en la formación política y en la conciencia histórica de sus audiencias.<sup>15</sup> Por ende, las telenovelas y series pueden tener un impacto directo en la formación de memorias colectivas sobre el pasado.<sup>16</sup>

Si una producción que retrata un tema traumático del pasado es percibida como una *telenovela* o *serie de la memoria* depende por un lado de la producción, y, por otro lado, de la audiencia si la percibe como tal.<sup>17</sup> A seguir, se clasificarán

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12 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Conciencia Histórica, pensamiento crítico y telenovelas en Latinoamérica,” en *Escenarios para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico*, coord. Eugenia Varela Sarmiento, (Buenos Aires: CLACSO; Bogotá: Universidad de La Salle, 2019), 60–1.

13 Karima Maluk Spahie, “Representaciones televisivas de la sociedad chilena de la dictadura: estereotipos de familia y de jóvenes opositores al régimen en la serie,” en *La ficción histórica en la televisión iberoamericana, 2000-2012: Construcciones del pasado colectivo en series, telenovelas y telefilms*, coord. María d. I. Á. Rodríguez Cadena (Leiden; Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 166.

14 Otros modelos que define Gordillo son el “modelo melodramático”, que sigue el género clásico del melodrama, donde normalmente existe un conflicto o una identidad que tiene que ser descubierta y reconocida. Aquí los matices de los personajes son simplificados. En el “modelo posmoderno”, las telenovelas ya salen de las características del género y se mezclan con otros estilos. Los personajes en este modelo son aún más complejos con una profundidad psicológica y una trama no-lineal. Véase Gordillo, *La hipertelevisión*, 135–6.

15 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “«Te reconstruyen la historia»: Teleseries sobre la dictadura militar chilena y en la conciencia histórica de sus telespectadores,” en *Golpes a la memoria: Escritos sobre la posdictadura chilena*, coords. Javier González Arellano, Nicolás Del Valle Orellana y Damián Gálvez González (Madrid: TEJE, 2019), 135–52. Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Telenovelas, series y formación política en Latinoamérica,” en *Educación política: Debates de una historia por construir*, coords. Marcela Pardo G. y Stefan Peters (Bogotá: Instituto CAPAZ, 2023), 202–16.

16 Ibero-American Television Fiction Observatory, Obitel, *Social Memory and Television Fiction in Ibero-American Countries, Yearbook*, coords. Guillermo Orozco Gómez y Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (Porto Alegre: Editora Meridional Ltda., 2013), 78.

17 Esto es similar al *Erinnerungsfilm* [película de la memoria], como elaboran las autoras Wodjanka y Erll. No todas las películas que representan el pasado se pueden transformar en un *Erinnerungsfilm*,

brevemente tres motivaciones de por qué se producen *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria* para poder entender mejor el contexto de cada caso de estudio que se analizará más adelante.

Una razón por la cual se producen *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria* es la enseñanza del pasado. La telenovela o la serie se puede transformar en una memoria protésica, donde las memorias que no se hayan vivido en carne propia se hacen accesibles para otras generaciones a través de la trama de la producción.<sup>18</sup> Por ende, la telenovela o la serie contribuye a la memoria histórica. La representación veraz del pasado en estas producciones es fundamental, ya que las producciones apelan a las emociones y la enseñanza se percibe de manera más entretenida que a través de clases de historia o documentales.

Otra razón por lo cual se producen *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria* puede ser el establecimiento de una *contra narrativa*. Ahí las producciones muestran otra parte de un pasado que no se podía fundamentar en la memoria colectiva y que puede entrar en disputa con narrativas ya establecidas. Como resume el antropólogo Michel-Rolph Trouillot, cualquier narrativa histórica es un conjunto de silencios, donde por cuestiones de poder no todas las narrativas tienen la posibilidad de ser escuchadas.<sup>19</sup> Para que sean escuchadas las contra narrativas de la memoria colectiva, las *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria* pueden jugar un papel fundamental, en mostrar otras perspectivas del pasado a un público masivo. En cambio, en la función de enseñar, se trata de mostrar un hecho o una narrativa de un acontecimiento. El enfoque está en una narrativa específica de un pasado que se conoce parcialmente.

Otra función por la cual se producen *telenovelas* y *series de la memoria* es sin duda *el entretenimiento*. Generalmente cuando se toman narrativas locales que se hacen accesibles para una audiencia global, y quizás se cuentan de una forma abreviada o incluso estereotipada, están produciendo entretenimiento y su éxito se basa más en la recreación de un hecho histórico que en la enseñanza sobre el pasado. Esto se puede ver en series y telenovelas sobre personajes famosos, que prometen causar una cierta fascinación en las y los espectadores, sin una representación veraz del pasado.

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ya que depende de la audiencia, si lo percibe como tal. El *Erinnerungsfilm* no es un género, si no “[...] un fenómeno negociado social y plurimedialmente”, que se construye y apoya dentro de un contexto específico” (véase Erll y Wodianka, “Einleitung”, 2–5; traducción hecha por la autora).

18 Alison Landsberg, “Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture,” en *Memory and Popular Film*, coord. Paul Grainge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 8.

19 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 25–7.

Las tres diferentes motivaciones por las que se producen telenovelas o series de la memoria, ya sea por enseñanza, por establecer una contra narrativa o por entretenimiento, no siempre pueden separarse claramente unas de otras. Es importante destacar que todas las producciones funcionan bajo una lógica de mercado para alcanzar un público masivo y tener éxito, por ende, el entretenimiento es clave para cualquier telenovela y serie de la memoria. No es una categorización estática, y depende de varios factores, como el mercado en general, el financiamiento de la serie o la telenovela, la producción y también la motivación propia de los directores y guionistas. Al mismo tiempo el efecto que puede tener una producción en una audiencia puede cambiar durante el tiempo y en diferentes momentos de emisión, y dependiendo de la audiencia que la vea. A continuación, se presentarán los tres casos de estudio y se propondrá una posible motivación por la cual se produjeron.

## ¿Tres maneras de narrar lo mismo o tres motivaciones distintas?

El primer caso de estudio es la telenovela colombiana *Pablo Escobar; el patrón del mal*, emitida por primera vez en Colombia 2012 por el canal Caracol. Se transmitió en el horario estelar a las nueve y media de la noche de lunes a viernes con una duración de 113 episodios.<sup>20</sup> Está basada en el libro *La parábola de Pablo*, de 2001, escrito por el antiguo alcalde de Medellín y periodista Alonso Salazar. Ya en 2009, los productores Juana Uribe y Camilo Cano explicaron la necesidad de hacer una telenovela sobre los hechos que ocurrieron en Colombia, como explica Cano: “Los canales también tienen la responsabilidad de hacer memoria histórica. Hay unos hechos que ocurrieron entre 1973 y 1993 que el país no puede olvidar, cuando Escobar inundó al mundo de cocaína y a Colombia de sangre...pero incluyendo, esta vez, la voz de quienes padecieron sus atrocidades”. La productora Juana Uribe esperaba que el programa: “ayude a quienes no vivieron del todo esa época o no tuvieron suficiente información para entender la dimensión del daño que el narcotráfico, y la tolerancia que tuvo el país con él, significó para todos nosotros y para el mundo”.<sup>21</sup> *Pablo Escobar; el patrón del mal* funcionó, por lo tanto, como una memoria

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<sup>20</sup> La versión internacional, que se vendió a otros países y que se encuentra también en Netflix, tiene 74 capítulos. Los episodios son más largos y se han cortado algunas escenas.

<sup>21</sup> Diana Carolina Durán Núñez, “La parábola televisada de Pablo Escobar: Dos víctimas del capo se pusieron en la tarea de realizar una serie basada en la vida criminal de este hombre,”

protésica, para transmitir el pasado traumático a generaciones más jóvenes. Cabe destacar, que los dos productores estaban personalmente afectados por la violencia causada por Pablo Escobar.<sup>22</sup> Por ende, la enseñanza sobre el pasado parece ser la motivación principal para haber producido la telenovela, como bien anuncia al inicio de cada episodio “Quién no conoce su historia está condenado a repetirla”. Fue la producción ficcional más exitosa en 2012 en Colombia, no solamente en términos de rating, sino también por el impacto social y cultural que obtuvo.<sup>23</sup> La Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia se muestra en el episodio 27 de la versión nacional de la telenovela *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, que se emitió por primera vez el 6 de julio de 2012 por Caracol Televisión.<sup>24</sup>

El segundo caso de estudio es la serie colombiana *El General Naranjo*, que se emitió por Fox Premium Series entre 2019 y 2021, con un total de 60 episodios en tres temporadas.<sup>25</sup> La serie cuenta, desde la perspectiva del policía Óscar Naranjo, la lucha contra Pablo Escobar y contra el Cartel de Cali. La producción es una adaptación del libro “El general de las mil batallas” del periodista Julio Sánchez Cristo. Cabe destacar que Óscar Naranjo no autorizó el guion y no estuvo involucrado en la producción. Sin embargo, él mismo constata:

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*El Espectador*, 7 de noviembre de 2009, <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia/mas-regiones/la-parabola-televisada-de-pablo-escobar-article-170884/>.

<sup>22</sup> Camilo Cano es hijo del periodista Guillermo Cano, asesinado el 17 de diciembre de 1986 por Pablo Escobar. La mamá de Juana Uribe es Maruja Pachón, cuñada del candidato presidencial Luis Carlos Galán, asesinado el 18 de agosto de 1989. Maruja Pachón estuvo secuestrada entre noviembre de 1990 y abril de 1991 por *Los Extraditables*, ordenados por Pablo Escobar. En 2022 salió la miniserie *Noticias de un Secuestro* (Amazon Prime, 2022), una coproducción chileno-colombiana basada en la novela del mismo título de Gabriel García Márquez. La producción ganó distintos premios, entre ellos los Premios Platinos.

<sup>23</sup> Ibero-American Television Fiction Observatory, *Social Memory*, 217.

<sup>24</sup> *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, episodio 27, “El MR-20 ejecuta la Toma del Palacio de Justicia”, dirigido por Carlos Moreno y Laura Mora, libreto por Juan Camilo Ferrand, primera emisión el 6 de julio de 2012 en Caracol Televisión. En la versión internacional, que se encuentra también en Netflix, el número de episodio respectivo es el 17.

<sup>25</sup> Los primeros trece episodios de la primera temporada se estrenaron entre el 24 de mayo y el 16 de agosto de 2019. La segunda temporada se estrenó con los 23 episodios completamente el 24 de noviembre 2019. La tercera temporada se estrenó el 1 de julio y duró con la totalidad de 23 episodios hasta el 31 de julio del 2020. El 15 de abril de 2020, la cadena de televisión colombiana Caracol transmitió la serie de lunes a viernes. Véase Adela Mac Swiney, “Televisión colombiana estrena serie ‘El General Naranjo’,” *Ibercine*, 16 de abril de 2020, <https://ibercine.com/television-colombiana-estrena-serie-el-general-naranjo/>.

Creo que la producción y todo el desarrollo televisivo, [...], tuvo el propósito de contar la historia desde el lado de los buenos, una historia que a pesar de la mezcla de ficción y realidad deja lecciones para que el país supere los enormes desafíos que plantea el narcotráfico. De lo que se trata es de que no se olvide a los colombianos anónimos que entregaron su vida por servirle al país.<sup>26</sup>

Aunque no se publicaron números de ratings, la serie parece ser una de las más vistas.<sup>27</sup> La Toma del Palacio de Justicia marcó un hito especial en la biografía de Óscar Naranjo, que se ve reflejado también en la serie, por el peso que tienen esos acontecimientos en la trama audiovisual. Por la extensa incorporación de los hechos en la narración, esta producción se puede clasificar en la categoría de contra narrativa, como se explicará más adelante.

Con una mirada desde Norteamérica la serie *Narcos*, producida por Netflix (2015–2017), cuenta casi los mismos hechos. Las primeras dos temporadas retratan la vida y la lucha de dos agentes de la DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) contra Pablo Escobar y el Cartel de Medellín y la tercera temporada es sobre el Cartel de Cali. La idea de la serie era, como dijo el director José Padilha en un evento en 2014: “[...] contar la historia verdadera de cómo la cocaína se volvió un problema enorme en Estados Unidos y Europa y cómo todo comenzó en Medellín”.<sup>28</sup> Cabe destacar, que hubo una reunión en 2014 entre el CEO de Netflix Ted Sarandos, José Padilha y otros con el presidente de entonces Juan Manuel Santos donde se habló sobre Colombia como lugar de rodaje y producción.<sup>29</sup> Sobre todo, con el inicio de las negociaciones de paz entre la guerrilla de las FARC-EP y el gobierno, hubo un interés gubernamental de mostrar a Colombia como un país seguro a una audiencia internacional.<sup>30</sup> Gracias a la Ley 1556 de 2012, también conocida como la ley de cine, la producción de la serie internacional en Colombia se facilitó gracias a

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26 Armando Neira, “Naranjo: ‘A la serie de televisión le ha ido muy bien, a mí no tanto’,” *El Tiempo*, 16 de junio de 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/general-naranjo-habla-sobre-la-serie-y-el-caso-de-la-vicepresidenta-507592>.

27 Publimetro Colombia, “¿Personaje de Julián Román en *El general Naranjo* se inspiró en un famoso delincuente?” *Publimetro Colombia*, 4 de mayo de 2020, <https://www.publimetro.co/co/entretenimiento/2020/05/04/personaje-de-julian-roman-en-el-general-naranjo-se-inspiro-en-un-famoso-delincuente.html>.

28 Luis Pablo Beauregard, “Netflix habla español. La compañía de televisión por Internet prepara para este año dos series con exitosos cineastas de América Latina,” *El País*, 16 de octubre de 2015, [https://elpais.com/cultura/2015/04/29/actualidad/1430337224\\_439278.html](https://elpais.com/cultura/2015/04/29/actualidad/1430337224_439278.html).

29 Ted Johnson, “Netflix’s Ted Sarandos Meets With Colombian President to Talk ‘Narcos’ Incentives,” *Variety*, 1 de octubre de 2014, <https://variety.com/2014/artisans/news/netflixs-ted-sarandos-meets-with-colombian-president-to-talk-narcos-incentives-1201319010/>.

30 Nahuel Ribke, *Transnational American Television: Genres, formats and adaptations* (London: Routledge, 2020), 105.

beneficios económicos.<sup>31</sup> *Narcos* fue la primera serie producida en Colombia que abrió las puertas para varias grandes producciones siguientes y es la cuarta serie original producida de Netflix. Aunque Netflix no publica cifras oficiales de espectadores, supuestamente se sumaron casi cuatro millones de nuevos abonados tras la segunda temporada,<sup>32</sup> e incluso más de 27 millones tras la tercera.<sup>33</sup> Por la narración, la representación abreviada de los acontecimientos y la perspectiva norteamericana a la historia colombiana y latinoamericana se puede suponer que la motivación de hacer la serie no era la enseñanza, si no el puro entretenimiento.

Siguiendo las lógicas neocoloniales, la audiencia global puede gozar de la violencia en Colombia en la pantalla, pero con una distancia, que Herlinghaus nombra una “violencia sin culpa”.<sup>34</sup> La atracción hacia la violencia es más grande cuando se presenta algo que esté conectado o suena familiar a la audiencia y parece plausible. La violencia real siempre atrae más que una violencia surrealista.<sup>35</sup> Ya que Pablo Escobar se volvió casi una marca global, que por un lado fascina por su trayectoria y sus hechos crueles que parecen casi ficticios, y al mismo tiempo horroriza. Por la atención internacional que siempre ha tenido, existen algunos recuerdos. Narrar la historia con un enfoque diferente, en este caso con la perspectiva de los agentes de la DEA, hizo que la serie se volviera un éxito. La violencia que se muestra se puede conectar por lo tanto con imágenes preestablecidas, ya sea por medios culturales o por noticieros. Convertir la violencia en un espectáculo puede atraer aún más a una audiencia que no ha vivido el tiempo al que hace referencia la producción, ya que sus propios recuerdos no entran en disputa con lo que se muestra. La Toma

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31 El Congreso de Colombia, “LEY 1556 DE 2012 (julio 09) por la cual se fomenta el territorio nacional como escenario para el rodaje de obras cinematográficas,” *Sistema Único de Información Normativa*, 27 de junio de 2022, <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Leyes/1683294>.

32 Zoya Teierstein and Ben Popper, “Led by Stranger Things and Narcos, Netflix reports record revenue: For the first time, the streaming service took in over \$2 billion in revenue during a single quarter,” *The Verge*, 17 de octubre de 2016, <https://www.theverge.com/2016/10/17/13305338/netflix-earnings-3rd-quarter-q3-2016>.

33 Corey Chichizola, “Wait, Narcos Season 3 Got How Many Viewers In Its First Week?,” *Cinema Blend*, 14 de septiembre de 2017, <https://www.cinemablend.com/television/1702940/wait-narcos-season-3-got-how-many-viewers-in-its-first-week>.

34 Hermann Herlinghaus, *Violence without guilt: Ethical narratives from the global South* (Nueva York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Véase también Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, *Commodifying Violence in Literature and on Screen: The Colombian Condition* (Abingdon, Nueva York: Routledge, 2022), 3–5, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195702>,

35 C. Fernández Villanueva, J.C. Revilla Castro, R. González Fernández y B. Lozando Maneiro, “Violence on television. Unpleasant, interesting or morbid?” *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 68 (2013): 591, <https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2013-991en>.

y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia forma parte del cuarto episodio de la primera temporada con el título “The Palace in Flames”.<sup>36</sup>

## La Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia – “la trama oficial”

El Palacio de Justicia se encuentra en el centro de Bogotá y es la sede de la Corte Suprema de Justicia y el Consejo de Estado. En 1985, los magistrados estaban discutiendo el Tratado de Extradición con Estados Unidos y revisando pruebas de violaciones de derechos humanos cometidas por militares. Magistrados como Alfonso Reyes Echandía trabajaban contra la militarización del país, evitando que casos de violaciones de derechos humanos se trasladaran de las cortes civiles a las cortes militares.<sup>37</sup> Por este motivo, los magistrados no tenían un trabajo sencillo y no se hicieron amigos ni de los militares, ni de quienes temían la extradición, como los narcotraficantes y los guerrilleros. Los magistrados y sus familiares sufrieron de amenazas de muerte e interceptación de conversaciones privadas.<sup>38</sup> Sobre todo, eran vistos como enemigos por parte del grupo alrededor de Pablo Escobar, *Los Extraditables*.

Estos son los tiempos de las llamadas *violencias*.<sup>39</sup> Durante la década de los ochenta, el surgimiento de empresas criminales narcotraficantes, paramilitares, y guerrillas, fueron dejando víctimas en diversos sectores de la sociedad civil con diferentes grados de vulnerabilidad. Durante *Las Violencias* Colombia sufrió una alta tasa de homicidios, que se intensificó a finales de los ochenta. En este contexto también se afectaron las instituciones democráticas del país, como el Palacio de Justicia. Con el asesinato del Ministerio de Justicia Rodrigo Lara Bonilla el 30 de

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36 *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” dirigido por Guillermo Navarro, libreto por Cris Brancato, primera emisión el 28 de agosto de 2015, en Netflix.

37 Ana Carrigan, *The Palace of Justice: A Colombian tragedy* (Nueva York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993), 92–7.

38 Julio Sánchez Cristo, *El cazador de la mafia: El general Óscar Naranjo, artífice de los golpes más contundentes al narcotráfico colombiano en los últimos 20 años confiesa sus secretos* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2017), 47.

39 Jefferson Jaramillo Marín, “Las comisiones de estudio sobre la violencia en Colombia: Un examen a los dispositivos y narrativas oficiales sobre el pasado y el presente de la violencia,” en *Las luchas por la memoria en América Latina: Historia reciente y violencia política*, coords. Eugenia Allier Montaño y Emilio A. Crenzel (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert; México D.F.: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2016), 247–8.



abril de 1984, Pablo Escobar y sus sicarios mostraron lo que eran capaces de hacer contra ministros y funcionarios del Estado que estaban en su contra. Esto llevó a ampliar la vigilancia y seguridad del Palacio y de los magistrados por parte de la Policía Nacional de Colombia a mediados de octubre. Uno de los policías que estaba a cargo de la seguridad era Óscar Naranjo. Sin embargo, la seguridad del Palacio fue retirada el 5 de noviembre, una decisión que tampoco fue coordinada con el Ministerio de Justicia<sup>40</sup> y que deja dudas, sabiendo la intensidad de los hechos que iban a acontecer.

A las 11:40 de la mañana del 6 de noviembre, 35 guerrilleros del grupo M-19 (Movimiento del 19 de Abril)<sup>41</sup> asaltaron el Palacio de Justicia con la “Operación Antonio Nariño por los Derechos del Hombre” de la “Compañía Iván Marino Ospina”. En el Palacio se encontraban alrededor de cuatrocientas personas,<sup>42</sup> entre ellas magistrados de la Corte Suprema, empleados, estudiantes, visitantes y trabajadores de la cafetería. Anteriormente, durante la presidencia de Belisario Betancur se había firmado el Acuerdo de Corinto, un acuerdo de paz entre el grupo guerrillero M-19, el Partido Comunista de Colombia y su organización guerrillera, Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), y las fuerzas institucionales armadas del Estado.<sup>43</sup> Dado que no se respetaron las treguas concordadas, la Toma del Palacio fue planificada como una oportunidad para obligar al presidente Betancur a negociar la paz y juzgarlo en frente de los magistrados de la Corte Suprema por haber violado los acuerdos de paz y el cese al fuego. De forma similar a otros casos, los planes de

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**40** Enrique Parejo González, *La tragedia del Palacio de Justicia: Cúmulo de errores y abusos* (Bogotá: Editorial Oveja Negra, 2010), 29.

**41** Después de la muerte del líder político Jorge Eliécer Gaitán el 9 de abril de 1948 anterior al Bogotazo, surgieron varias guerrillas. Se acordó que, cada cuatro años, liberales y conservadores se turnarían el poder, impidiendo a otras fuerzas políticas poder actuar, radicalizando así otros sectores políticos. Tras el controvertido triunfo de Misael Pastrana del Partido Conservador, así como la derrota del general Rojas Pinilla del movimiento político Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO) en la elección presidencial del 19 de abril de 1970, las denuncias de fraude y manipulación electoral aumentaron. Esto llevó a antiguos miembros de la guerrilla FARC-EP como Jaime Bateman y Andrés Almarales, así como otros jóvenes, a fundar el grupo guerrillero Movimiento del 19 de Abril (M-19) (véase Camilo Eduardo Umaña Hernández, *El caso del Palacio de Justicia: un estado del arte* (Bogotá: Instituto CAPAZ, 2022), 8–9, <https://www.instituto-capaz.org/en/the-case-of-the-palace-of-justice-in-the-latest-capaz-working-paper/>). Véase también Carrigan, *Palace*, 77. El nombre hace referencia a la fecha de la elección.

**42** Carrigan, *Palace*, 116.

**43** Centro de Documentación de los Movimientos Armados, “Acuerdo entre el Gobierno y el Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) y el Partido Comunista De Colombia (M-L) y su organización guerrillera, Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) (Acuerdos de Corinto)” *Centro de Documentación de los Movimientos Armados*, 24 de agosto de 1984, [https://cedema.org/digital\\_items/4064](https://cedema.org/digital_items/4064).

tomarse el Palacio de Justicia fueron anunciados a través de diferentes medios de comunicación en octubre de 1985.<sup>44</sup> Este iba a ser otro de los “golpes espectaculares” que caracterizaban al M-19 con el fin de una “máxima desestabilización del sistema”,<sup>45</sup> en los que la primera meta era la difusión y la creación de un impacto, más que lograr un avance militar.<sup>46</sup>

La realidad fue otra. El ejército atacó el Palacio en una violenta Retoma con diez tanques y más de 2000 tropas.<sup>47</sup> Un rol clave de blanqueamiento y censura lo jugó la ministra de comunicación Noemí Sanín que permitió que, poco después de la Toma, se mostrara por televisión nacional un partido de fútbol. Además, los hechos coincidieron con el Concurso Nacional de Belleza. La radio se opuso a esta censura y transmitió un discurso del M-19 durante las primeras horas de la Toma. El magistrado Alfonso Reyes Echandía logró hablar con la radio, después de intentar hablar con el presidente por teléfono. Sin embargo, las demandas de negociar una tregua resultaron infructuosos. Alrededor de cien personas perdieron la vida en los eventos de Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia.<sup>48</sup> Debido a tres incendios que iniciaron dentro del Palacio, los restos humanos se volvieron difíciles de identificar. El número exacto de víctimas sigue siendo incierto, exacerbado por la cantidad de personas desaparecidos en manos de los militares, quienes “[...] crearon una especie de ratonera para atrapar a la guerrilla en un operativo que estrangulara su influencia política, a la vez que escarneciera su, hasta entonces, astucia militar”.<sup>49</sup>

Las veintiocho horas de Toma y Retoma que ocurrieron en pleno centro de Bogotá el 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985 marcan un trauma en la historia colombiana hasta hoy. Existen diversos obstáculos y obstrucciones en el proceso de aclaración de los hechos que intentan ocultar la responsabilidad de los militares en la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia. Hasta hoy, existen pocas condenas

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44 Laura Valbuena, *La toma del Palacio de Justicia en 30 años de literatura* (Bogotá: Filomena Edita, 2019), 32; Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 8–13; Carrigan, *Palace*, 86.

45 Valbuena, *La toma*, 11 y Carrigan, *Palace*, 33.

46 Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 8. El primer gran golpe hizo famoso al M-19, también por la estrategia de comunicación que acompañaba la acción, ha sido el robo de la Espada de Simón Bolívar, que ocurrió el 17 de abril de 1974. El 27 de febrero de 1980, el M-19 se tomó rehenes diplomáticos en la embajada de República Dominicana en Bogotá, una práctica para conseguir dinero para sus acciones.

47 Carrigan, *Palace*, 114–5.

48 Adriana Echeverry y Ana María Hanssen, *Holocausto en el silencio* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana, 2007), 9.

49 Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 14.

contra los responsables.<sup>50</sup> Sobre todo la respuesta brutal de las Fuerzas Armadas desestabilizó incluso más las instituciones democráticas y de derecho.<sup>51</sup> La imagen más icónica de estos hechos es seguramente la entrada de tanques militares por la puerta principal del edificio, que se transmitió en noticias nacionales y globales, y que “se convirtieron en uno de los símbolos más dicentes de la barbarie que encarnaría la llamada retoma del Palacio de Justicia”.<sup>52</sup> También la llegada de helicópteros o el traslado de rehenes a la Casa del Florero, que funcionó como centro de tortura por parte de las Fuerzas Armadas, siguen siendo parte de la memoria colectiva del pueblo colombiano que vivió estos hechos o los conoce a través de las noticias, clases de historia o testimonios. Después de la reconstrucción del edificio, en una placa conmemorativa en la puerta se recuerdan solamente a trece magistrados, lo cual oculta la intensidad y crueldad de los hechos.<sup>53</sup> A diferencia de otros conflictos entre el ejército y la guerrilla en las zonas rurales, donde las víctimas eran campesinos, el 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985 el lugar de confrontación fue el centro de Bogotá, con víctimas de mucho prestigio y con una transmisión de los medios de comunicación en vivo.<sup>54</sup> La Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia fue decisiva para la violencia que vendrían después del lado de la policía y el ejército.<sup>55</sup> Como atestó la Comisión de la Verdad después, el ejército no actuó con la sensibilidad adecuada de salvar vidas cuando bombardearon el Palacio con los tanques, sabiendo que se encontraban personas en él.<sup>56</sup> Hasta hoy siguen existiendo incongruencias entre los hechos que no fueron aclarados. Algo que no se pudo probar, pero que aún permanece en la memoria y sigue siendo un campo de especulaciones, es la relación del M-19 con Pablo Escobar y el Cartel de Medellín y su aparente financiación de la Toma del Palacio.<sup>57</sup>

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50 Sebastián Cote Lozano, “Palacio de Justicia: doble golpe a la verdad que han sostenido algunos militares,” *El Espectador*, 18 de marzo de 2023, <https://www.pressreader.com/colombia/el-espectador/20230318/281590949801138>. El proceso judicial contra el coronel Plazas Vega empezó en 2006, resultando en una condena en 2010 por el delito de la desaparición forzada. Sin embargo, fue absuelto en 2015 (Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 28). En 1989 los sobrevivientes del M-19 fueron amnistiados por el presidente Virgilio Barco (Carrigan, *Palace*, 281).

51 Parejo González, *La tragedia*, 11.

52 Valbuena, *La toma*, 46.

53 Fernando J. Rosenberg, “Sobre la reparación simbólica de un trauma histórico: el caso Desaparecidos del Palacio de Justicia,” en *Reparación simbólica: Cultura y arte para nueve casos de violaciones de los derechos humanos*, coords. José L. Falconi, Liliana Mendoza Ortiz y Yolanda Sierra León (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2020), 338–9.

54 Carrigan, *Palace*, 185.

55 Parejo González, *La tragedia*, 12.

56 Echeverry y Hanssen, *Holocausto*, 60.

57 Un resumen de la conexión entre los Narcos y el M-19 se encuentra en Adolfo León Atehortúa

Debido a las imágenes recogidas por los medios de comunicación internacionales y a la reproducción de los hechos en series, películas y telenovelas, muchas de las imágenes también son conocidas por un público mundial. La Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia es la base para varias investigaciones académicas, testimonios, obras literarias, obras teatrales, novelas gráficas y exposiciones. También han surgido películas y documentales desde el año 2015.<sup>58</sup> Valbuena resume el rol del periodismo y la función clave de la literatura en los procesos memoriales sobre los hechos: “La historia lo hizo apegándose [la reflexión] a la verdad, la justicia señalando acusados, el periodismo intentando presentar cada día nuevos descubrimientos; pero es la literatura la que aporta evidencia estética que invita a un acercamiento más atractivo; sin excluir, por ello, un llamado a la reflexión”.<sup>59</sup> Siguiendo esta reflexión, se analizará el papel de las series y telenovelas que retratan la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en los procesos memoriales. Ya que los hechos se dividen en distintos acontecimientos, como la Toma, la Retoma, los tres incendios, la toma de rehenes, la desaparición de víctimas y la respuesta violenta de los militares, el artículo se centrará en dos aspectos para poder analizarlos en la representación de las dos series y la telenovela. Primero se analizará la presunta conexión entre Pablo Escobar y el M-19, después se centrará en la representación

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Cruz, “Decisiones y narcos: Discusiones recientes en torno a los hechos del palacio de justicia,” *Análisis Político* 24, no. 71 (enero-abril 2011), <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/74913>.

58 Las obras que describen y retratan los acontecimientos del Palacio de Justicia pueden ser de carácter periodístico (véase por ejemplo Olga Behar y su novela “Noches de humo: cómo se planeó y ejecutó la toma del Palacio de Justicia” de 1988), literario (por ejemplo “Mañana no te presentes” de Marta Orrantía de 2016) o artístico (por ejemplo, la obra teatral *La siempreviva* de Miguel Torres de 1993 o la novela gráfica *Los once* de Miguel Jiménez, José Luis Jiménez y Andrés Cruz de 2014). Los testimonios de las personas involucradas también desempeñan un papel central en el proceso de la reconstrucción de los hechos, sea del lado del Estado, como por ejemplo del procurador (Carlos Jiménez Gómez, *Camino de la tragedia nacional*) o del ejército, como los libros del comandante Plazas Vega que muestra su lado de la historia y usa el libro de testimonio como una narrativa de inocencia (véase Plazas Vega, *El Palacio, ¿Desaparecidos?* y *El itinerario de una injusticia* (Bogotá: Editorial Nomos, 2008)). Un rol importante juega los testimonios de familiares de desaparecidos (véase por ejemplo Helena Uran Bidegain, *Mi vida y el Palacio: 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985: La historia de Carlos Horacio Uran y la lucha de su familia por la verdad* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 2020)). Otros formatos como la exposición de Forensic Architecture (véase en <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/enforced-disappearance-at-the-palacio-de-justicia>) quieren aportar a la revisión judicial de los hechos. Películas como *Antes del fuego* (dirigido por Laura Mora Ortega), *La siempreviva* (dirigido por Klych López) y documentales como *La Toma* (dirigido por Angus Gibson y Miguel Salazar), *28 horas bajo fuego* de Juan Antonio Vanegas; y *Holocausto Palacio de Justicia* de RTVC Sistema de Medio Públicos jugaron un papel importante en la reconstrucción de los hechos y querían dar una voz a las víctimas. Véase más en Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 37.

59 Valbuena, *La toma*, 7.

de las víctimas en las tres producciones, antes de reflexionar sobre su rol para la formación de memoria protésica.

## La relación de los narcos con la guerrilla

La supuesta financiación del M-19 por parte de Pablo Escobar para tomarse el Palacio de Justicia sigue siendo motivo de división de opiniones hasta el día de hoy. A pesar de que en las primeras investigaciones del Tribunal Especial de Instrucción, instalado el 13 de noviembre de 1985,<sup>60</sup> no se encontraron pruebas de una conexión entre los narcotraficantes y los guerrilleros, esta sigue siendo una de las teorías existentes para explicar lo sucedido. Este tema no forma parte del currículo escolar, pero se transmite repetidamente a través de la televisión y el cine, lo que contribuye a su persistencia.<sup>61</sup> Pocos días después de la Toma, el 8 de noviembre de 1985, esta narrativa fue recogida por medios de comunicación locales, como *El Tiempo* del 8 de noviembre de 1985 y *El Espectador* del 21 de noviembre de 1985, así como por medios internacionales, como el *Washington Post* y *CBS Evening News*.<sup>62</sup>

Primero, es necesario pensar sobre el por qué una persona como Pablo Escobar tendría intereses de cooperar con esta guerrilla para tomarse el Palacio. Se debe considerar que fue el M-19 quien secuestró en marzo de 1981 a Marta Nieves Ochoa Vásquez, hermana de los Ochoa, socios de Pablo Escobar y fundadores de la organización MAS (Muerte a los Secuestradores). Una convicción que unía a los narcotraficantes y a los guerrilleros en este tiempo fue la oposición a la extradición hacia Estados Unidos, lo cual representaba una amenaza para su seguridad.<sup>63</sup> Al mismo tiempo, debido a las acciones que llevaban a cabo para el pueblo colombiano, tanto el M-19 como Pablo Escobar se transformaron en una especie de Robin Hood, luchando por combatir las desigualdades en la sociedad y ganándose muchos simpatizantes en la población.<sup>64</sup> Esto puede llevar a suponer que eran ideológicamente afines, por lo cual podrían haber trabajado juntos en la Toma del Palacio de Justicia.

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60 Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 23.

61 Alejandro Cabezas Guerrero, *Miércoles de ceniza y la expiación de todas las culpas: La toma del Palacio de Justicia desde sus entrañas* (Bogotá: Fundación R3nasc3ntro Ateneo Literario, 2021), 17.

62 Parejo González, *La tragedia*, 71–72 y Carrigan, *Palace*, 264.

63 Ramón Jimeno, *Noche de lobos* (Bogotá D.C. Colombia: Siglo XXI Ed, 1989), 32–3 y Parejo González, *La tragedia*, 70.

64 Por parte del M-19, se destacan acciones como el robo de un camión de leche el 30 de septiembre de 1985, con el propósito de distribuir la leche entre habitantes de las zonas más desfavorecidas. (Véase en Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 13.) En contraste, Pablo Escobar era conocido como el Robin Hood paisa, por su participación en la construcción de viviendas y canchas de fútbol en barrios

En concreto hay tres testimonios que mencionan la conexión entre Pablo Escobar y el M-19 en relación con la Toma del Palacio. Por un lado, la periodista Virginia Vallejo, amante de Pablo Escobar, relata una reunión entre Álvaro Fayad, Iván Ospina y Pablo Escobar.<sup>65</sup> Escobar le contó a Vallejo que se trataba de un plan “muy grande”, por lo cual le dio un millón de dólares al M-19, “[p]ara recuperar mis expedientes y meterles candela. Y sin expedientes, no hay forma de que me extraditen [...]”<sup>66</sup>. Por otro lado, en el libro de Astrid Legarda Martínez: “El verdadero Pablo: sangre, traición y muerte”, basado en el testimonio del sicario Popeye, este afirma que la idea de la Toma del Palacio fue de Pablo Escobar, quien propuso asesinar a los magistrados y quemar los expedientes para evitar la extradición. Para llevar a cabo esto, Escobar entregó dos millones de dólares al M-19 y prometió cinco millones más después de la operación. Después de la Toma del Palacio, Iván Ospina y Jaime Bateman supuestamente se escondieron de las autoridades en la Hacienda Nápoles, propiedad de Pablo Escobar.<sup>67</sup> Sin embargo, la credibilidad de este testimonio se ve comprometida al considerar que Iván Ospina y Jaime Bateman ya estaban muertos en el momento de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia.<sup>68</sup> Por lo tanto, la veracidad de la entrega de dinero que describe Popeye en su testimonio también es cuestionable.

El tercer testimonio aparece en el libro “Mi confesión” del líder paramilitar Carlos Castaño de las *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). Según Castaño, Pablo Escobar supuestamente habló del plan con Carlos Pizarro, otro miembro del M-19, en mayo de 1985. Las armas para la operación venían de Fidel Castaño y el dinero de Pablo Escobar.<sup>69</sup> Fue Carlos Pizarro quien exigía dos millones de dólares: “Un millón de dólares para el M-19 por eliminar al presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, Alfonso Reyes Echandía y un millón de dólares adicionales por destruir

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marginados de Medellín, tal como lo destacaron los medios de comunicación ya en 1983 (véase “Un Robin Hood Paisa,” *Semana*, 19 de abril de 1983). A pesar de su estatus como un importante capo del narcotráfico, Escobar cultivaba una imagen de hombre del pueblo.

<sup>65</sup> Virginia Vallejo, *Amando a Pablo, odiando a Escobar* (Bogotá: Grijalbo, 2007), 232–40. En esto coincide con lo expuesto por la hermana de Pablo Escobar, Alba Marina Escobar, en su libro *El otro Pablo: El retrato íntimo del narcotraficante que doblegó a Colombia* (Miami: Editorial Pelicano, 2011), 223–4.

<sup>66</sup> Vallejo, *Amando*, 230, 240.

<sup>67</sup> Astrid Legarda Martínez, *El verdadero Pablo: sangre, traición y muerte* (Bogotá: Ediciones Dipon, 2007), 65–70.

<sup>68</sup> Iván Marino Ospina murió el 28 de agosto de 1985 en una operación militar, Jaime Bateman murió el 28 de abril de 1983 en un accidente aéreo.

<sup>69</sup> Mauricio Aranguren Molina, *Mi confesión: Carlos Castaño revela sus secretos* (Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 2002), 41–2.

todos los archivos”.<sup>70</sup> Los tres testimonios discrepan en cuanto a los participantes del M-19 en las reuniones con Escobar y en el motivo por el que recibieron dinero, ya sea por la eliminación de las pruebas o el asesinato de los magistrados. Estas versiones divergentes se contradicen entre sí y han sido sometidas a un análisis crítico.<sup>71</sup> Sin embargo, se ha observado que dichos testimonios son utilizados por personas involucradas en los hechos del 6 y del 7 de noviembre para establecer una narrativa que minimiza la responsabilidad del ejército en estos sucesos. Aquí se puede nombrar la versión del coronel Alfonso Plazas Vega, quien era el comandante de la Escuela de Caballería del Ejército a cargo de la operación militar, junto con el general Jesús Armando Arias Cabrales, comandante de la XIII Brigada y responsable de la Retoma.<sup>72</sup> Repetir esta versión ayuda a los responsables del Ejército a ocultar la responsabilidad que tuvieron y por la cual muchas personas inocentes perdieron su vida. Incluso, según un audio anónimo, los guerrilleros fueron torturados y forzados a firmar una declaración admitiendo que recibieron tres millones de pesos para financiar la operación.<sup>73</sup>

No obstante, si hubo reuniones entre Iván Marino Ospina, Álvaro Fayad y Pablo Escobar, como constata también la Comisión de la Verdad. Es probable que no todos los miembros del M-19 supieran de esas conexiones entre la guerrilla y los narcotraficantes.<sup>74</sup> Por lo tanto, no se trata de negar ninguna conexión que hubiese entre narcotraficantes como Pablo Escobar y el M-19, pero cabe destacar que tomarse el Palacio de Justicia por orden de Pablo Escobar es improbable. Por un lado, el aniquilamiento de las pruebas contra la extradición no hubiera sido tan fácil, ya que existían copias de los expedientes en otros lugares. Asimismo, esta acción iba a poner en riesgo la propia vida de los guerrilleros dentro del Palacio. De igual forma, ni siquiera los magistrados sabían cuando se iba a negociar la extradición en la Corte Suprema. La supuesta amenaza de quemar los expedientes en realidad no salvó a ningún narcotraficante de ser extraditado, por ende, hace la supuesta conexión menos creíble.<sup>75</sup>

Sin embargo, la conexión entre la guerrilla y los narcotraficantes forma parte de las narrativas en las producciones que se analizan en este artículo. Dentro de las tres producciones, la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia se diferencian por la duración de la exposición de los eventos en la trama y por los personajes

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<sup>70</sup> Aranguren Molina, *Mi confesión*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> Véase Atehortúa Cruz, “Decisiones” y Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 311–20.

<sup>72</sup> Luis Alfonso Plazas Vega, *El Palacio de Justicia: documento testimonial* (Bogotá: Ed. Carrera 7a., 2004), 239–40 y Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 16.

<sup>73</sup> Carrigan, *Palace*, 273–4.

<sup>74</sup> Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 312, 319.

<sup>75</sup> Atehortúa Cruz, “Decisiones,” 104–5; Echeverry y Hanssen, *Holocausto*, 201.

involucrados. Las discrepancias en la duración tienen como consecuencia que, a mayor exposición de los hechos, mayor es el espacio para integrar subtramas y evocar sentimientos y emociones en relación con la situación en la que se ven involucrados los personajes. Se presume que una narración breve en la trama afecta la representación de las víctimas al simplificar la historia, centrándose en la relación entre el narcotráfico y la guerrilla. Todo esto podría tener un impacto en la función de estas producciones como memoria protésica. En *Narcos*, la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia dura solamente un poco más que un minuto<sup>76</sup> al final del cuarto episodio de la primera temporada. No obstante, como las imágenes reales de los tanques de guerra ingresando al Palacio de Justicia forma parte de los créditos de apertura de cada episodio de la primera y la segunda temporada, este evento histórico se recuerda repetidamente.<sup>77</sup> En la telenovela *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* la representación de las veintiocho horas de Toma y de la Retoma dura un poco más que once minutos en un capítulo.<sup>78</sup> La representación más detallada y más extensa se encuentra en *El General Naranjo*, por ser contada desde la perspectiva del protagonista de la serie, el policía Óscar Naranjo.

La Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia marcó un hito especial en la biografía de Óscar Naranjo. Él vivió esos hechos en carne propia como encargado de la seguridad del Palacio de Justicia y fue afectado por la pérdida de su amigo Aníbal Talero. Naranjo no pudo implementar los cambios en los planes de seguridad debido a la oposición dentro de las instituciones y el gobierno. Estos sucesos tienen una relevancia significativa dentro de la trama de la serie. De un total de sesenta episodios, se hace referencia a la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en diecisiete episodios, lo que corresponde a un 28 % de toda la producción.<sup>79</sup> La Toma y Retoma funciona como un arco de tensión entre la primera y la segunda temporada, abordando la Toma inicial, su posterior Retoma y la búsqueda de pruebas subsiguiente. En la segunda y tercera temporada se muestran los acontecimientos de manera retrospectiva, a menudo como una crítica a la violencia y la brutalidad

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76 *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 37:31–38:42.

77 También aparece como retrospectiva en el cuarto episodio de la segunda temporada, “The Good, the Bad, and the Dead”, 15:54. Ahí, Stephen Murphy recuerda, mediante material de archivo, la conexión entre el M-19 y Pablo Escobar para tomarse el Palacio de Justicia. Esto le sirve como motivo para la violencia entre los hermanos Castaños de la AUC y Pablo Escobar.

78 *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, episodio 27, “El MR-20 ejecuta la Toma del Palacio de Justicia”, 02:08–13:36.

79 Se trata de cinco episodios de la primera temporada (Episodio 7, 10, 11, 12 y 13), emitidos el 24 de mayo de 2019 por Fox Telecolombia, siete episodios de la segunda temporada (Episodio 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 14), emitidos el 15 de noviembre de 2019 por Fox Telecolombia. En la tercera temporada se trata de cinco episodios (Episodio 1, 3, 4, 5 y 21), emitidos el 1 de julio de 2020 por Fox Telecolombia.



tanto de Pablo Escobar como del Ejército. En ocasiones, el edificio del Palacio de Justicia se menciona como referencia de lugar, sin establecer una conexión directa con los hechos del 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985. Además, partes de la Toma y de la Retoma se incluyen en el tráiler de la serie. A continuación, se analizan los respectivos capítulos de los hechos en “la trama ficcional” de las tres producciones.

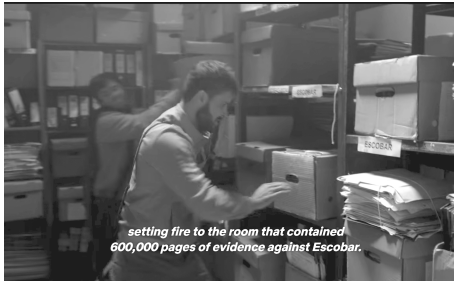
## La perspectiva estadounidense de los hechos en la serie *Narcos*

La conexión entre Pablo Escobar y el M-19 es fundamental en la trama del cuarto episodio „The Palace in Flames“,<sup>80</sup> de la primera temporada de *Narcos*. Los agentes de la Drug Enforcement Administration, Stephen Murphy y Javier Peña, cuyas experiencias sirvieron de inspiración para la serie *Narcos*, colaboraron como asesores en la producción. Asimismo relatan sus experiencias en el libro “Manhunters”, publicado en 2019, cuatro años después del estreno de la primera temporada de *Narcos*. En el libro, los autores mencionan una presunta conexión entre los guerrilleros del M-19 y Pablo Escobar, así como la financiación por parte del capo de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia.<sup>81</sup> También hacen referencia a los acuerdos de paz fallidos entre el gobierno de Belisario Betancur y las guerrillas. Aun así, estas negociaciones no se reflejan en la trama de la serie, como se mostrará a continuación. En el episodio, Stephen Murphy y Javier Peña están revisando las evidencias que se encuentran ordenadas en una sala del Palacio de Justicia y que están etiquetadas con el nombre Escobar.

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<sup>80</sup> El título del episodio se inspiró en el capítulo respectivo “Aquel palacio en llamas” del libro de Virginia Vallejo, lo que seguramente influyó en la producción y culminó en una demanda presentada por Vallejo contra Netflix (véase Brittany Shammass, “Former Colombian Reporter Says Netflix’s *Narcos* Copied Her Best-Selling Memoir,” *Miami New Times*, 28 de agosto de 2018, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/former-colombian-reporter-virginia-vallejo-says-netflixs-narcos-copied-her-best-selling-memoir-10671975>).

<sup>81</sup> Steve Murphy y Javier F. Peña, *Manhunters: How we took down Pablo Escobar* (Nueva York: St. Martin’s Press, 2019), 152.



**Ilustración 1:** El guerrillero Iván “el Terrible” Torres (inspirado en Iván Marino Ospina, interpretado por Aldemar Correa) y otro compañero en *Narcos* sacando expedientes con el nombre Escobar para incendiarlos. El nombre Escobar está en una posición muy central y visible para la audiencia. Fotograma de la primera temporada de *Narcos*, el cuarto capítulo “The Palace in Flames”, 2015, dirigido por Guillermo Navarro, libreto por Cris Brancato, primera emisión el 28 de agosto de 2015 en Netflix.

También hablan de la extradición que se decidirá esa semana en la Corte Suprema,<sup>82</sup> con lo cual se refieren a la extradición del socio de Pablo Escobar, el narcotraficante Carlos Lehder. Esto es una de las incoherencias que se puede ver en la serie. La extradición de Carlos Lehder se usa como un argumento narrativo para que Pablo Escobar se acercara a buscar una cooperación con la guerrilla. Cabe destacar, que la extradición de Carlos Lehder fue el primer caso de extradición a Estados Unidos y ocurrió el 4 de febrero de 1987, dos años después de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia.<sup>83</sup> De forma similar a la realidad, se muestran las amenazas contra los jueces por el tema de la extradición, quienes corrían peligro de muerte y tenían que comparecer en los tribunales ocultando sus caras, lo que hace referencia a los *jueces sin rostro*.<sup>84</sup> Al mismo tiempo, la audiencia puede ver desde la perspectiva del personaje Elisa, una guerrillera, que hubo una reunión entre Iván y Pablo Escobar, para hablar sobre un plan que se revelará después. Elisa, que también es compañera de trabajo de Conny Murphy, la esposa del agente de la DEA Stephen Murphy, pregunta de qué se trataba la reunión. Iván responde: “Es una alianza necesaria para nuestra lucha revolucionaria”,<sup>85</sup> a lo cual contesta Elisa “yo lucho por el pueblo, no por los narcotraficantes”. Sabiendo que algo va a pasar, lo cuenta a su colega Conny, que avisa a su esposo Stephen Murphy.<sup>86</sup> Él podría haberlo evitado, pero llega demasiado

<sup>82</sup> *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 33:45.

<sup>83</sup> *El Espectador*, “Cayó Lehder: Extraditado a E.U.,” *El Espectador*, 5 de febrero de 1987.

<sup>84</sup> *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” minuto 08:21–09:30. Véase más sobre los *jueces sin rostro* en Ricardo Rivero Ortega y Nicolás Rodríguez García, “Jueces sin rostro: una crítica desde las garantías del estado de Derecho colombiano,” *Revista del poder judicial* 59 (2000): 13–72.

<sup>85</sup> *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 35:35.

<sup>86</sup> Elisa es interpretada por Ana de la Reguera, Pablo Escobar es interpretado por Wagner Moura.

tarde a la oficina de la embajadora de Estados Unidos, donde ya ve las noticias de la Toma en la televisión. Con su voz en *off* explica a la audiencia que el M-19 se tomó el Palacio de Justicia con financiación de Pablo Escobar y que se tomaron cien personas como rehenes.<sup>87</sup> La audiencia ya conoce el M-19 desde el segundo episodio<sup>88</sup> de *Narcos*, donde se refiere al robo de la Espada de Simón Bolívar en abril de 1974 para presentar a los secuestradores a Martha Ochoa.

La voz en *off* de Stephen Murphy explica a la audiencia, junto con música de rock latinoamericano, de qué se trata el grupo guerrillero: “El M-19 era una guerrilla comunista de universitarios e intelectuales que habían leído demasiado a Marx”<sup>89</sup> bajo el comando de Iván “el Terrible” Torres, que está inspirado en el líder guerrillero Iván Marino Ospina. Las demandas del grupo guerrillero en la Toma del Palacio de Justicia eran “la distribución de la riqueza y el fin de la tiranía. Pero era todo pura mierda.”<sup>90</sup> En el capítulo se incorpora material de archivo que viene de noticias de esta época. Antes de que Murphy hablara sobre el contraataque del Ejército se ven los tanques y el helicóptero. Una audiencia que no conoce el contexto colombiano podría pensar que los tanques corresponden al M-19, ya que la serie no diferencia, en el material visual que viene de archivos, entre los guerrilleros y el Ejército. La razón por la que se tomaron el Palacio fue supuestamente la quema de las más de seiscientas mil páginas de evidencia contra Escobar,<sup>91</sup> que los dos agentes de la DEA Stephen Murphy y Javier Peña habían revisado antes, por lo cual la audiencia ya puede reconocer fácilmente la sala donde se encuentran los expedientes. Murphy explica con un tono sarcástico: “En Estados Unidos, la mafia hace desaparecer testigos para que no declaren en la corte. En Colombia, Pablo Escobar hizo desaparecer a la corte entera.”<sup>92</sup> Destruir una Corte entera es otra prueba de que Colombia es un país casi surrealista, donde el realismo mágico es “tan extraño que resulta increíble” y por lo cual no sorprende que “el realismo mágico nació en Colombia”, como ya se muestra al inicio del primer episodio de la serie.<sup>93</sup> Las

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Conny Murphy es interpretada por Joanna Christie. Stephen Murphy es interpretado por Boyd Holbrook.

87 *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 37:36–46.

88 *Narcos*, episodio 2, “The Sword of Simón Bolívar,” dirigido por José Padilha, libreto por Cris Brancato, primera emisión el 28 de agosto de 2015, en Netflix

89 *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 9:45–49.

90 *Ibid.*, 37:46–53.

91 *Ibid.*, 38:09.

92 *Ibid.*, 38:22–33.

93 Juliana Martínez, “Netflix ‘Narcos’: ‘Cultural Weight’ or Cultural Maquila?” *Insight Crime*, 27 de noviembre de 2015, <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/netflix-narcos-cultural-weight-or-cultural-maquila/>.

noticias en inglés que Murphy ve dicen: “El fuego que causaron los guerrilleros fue alimentado por las balas de cañón que explotaron dentro.”<sup>94</sup> Esto realimenta la narración según la cual el incendio de los expedientes fue la única razón por la cual el M-19 se tomó el Palacio. La pregunta sobre los incendios es algo que no se puede responder fácilmente. Como encontró la Comisión de la Verdad, hubo tres incendios, cuya responsabilidad se explica de la siguiente manera:

[...] el Ejército pudo tener responsabilidad en el tercer incendio del Palacio de Justicia, el devastador, por la falta de previsión durante la operación militar sobre los efectos del armamento utilizado, así como por la persistencia en el uso de ciertas armas, a pesar de la evidencia del efecto nefasto que produjo la conflagración en el Palacio.<sup>95</sup>

Dado que gran parte de la trama de este episodio parece haberse basado en el capítulo del libro de Virginia Vallejo, se presume que los guionistas optaron por omitir la reflexión de Vallejo sobre el papel del Ejército en los hechos, especialmente al mencionar las pruebas relacionadas con violaciones de derechos humanos que se encontraban en el Palacio de Justicia.<sup>96</sup> Por tener expedientes abiertos de estos casos, puede que los militares hayan tenido también un interés en quemar las pruebas con la Retoma del Palacio, como también lo afirmó en una entrevista Helena Uran, hija del magistrado desaparecido y asesinado Carlos Uran.<sup>97</sup> En el relato de *Narcos* el rol que jugó el Ejército en la Retoma del Palacio es secundario. Cabe destacar que Estados Unidos apoyaba las decisiones de Belisario Betancur y, por consiguiente de las Fuerzas Armadas,<sup>98</sup> lo cual se refleja en la producción estadounidense. Esta representación puede tener graves consecuencias en la audiencia, ya que el M-19 y Pablo Escobar aparecen como los únicos responsables de esta masacre. La idea de tomar el Palacio de Justicia supuestamente provenía de Pablo Escobar. Esta versión también fue tratada de establecer a nivel institucional para disipar las sospechas de que los militares desempeñaron un papel protagónico en los acontecimientos. A la luz de los hechos históricos, esa versión resulta simplista, como describe Helena Uran en su libro:

Como en un cuento infantil moralista la versión era que un hombre muy malo había contratado a unos bandidos para que quemaran unos papeles para evitar que los procesos que lo comprometían avanzaran, poner en jaque a la institución y tomarse el poder; y como ellos eran los bandidos no solo habían quemado y destrozado el edificio, sino también asesinado

<sup>94</sup> *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 38:36–42.

<sup>95</sup> Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 258.

<sup>96</sup> Vallejo, *Amando*, 248–9.

<sup>97</sup> Helena Uran Bidegain, entrevistada por la autora, febrero 10 de 2022, Miami, EEUU.

<sup>98</sup> Carrigan, *Palace*, 267.

a casi cien personas. Los que no aparecían eran simplemente colaboradores de esa guerrilla. El Ejército en cambio había rescatado a cientos y sobre todo había salvado la democracia.<sup>99</sup>

Reforzando la versión de que el incendio fue por causa de la guerrilla, la trama de *Narcos* ayuda a pintar a Pablo Escobar como el villano, como si fuera él la persona responsable por todas las víctimas de Colombia. Esta narrativa conviene a la perspectiva de los agentes norteamericanos que vinieron a “salvar” a Colombia de Pablo Escobar, que están “profundamente arraigad[os] en la construcción del heroísmo occidental.”<sup>100</sup> Helena Uran Bidegain también hace referencia a la serie en su libro, cuando dice:

Pero hoy, treinta y cinco años después, la versión oficial de la quema de los archivos del Palacio por orden de Escobar, para lo cual contrató al M-19 y así desaparecer las pruebas de su extradición, es una verdad que se repite como un sonsonete y que nutre hasta series populares de Netflix, que narran con cierta épica vergonzosa la vida de infames narcotraficantes. La versión de quienes estuvieron encerrados dentro del Palacio de Justicia[,] en cambio[,] es otra.<sup>101</sup>

Así como Pablo Escobar se presenta como el villano y, sobre todo, Stephen Murphy, como el agente bueno que podría haberlo evitado, la representación del M-19 en *Narcos* también es muy estereotipada. Murphy desestima sus afirmaciones en el momento de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia como tonterías, sin mostrar el contexto más grande sobre los fallidos acuerdos de paz entre la guerrilla y el Estado. Es posible que esta información se haya considerado demasiado detallada para la audiencia y hubiera afectado el ritmo de la serie. En cuanto a la apariencia y los hábitos, los miembros del M-19 son representados de una manera ingenua, siguiendo simplemente las órdenes de Pablo Escobar.<sup>102</sup> Después de la Toma, Escobar entrega una maleta llena de dólares a Iván y le devuelve la espada de Simón Bolívar como un símbolo de liberación del pueblo<sup>103</sup> antes de que sus sicarios lo maten a él y a sus compañeros guerrilleros.

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99 Uran Bidegain, *Mi vida*, 94

100 Martínez, “Netflix.”

101 Uran Bidegain, *Mi vida*, 58.

102 Carrigan dice sobre el imaginario sobre el M-19 que combinaba “dos imágenes queridas por las sociedades latinas: el macho rebelde y el playboy, el tejedor de fantasías exóticas”, algo que se ve reflejado de manera visual en la producción *Narcos* [traducido por la autora: “two images beloved by Latin societies: the macho rebel and the playboy, the weaver of exotic fantasies”, véase Carrigan, *Palace*, 34.

103 Iván había dado la espada a Pablo Escobar en el segundo episodio “La espada de Simón Bolívar”.

Según la trama, el M-19 iba a recibir el dinero solo después de la Toma que les cuesta la vida. Esto afirma la ingenuidad por parte de los guerrilleros en *Narcos*. Siendo una coproducción estadounidense, la perspectiva de Colombia siempre es a través de los dos agentes de la DEA. Por ende, una mirada de los Estados Unidos a una guerrilla, en el contexto de la Guerra Fría, reproduce estereotipos y prejuicios de revolucionarios comunistas. Como subraya Pérez Moran, la diferencia entre *Narcos* y la telenovela colombiana *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*: “[*Narcos* es] la lectura local en forma de parábola como discurso propio, y la apropiación de una historia ajena a modo de fábula colonial, de enseñanza global.”<sup>104</sup> Esto explica por qué Murphy habla del M-19 de manera sarcástica, siendo un grupo estudiantil con demasiada lectura de Marx, cuyas declaraciones al tomarse el Palacio eran la redistribución de riqueza. En la presentación del M-19 no se usa material de archivo, sino es siempre una recreación de los hechos.<sup>105</sup>

Respecto a la representación de las víctimas de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia es notorio que en *Narcos* no se nombra ninguna. Las víctimas son solo cifras imprecisas. Cuando Murphy dice: “El Ejército atacó y murieron decenas de personas en la matanza, entre ellas, la mitad de los jueces de la Corte Suprema. La mayoría de los M-19 murieron”<sup>106</sup> no se nombra la responsabilidad del Ejército, ni se refiere a la desaparición de personas, ni a las víctimas que no eran magistrados, como por ejemplo los empleados de la cafetería. Como se muestra en la placa conmemorativa que solamente hace referencia a la muerte de trece magistrados, *Narcos* reproduce esta clasificación de las víctimas “más importantes”.<sup>107</sup>

Por la clave melodramática y la identificación con los personajes dentro de una serie o telenovela se puede generar una conexión entre la audiencia y la trama que puede afectar diferentes niveles de emociones. Como explica Allison Landsberg analizando sobre todo películas de cine, existe una diferencia entre la creación de

**104** Ernesto Pérez Morán, “Parábola paisa, fábula estadounidense: taxonomía de los personajes en *Narcos* y *El patrón del mal*” *kepes* 16, no. 20 (2019): 94, <https://doi.org/10.17151/kepes.2019.16.20.4>.

**105** También se presenta la FARC-EP en *Narcos*, tercera temporada, episodio 8, “Convivir,” dirigido por Fernando Coimbra, libreto por Andy Black, primera emisión 1 de septiembre de 2017 en Netflix, Min 16.51. Se usa material de archivo para mostrar la FARC-EP en la selva y los secuestros. Por qué en la presentación de la FARC no se usan imágenes estereotipadas, no lo podemos decir con claridad. Es probable que por las negociaciones que se hicieron antes de la firma de paz entre la FARC-EP y el gobierno en 2016, los productores trataron de presentar a los miembros de la FARC-EP de una manera más objetiva.

**106** *Narcos*, episodio 4, “The Palace in Flames,” 37:53–38:02.

**107** Helena Uran habla de una clasificación de las víctimas que perdieron a sus seres queridos, donde los familiares de los y las empleados de la cafetería han tenido una lucha incluso más difícil, para tener un reconocimiento de su dolor y pérdida (véase Uran Bidegain, *Mi vida*, 97–8). Por su estrato social también eran más propensos a ser desaparecidos (Umaña Hernández, *El caso*, 18).

simpatía y empatía que se puede establecer a través de una narración audiovisual. La simpatía es generada por la identificación con el dolor del otro, que sugiere una “igualdad” entre el simpatizante y su objeto, también si más bien se trata de una proyección de los propios sentimientos en el otro. La simpatía puede tener una connotación colonial e imperialista, por limitar el espacio a las emociones del otro y la creación de jerarquías, ya que el simpatizante reafirma su superioridad y desprecia al otro.

La empatía, al contrario, opera en el nivel cognitivo, como lo explica la autora, se trata de “la conexión que se siente cuando se empatiza con otra persona, no es simplemente un sentimiento de conexión emocional, sino un sentimiento de conexión cognitiva, intelectual: una aceptación intelectual de las circunstancias de la otra persona.”<sup>108</sup> Se trata de una “identificación cinematográfica, que ayuda a los y las espectadores a adquirir memorias protésicas.”<sup>109</sup> Es una posibilidad de ver el mundo desde otra perspectiva que no tiene que ser de la misma posición social de la audiencia. En el capítulo correspondiente, la audiencia no tiene tiempo de identificarse con las víctimas de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio, lo que no permite desarrollar ni simpatía ni empatía en términos de Landsberg.<sup>110</sup>

Al repetir la imagen de los tanques que atacan al Palacio de Justicia, una institución que simboliza la democracia del país, la violencia se convierte en un espectáculo que relega la vida de las víctimas que se encontraban dentro. La reproducción de estas imágenes por parte de los medios y la “espectacularidad [...] también sirvió para borrar huellas y ocultar el horror de la masacre y del desdén por la vida”.<sup>111</sup> Es precisamente esta espectacularidad la que beneficia a las producciones de entretenimiento al incorporarla en la trama, ya que no requiere de mucha más ficción.

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**108** Landsberg, “Prosthetic,” 147. “The connection one feels when one empathises with another is not simply a feeling of emotional connection, but a feeling of cognitive, intellectual connection – an intellectual coming-to-terms with the other’s circumstances.”, traducción hecha por la autora.

**109** *Ibid*, 154. “Similarly, cinematic identification can enable viewers to acquire prosthetic memories”, traducción hecha por la autora.

**110** Sin embargo, se puede detectar el tono colonial del que habla Landsberg en la representación del M-19 como se ha mencionado anteriormente.

**111** Rosenberg, “Reparación,” 337.

## La perspectiva colombiana de los hechos – la telenovela *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*

En la producción colombiana *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* se cambió el nombre del M-19 a MR-20, posiblemente por razones legales para evitar demandas contra la productora. Sin embargo, para una audiencia colombiana resulta fácil reconocer que se trata del M-19. El contexto nacional tiene un peso significativo en la trama, como se muestran en el episodio anterior donde se presentan las negociaciones fallidas entre el grupo guerrillero y el gobierno.<sup>112</sup> El líder guerrillero, representado por el personaje Fabrizzio Romero, que encarna a Iván Marino Ospina, conversa con Pablo Escobar en Cali sobre sus planes de llevar al presidente ante la Corte Suprema de Justicia para juzgarlo por las negociaciones relacionadas con la extradición. Se trata de una acción que requiere ayuda debido a su complejidad, por lo que acude a Pablo Escobar. Posteriormente, el personaje habla con otro compañero frente a las maletas llenas con los dos millones de dólares, indicando que la Toma del Palacio de Justicia beneficia tanto a Escobar para “quemar unos archivos”, como a la guerrilla, para obtener fondos adicionales para la operación.<sup>113</sup> El Ejército mata a Fabrizzio Romero el 28 de agosto de 1985, que coincide con la fecha de la verdadera muerte de Iván Marino Ospina, mientras su compañero se junta con Gonzalo Gaviria, quien representa el primo de Pablo Escobar, Gustavo Gaviria en la vida real, para recibir un camión lleno de cargamento y armas. Gonzalo, que nunca ha sido un simpatizante de la guerrilla, está preocupado por haber perdido el dinero. Sin embargo, Pablo defiende la operación de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia se llevará a cabo de todas formas y les beneficiará, ya que sin jueces no habrá procesos legales en su contra.<sup>114</sup>

La estructura de la narración sugiere que Pablo Escobar ayudó a la guerrilla con dinero y armas, pero que la idea de tomarse el Palacio de Justicia fue exclusivamente de Iván Ospina, quién finalmente convence a Escobar. Sin embargo, Escobar avisa telefónicamente, de manera anónima, a un coronel del Ejército, advirtiéndolo sobre un próximo ataque al Palacio de Justicia. Según la Comisión de la Verdad, el Ejército recibió una llamada anónima sobre una posible toma el 16 de octubre de 1985, que condujo a una operación militar donde se descubrieron los planes

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<sup>112</sup> *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, episodio 26, “Prueba reina definiría la extradición,” dirigido por Carlos Moreno y Laura Mora, libreto por Juan Camilo Ferrand, primera emisión el 5 de julio de 2012 en Caracol Televisión. Andrés Parra interpreta a Pablo Escobar, Fabrizzio Romero es interpretado por Hernán Cabiativa y Christian Tappan interpreta a Gonzalo Gaviria.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:43–12:47 y 13:50–14:20.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 15:34–19:26.



de la Toma.<sup>115</sup> El hecho de que Pablo Escobar haya advertido al Ejército puede considerarse una licencia narrativa por parte de los productores, destacando así la maldad de su personalidad en sus negocios. Aunque no hay pruebas de la colaboración entre Pablo Escobar y el M-19, la telenovela retoma esa narrativa y la integra al contexto nacional histórico. Conociendo los acontecimientos previos y sobre todo los acuerdos de paz fallidos, se comprende por qué la guerrilla decide tomar el Palacio de Justicia. En contraste con *Narcos*, los guerrilleros se representan como individuos fuertes con sus propias ideas, que no son explotados por Pablo Escobar. Aunque el capo se aprovecha de la idea de la guerrilla, no es él quien la concibe.

La telenovela hace referencia a la toma de rehenes por parte del MR-20, la entrada de helicópteros, la reunión del presidente con los ministros, la entrada de los tanques, la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia, el discurso de Luis Carlos Galán en contra de la entrada de los helicópteros<sup>116</sup> (que le hace a Pablo Escobar anotar su nombre en la libreta donde va enlistando los nombres de las personas que tienen que morir), los incendios dentro del Palacio de Justicia y el golpe final con metrallas y rockets por parte del Ejército. La escena cierra con el discurso del presidente Betancur donde asume toda la responsabilidad por la Retoma.<sup>117</sup> En la producción, se emplea material de archivo sonoro y audiovisual como un puente entre la realidad y la ficción. Es a través de este material que los personajes de la telenovela cobran vida, y a su vez, se entrelazan con la realidad.

En *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* la audiencia puede seguir los acontecimientos en dos niveles. Por un lado, la telenovela ofrece una visión de lo que ocurre dentro del palacio, como el intento del presidente de la Corte Suprema Alfonso Reyes Echandía por detener la violencia cuando se transmite por radio su pedido de “que cese el fuego”.<sup>118</sup> Por otro lado, el público puede seguir a través de los ojos de la periodista Niki Polanía, cómo comparte lo incomprensible con Guillermo Cano y *El Espectador*, cuando le cuenta de la entrada de los tanques al edificio.<sup>119</sup>

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115 Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 97.

116 Esto es concebible, ya que Luis Carlos Galán y Enrique Parejo se juntaron y trataron de oponerse a la decisión de Belisario Betancur de entrar con tanques, véase Carrigan, *Palace*, 187–90.

117 En la noche del 07 de noviembre Belisario Betancur se dirige a la nación, asumiendo toda la responsabilidad “para bien o para mal”, véase Humberto Vélez Ramírez y Adolfo L. Atehortúa Cruz, *Militares, guerrilleros y autoridad civil: El caso del Palacio de justicia* (Santiago de Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1993), 210–1.

118 *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, episodio 27, “El MR-20 ejecuta la Toma del Palacio de Justicia”, minuto 08:43–57. Después de varios intentos fallidos de hablar con el presidente por teléfono, Reyes Echandía logra transmitir el pedido de tregua por radio, véase Carrigan, *Palace*, 142.

119 *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, episodio 27, “El MR-20 ejecuta la Toma del Palacio de Justicia”, 05:01–34. Susana Torres interpreta a la periodista del diario *El Espectador* Niki Polanía. En la

Después de los acontecimientos, la audiencia puede ver cómo la periodista escribe el artículo contando lo que ocurrió. En la trama se muestra más material de archivo, como la búsqueda que hacen las familias de sus seres queridos, haciendo referencia tanto a los desaparecidos como a las víctimas de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio.<sup>120</sup> A medida que se muestra la desesperada situación en el interior del palacio, la audiencia puede empatizar con las víctimas gracias a la información previa que han recibido a través de la trama de la telenovela, lo que promueve una “conexión cognitiva” entre el público y los personajes, siguiendo la definición de Landsberg. También se muestra la impotencia por parte de la guerrilla, que no tiene cómo responder a la respuesta brutal del Ejército, que al final cuesta tantas vidas. Por ende, la representación de las víctimas es digna, mostrando la responsabilidad en los dos lados, la guerrilla por tomarse el Palacio y el Ejército por su respuesta violenta.<sup>121</sup>

## La perspectiva de las personas involucradas en los hechos – La serie *El General Naranjo*

Los personajes involucrados en la Toma y la Retoma en la trama de la serie *El General Naranjo* son, por el lado de los guerrilleros y criminales, miembros del G-31, como se llama el M-19 en la serie, Pablo Escobar y el sicario llamado Liso. Liso sirve como antagonista del héroe Óscar Naranjo. El personaje está basado en diferentes personas para que pueda ser adversario por varias temporadas. Liso empezó como delincuente común, robando carros, hasta convertirse en un sicario y narcotraficante que hace negocios con el Cartel de Cali, el Cartel de Medellín e incluso la DEA, mientras Óscar Naranjo asciende en la carrera profesional de policía hasta llegar a ser director de la Policía Nacional de Colombia. Durante la trama Liso se quiere vengar por diferentes razones de su enemigo Naranjo. Por el lado estatal está involucrado el Ejército y el coronel Sepúlveda, el coronel Hurtado y la Policía. Por el lado de la policía, se trata en especial de Óscar Naranjo, su mejor amigo Aníbal Talero y otros compañeros y compañeras de la policía. Un rol importante juega el

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vida real, existe una periodista llamada María Jimena Duzán quien también comparte recuerdos parecidos en su podcast *A Fondo Con María Jimena Duzán* en el episodio *El día que la justicia agonizó: memorias de la toma y retoma del Palacio de Justicia* en noviembre de 2021. También dio su testimonio en frente de la Comisión de la Verdad, véase Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 150.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 19:48–21:26. Para más información de las protestas véase Carrigan, *Palace*, 228.

<sup>121</sup> Esta es también la conclusión de la Comisión de la Verdad sobre las responsabilidades, véase Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final*, 298–408.

presidente de la Corte Suprema, el magistrado Alfonso Reyes Echandía y las esposas de Naranjo, Claudia y la esposa de Talero, Esperanza.<sup>122</sup>

En la serie se muestran diferentes acontecimientos nacionales que anteceden a la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia, como el asesinato de Iván Marino Ospina, las amenazas contra los jueces por debatir la extradición y el esfuerzo fracasado de Óscar Naranjo por mejorar la seguridad del Palacio de Justicia.<sup>123</sup> El villano que actúa estratégicamente es el Liso, quien le cuenta a Pablo Escobar de la posibilidad de evitar la extradición planteando la posibilidad, sin entrar en muchos detalles, de un mundo sin jueces.<sup>124</sup> El plan de tomarse el Palacio de Justicia para presionar al gobierno a entrar en negociaciones con la guerrilla viene de Álvaro Fayad, quien se reúne con Pablo Escobar, donde el capo le ofrece dinero y contactos dentro de la política. El Liso se infiltra en la misión de la guerrilla y trabaja también en las intercepciones a los jueces cuando su camino se cruza con el de Naranjo en el Palacio. La audiencia ve cómo el Liso llama al coronel Sepúlveda de forma anónima para decirle que el G-31 está organizando un golpe grande. Después se lo dirá personalmente.<sup>125</sup> El Liso le da la idea al coronel Sepúlveda de usar la Toma del Palacio de Justicia como una ocasión de terminar una vez con toda la guerrilla. El Liso y el coronel tienen el mismo objetivo, como dicen: “no queremos que la izquierda se tome el país”. El coronel no está de acuerdo y no se quiere convertir en un asesino. El Liso coincide con él, reconociendo que será difícil distinguir entre guerrilleros, abogados y civiles, pero le dice que no será culpa del Ejército si no de la guerrilla. El Liso subraya la importancia de defender las instituciones y cierra con la famosa frase “a defender la democracia, maestro”, que recuerda la frase verdadera “mantener la democracia, maestro” que usó el teniente coronel, comandante de la Escuela de Caballería Alfonso Plazas Vega en la noche del 6 de noviembre de 1985, cuando respondía a un periodista que le preguntó por la decisión de entrar por la fuerza al Palacio.<sup>126</sup> En esa escena el Liso predice todo lo que

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122 Pablo Escobar es interpretado por Federico Rivera, El Liso por Julián Román y Christian Meier interpreta a Óscar Naranjo. Coronel Sepúlveda es interpretado por Juan Carlos Messier y el coronel Hurtado por Rafael Martínez. Aníbal Talero es interpretado por Diego Cadavid. El magistrado Alfonso Reyes Echandía es interpretado por Julio Sánchez Coccaro. Las actrices Juliana Galvis y Viña Machado interpretan a Claudia Naranjo y la esposa de Talero, Esperanza. Rafael Zea interpreta a Álvaro Fayad en la serie.

123 Véase *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 10, 11 y 12 dirigido por Guillermo Mejía y Mónica Botero, libreto por Anita de Hoyos primera emisión el 24 de mayo de 2019, en Fox Telecolombia.

124 *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 9, 44:40.

125 *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 11, 33:20–58 y 41:48–43:45.

126 *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 11, 42:33–43:43 y EFE, “„Aquí defendiendo la democracia, maestro“: la frase que marcó al coronel Plazas: „¡Aquí, defendiendo la democracia, maestro!“ Esa

ocurrirá. El guion se apoyó en lo que ha pasado en la vida real para ficcionalizar este encuentro entre el Liso y el coronel. La representación de los hechos se interpreta desde el presente. La frase podrá traer recuerdos a la audiencia colombiana, pero es usada de forma descontextualizada para que sea apropiada por Liso para subrayar su maldad. En *El General Naranjo* la idea de tomarse el Palacio de Justicia es de la guerrilla, pero la ejecución del plan y las instrucciones para el Ejército son coordinadas por El Liso, quien trabaja con los narcotraficantes, con los guerrilleros y advierte a los militares.

Respecto a la conexión que hubo supuestamente entre los narcotraficantes y los guerrilleros, en *El General Naranjo* se puede ver cómo Pablo Escobar le cuenta a su primo la idea de incendiar todo el palacio para eliminar las pruebas de extradición, de las cuales se preocupará El Liso.<sup>127</sup> Por el otro lado, los militares se preparan para los planes y organizan un posible contraataque, que les servirá para acabar de una vez con la guerrilla, porque “si no aprovechamos esta oportunidad, vamos a tener que aguantar a la guerrilla por 100 años más”.<sup>128</sup> Todo culmina con la ocupación del Palacio de Justicia en el último episodio de la primera temporada. Después de una reunión con el magistrado Reyes Echandía, Naranjo ve dos personas de las cuales solo después se da cuenta que son guerrilleros. En el parqueadero encuentra a otras más muertas por disparos, lo que le hace volver al Palacio.<sup>129</sup> De forma similar a Stephen Murphy en *Narcos*, Óscar Naranjo podría haber evitado el sangriento acontecimiento si no hubiera tenido el viento en contra dentro de las instituciones gubernamentales en relación con los planes de seguridad. Óscar Naranjo está consciente de la responsabilidad tanto de la guerrilla como de Pablo Escobar en la Toma, así como del papel del Liso y del Ejército en la Retoma. En los siguientes episodios, Naranjo luchará por esclarecer los hechos. Debido a la narración detallada sobre los sucesos del 6 y 7 de noviembre que propone la serie, las dinámicas de responsabilidad tienen matices y no se centra solamente en la conexión entre Pablo Escobar y el grupo guerrillero.

La trama que representa la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en *El General Naranjo* se puede interpretar en dos niveles. Por un lado, la historia de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia y la preparación de la Retoma se muestra al final de la primera y al inicio de la segunda temporada. Al mismo tiempo, la trama apela a

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frase marcó la vida del coronel Luis Alfonso Plazas Vega ante los colombianos, hoy absuelto por la retoma del Palacio de Justicia,” Blu Radio, 17 de diciembre de 2015, <https://www.bluradio.com/nacion/aqui-defendiendo-la-democracia-maestro-la-frase-que-marco-al-coronel-plazas>.

<sup>127</sup> *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 12, 2:37–57.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:53–58

<sup>129</sup> Como lo muestra la serie, es cercano a las memorias de Óscar Naranjo que describe en su libro que fue la base para la serie, véase Sánchez Cristo, *El cazador*, 46–59.

las emociones y el melodrama y cuenta la historia personal de Óscar Naranjo, que culmina en la muerte de su mejor amigo el teniente Aníbal Talero tras lograr entrar al Palacio a través de un helicóptero al final de la primera temporada. Dentro del Palacio, es dado de baja por dos guerrilleros, lo que es cierto.<sup>130</sup> Las víctimas que sufren por el Palacio de Justicia en *El General Naranjo* son de diferentes lados. Los militares le disparan a un compañero de Naranjo, algo que ha pasado también en la vida de Óscar Naranjo.<sup>131</sup> También el propio Naranjo sufre por la violencia del Ejército cuando lo confunden con un guerrillero.<sup>132</sup> Esto pasa mientras la esposa de Aníbal Talero, Esperanza, acompaña a la esposa de Óscar Naranjo, Claudia, al hospital porque está a punto de dar a luz. Esperanza ve la Toma del Palacio por la televisión y sabe que su marido corre peligro. La culminación de la temporada con la Toma del Palacio y el nacimiento de la primera hija de Naranjo, hace que quede un sabor amargo para el protagonista de la serie. Por la extensa narración y las diferentes reuniones que hubo entre Reyes Echandía y Naranjo la audiencia está informada sobre el magistrado. Debido a que también Naranjo reconoce entre las víctimas a una empleada del Palacio, la serie muestra que las víctimas dentro del Palacio de Justicia correspondían a diferentes clases sociales y que la identificación se vuelve muy difícil por las heridas y quemaduras.<sup>133</sup> *El General Naranjo* permite a la audiencia ver los hechos desde diferentes ángulos, siendo capaz de empatizar con los diferentes personajes en el sentido de Landsberg.

Algo que no forma parte de la trama es la desaparición de varias personas. Sin embargo, la primera temporada termina después de la muerte de Aníbal Talero con una explicación a través de la incorporación de material de archivo, que dice sobre paneles de texto: “Más de 350 rehenes. Casi 100 muertos. Muchos de ellos sin identificar. 12 desaparecidos.”<sup>134</sup> La serie trata de hacer una representación fiel de la realidad, ofreciendo los números correctos de las víctimas a la audiencia.

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**130** *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 13, 44:14 y Carrigan, *Palace*, 158–9.

**131** En la serie, se trata del compañero Andrade (interpretado por Carlos Manuel Vesga Sánchez). Véase Sánchez Cristo, *El cazador*, 16.

**132** *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 13, 26:12. Algo que ha pasado en la realidad con varias personas según el Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad, véase Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe final*, 144.

**133** *El General Naranjo*, temporada 2, episodio 1, dirigido por Guillermo Mejía y Mónica Botero, libretto por Anita de Hoyos, primera emisión el 15 de noviembre de 2019, en Fox Telecolombia, minuto 31:37–47 y Carrigan, *Palace*, 171.

**134** *El General Naranjo*, temporada 1, episodio 13, a partir de 45:11.

## Explorando el impacto de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en la audiencia a través de Twitter

Dado que las dos series y la telenovela presentan diferentes perspectivas sobre los hechos del 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985, a continuación se reflexionará sobre la repercusión de estas narrativas en la audiencia usando la red social Twitter (renombrada como X desde julio de 2023) como fuente de recepción. Interacciones en la red, como tweets que se publican en el momento de la emisión de una producción, un fenómeno llamado *second screening*,<sup>135</sup> pueden dar pistas sobre los temas que conmueven a la audiencia. La recepción del contenido se comparte en un espacio de interacción social en el mundo digital. El internet sirve como espacio mediático transregional donde las comunidades (virtuales) se encuentran a través de hashtags<sup>136</sup> (p.ej. #ElGeneralNaranjo) y palabras claves (p.ej. Palacio de Justicia), lo que construye un discurso colectivo y da lugar a debates en distintas plataformas. Este fenómeno servirá como entrada a entender cómo se recibían los diferentes episodios que mostraron la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia. Con métodos digitales se recolectaron datos de Twitter que hacían referencia en castellano a una de las tres producciones entre el momento de la primera emisión o referencia a la producción en Twitter hasta el 31 de julio de 2021, que fue la fecha límite para la extracción de datos en el marco del proyecto GUMELAB.<sup>137</sup> En particular las producciones *Narcos* y Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal han generado una gran cantidad de Tweets desde su primera emisión hasta hoy.

Viendo el caso de estudio *Narcos*, no se encuentran tweets que hagan referencia al episodio del Palacio de Justicia. Esto subraya la sensación que se obtuvo en las entrevistas, que los acontecimientos del 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985 son uno de muchos hechos mostrados en *Narcos* y que no siempre logra establecerse en la

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135 Véase más en Anjali Midha y Judit Nagy, “The Value of Earned Audiences: How Social Interactions Amplify TV Impact,” *Journal of Advertising Research* 54, no. 4 (2014): 448–53, <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-54-4-448-453>; Sherryl Wilson, “In the Living Room: Second Screens and TV Audiences,” *Television & New Media* 17, no. 2 (2016): 174–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476415593348>.

136 Renée Pastel, “Hashtag Television: On-Screen Branding, Second-Screen Viewing, and Emerging Modes of Television Audience Interaction,” en *#identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation*, coords. Keith Feldman y Abigail de Kosnik (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 168.

137 Esto corresponde al 28 de agosto de 2015 para la serie *Narcos*, el 11 de julio de 2009 y el 18 de octubre de 2018 para *El General Naranjo*. La extracción de datos fue posible gracias a la cooperación con el equipo del Instituto de Física y del Grupo de Física Teórica y Matemática Aplicada de la Universidad de Antioquia de Medellín.

memoria de la audiencia, a no ser que haya una conexión personal o ciertos conocimientos previos de los hechos. La corta duración del hecho juega un rol significativo, ya que la audiencia no tiene tiempo de elaborar emociones y conexiones profundas con los personajes en la secuencia mencionada. Sin embargo, es necesario reflexionar sobre los impactos que la narración de los hechos del 6 y 7 de noviembre en *Narcos* pueden tener en la audiencia, incluso si no se ve reflejado en las entrevistas y en los tweets.

En cambio, con relación a la telenovela *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* se encuentran algunos tweets esporádicos que hacen referencia a la Toma del Palacio de Justicia. Por un lado, se felicita la representación de los hechos, como se puede leer en el tweet “#Escobar excelente las escenas del palacio de justicia”.<sup>138</sup> También se expresa la conmoción con palabras como “#shocked” o “#QueLocura”.<sup>139</sup> A pesar de que no siempre es posible obtener la locación de las y los usuarios de Twitter, se ve que la conmoción evocada por el episodio respectivo no se limita solo a espectadores y espectadoras de Colombia.<sup>140</sup> En algunos casos, las y los espectadores conectan los hechos con sus propios recuerdos.<sup>141</sup> Por la narración y el uso del material de archivo en *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* para la audiencia fue posible conectar la trama ficcional con la vida personal y ampliar sus conocimientos. La narración de una supuesta financiación de la operación por parte de Pablo Escobar queda muy presente en la memoria colombiana.<sup>142</sup> La discusión en la red social se inició con el impacto visual de la telenovela y sigue hasta hoy, como se podía ver en junio de este año cuando el presidente actual Gustavo Petro, un antiguo guerrillero del M-19, planteó prohibir producciones sobre Pablo Escobar

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**138** Emilio Escobar (@IndieBoy07), “#Escobar excelente las escenas del palacio de justicia,” Twitter, 07 de julio de 2012, <https://twitter.com/IndieBoy07/status/221428913417625600>.

**139** Balmore (@Balmoremusic), “Viendo el episodio de la toma del Palacio de Justicia de Colombia en 1985 #shocked #Escobar,” Twitter, 20 de septiembre de 2012, <https://twitter.com/Balmoremusic/status/248662190943506432>; Ariel Gustavo (@arielgustavo4) “La toma del Palacio de Justicia #Escobar #QueLocura,” Twitter, 13 de enero de 2012, <https://twitter.com/arielgustavo4/status/422549367619608576>.

**140** El usuario @Balmoremusic escribió el Tweet desde Caracas, Venezuela.

**141** JP Gaitán (@JosePabloGaitan), “Yo era muy niño cuando el m19 asociado a #escobar quemó el palacio @navarrowsloff puede instruirnos + sobre ese pasado asqueroso d la patria,” Twitter, 29 de diciembre de 2012, <https://twitter.com/JosePabloGaitan/status/285141259746689025>.

**142** RonaldRuizPrieto (@prieto\_ruiz), “@JuanpTello A @petrogustavo lo torturó #Escobar con 1 millón de dólares para financiar holocausto del Palacio de Justicia. Pobre víctima!,” Twitter, 8 de noviembre de 2014, [https://twitter.com/prieto\\_ruiz/status/530887213202948096](https://twitter.com/prieto_ruiz/status/530887213202948096). El último usuario autodeclaró su posición política de derecha y hace hincapié en su perfil, que Gustavo Petro no es su presidente.

para el bien del país. Las y los usuarios protestaron inmediato con sus comentarios, temiendo que así se ocultará la conexión entre el M-19 y el Cartel de Medellín.<sup>143</sup>

Como se puede ver en Twitter, la representación de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en la serie *El General Naranjo* conmocionó a la audiencia. Esto se puede conectar con la extensa narración de los hechos en la trama. Con el hashtag #ElGeneralNaranjo fueron encontrados un total de 6254 de Tweets desde el 18 de octubre de 2018 hasta el 20 de julio de 2021. Por el alto número de Tweets el análisis solo se concentrará en Tweets que fueron escritos el 30 de abril de 2020 (67 Tweets) o el 01 de mayo de 2020 (211 Tweets). Las fechas corresponden a la transmisión de los capítulos respectivos por el canal televisión Caracol.<sup>144</sup> Muchos de estos tweets hacen referencia a los hechos. En la red social se discute la responsabilidad militar, como señala un usuario diciendo “Obviamente hay ficción en esta historia, pero lo que si es cierto es que el ejercito asesino a gente en el palacio y no precisamente guerrilleros.

#ElGeneralNaranjo”.<sup>145</sup> Otros usuarios también hicieron hincapié en la culpabilidad de los militares.<sup>146</sup> Sin embargo se critica también la ausencia de explicación sobre lo que “realmente pasó” con el incendio de los expedientes.<sup>147</sup> Por la confluencia

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**143** Véase Revista Semana (@Revista Semana), “El presidente Gustavo Petro, en una fuerte declaración, dijo que se deberían anular las producciones de TV alusivas al extinto capo del narcotráfico Pablo Escobar. Vea lo que dijo. semana.com,” 26 de junio de 2023, <https://twitter.com/RevistaSemana/status/1673374921031041024> y la respuesta ejemplar de Juan Camilo (@camilojuan76) “Tiene miedo a que el mundo conozca que el capo Pablo Escobar fue el que financió al m-19 en la toma del palacio de justicia,” Twitter, 26 de junio de 2023, <https://twitter.com/camilojuan76/status/1673427188740247552>.

**144** Caracol Televisión, “‘El General Naranjo’, gran estreno miércoles 15 a las 9:30 p.m.,” *Caracol Televisión; Portal Corporativo*. 8 de abril de 2020, <https://www.caracoltvcorporatvo.com/comunicados-de-lanzamiento/el-general-naranjo-gran-estreno-miercoles-15-las-930-pm>.

**145** cris agüero (@crisaguero\_1), Twitter, 30 de abril de 2020, [https://twitter.com/crisaguero\\_1/status/1255699402242625544](https://twitter.com/crisaguero_1/status/1255699402242625544). En adelante para presentar los tweets con veracidad, no se ha modificado su ortografía.

**146** Karen (@milaparceros), “Yo siempre diré que eso se volvió mierda fue por culpa del ejercito, kedecirles #ElGeneralNaranjo,” Twitter, 30 de abril de 2020, <https://twitter.com/milaparceros/status/1255698704054521856>; Eduardo Bayona (@elobo27), “#ElGeneralNaranjo nos muestra una realidad muy dura, el ejercito golpeando y asesinando civiles en la casa del florero,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/elobo27/status/1256095849723105280>.

**147** David Ricardo (@damayor11), “Pero cuenten bien quién quemó el Palacio de Justicia! Se lavaron las manos poniendo la bomba de El Liso #ElGeneralNaranjo,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/damayor11/status/1256061306228084736>. A continuación, otra usuaria responde. Nurit (@LindaEscorcía10), “A día de hoy, no sé sabe quién quitó la seguridad un día antes, no se sabe quién dio la orden, no se sabe porque no se negoció con el M-19, lo que si se sabe es que el proyectil con que mataron al Presidente de la Corte en su momento, no salió del M-19,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/LindaEscorcía10/status/1256061899961241601>.



entre la máxima tensión del personaje principal, el General Naranjo, y los acontecimientos históricos, se puede estimar que la representación en la serie de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia se queda en la memoria de la audiencia gracias a las emociones transmitidas. Los hechos, sean reales o ficcionalizados, causaron varias reacciones en Twitter en particular a raíz de la muerte de Talero,<sup>148</sup> que era un personaje clave en la trama. También se encuentran reacciones de elogio por el uso de material de archivo.<sup>149</sup> Las y los usuarios comentan sobre los límites entre la ficción y la realidad, opinan sobre los hechos reales y comparten sus emociones, como lo resume un usuario: “A pesar de no haber nacido en la época de la toma y retoma del Palacio de Justicia, no se por qué se me hace un nudo en la garganta al verlo en #ElGeneralNaranjo, Se me arruga el Corazón por Talero, por Reyes Echandia y las demás víctimas, ¿será Dolor de Patria qué llaman?”<sup>150</sup> Los libretistas de la serie son percibidos como historiadores,<sup>151</sup> muy seguramente por la forma detallada de contar los hechos logran transmitir los acontecimientos a la audiencia, independientemente de que hayan vivido o no la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia. Igualmente hubo voces que criticaban el heroísmo de Óscar Naranjo.<sup>152</sup> Al mismo tiempo, la representación de los hechos pudo ser una de las razones por las cuales algunas personas decidieron no ver la serie.<sup>153</sup>

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**148** Stellita (@ginafigueredop), “Que dolor ver la recreación de la toma del palacio de justicia en #ElGeneralNaranjo muy triste la muerte de Talero,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/ginafigueredop/status/1256055225766551556>.

**149** apenas vengo a opinar (@ApenasVengo), “Tremendo como concatenan las imágenes reales con lo recreado #ElGeneralNaranjo”, Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/ApenasVengo/status/1256050629753135104>.

**150** †Antonio Novoa† (@AntonioNovoa1), “A pesar de no haber nacido en la época de la toma y retoma del Palacio de Justicia, no se por qué se me hace un nudo en la garganta al verlo en #ElGeneralNaranjo, Se me arruga el Corazón por Talero, por Reyes Echandia y las demás víctimas, ¿será Dolor de Patria qué llaman?”, Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/AntonioNovoa1/status/1256067295958491137>; Paula (@gxldweex), “Siento que esta es la escena más fuerte de toda la novela #ElGeneralNaranjo”, Twitter, 30 de abril de 2020, <https://twitter.com/ferxxoparce/status/1255696246083334150>.

**151** Augusto Otero Herazo (@augustotero) “Los libretistas de #ElGeneralNaranjo resultaron ser los nuevos historiadores de la toma del Palacio de Justicia. @navarrowolff @PizarroMariaJo,” Twitter, 30 de abril de 2020, <https://twitter.com/augustotero/status/1255698231830417412>.

**152** Gio Diaz (@GioDiaz19) “@CaracolTV #ElGeneralNaranjo parece como si los escritores o libretistas no conocieran la historia. Quien dijo que en la casa del florero todo era tan tranquilo? La toma del 85 fue lo más trágico de la historia Colombiana. Quieren hacer ver a Naranjo como héroe nacional. #unafarza,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/GioDiaz19/status/1256051375827570689>.

**153** Márgara Libertad y Orden (@MargaraOrtiz66), “Nunca he visto (ni veré) la producción #ElGeneralNaranjo. Basta con haber tenido que vivir en la época del holocausto del Palacio de Justicia y conocer todo lo que pasó ahí, no da sino asco y vergüenza #DolorDePatria,” Twitter, 1 de mayo de 2020, <https://twitter.com/DIAPOLA/status/1256454494671507457>.

## Reflexiones finales

Se podría suponer que Colombia ha logrado un avance en términos de lidiar con el pasado considerando que hoy su presidente, Gustavo Petro, es un antiguo militante del M-19, quien se encontraba en la cárcel cuando ocurrió la Toma.<sup>154</sup> Sin embargo, la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia es una herida abierta en la historia colombiana. Esto se debe, por un lado, al hecho, que parece tener reminiscencias de ficción y surrealismo, de que se atacó tanto por parte de la guerrilla como del propio Ejército una institución democrática ubicada en el centro del país. Por otro lado, por la cantidad de víctimas y el desconcierto ante la brutalidad. Al mismo tiempo, debido a retrasos en la aclaración de los hechos, se dificulta la construcción de una memoria colectiva que respete a las víctimas. En ese sentido, las series y las telenovelas pueden llenar este vacío y establecer contra narrativas o permitir que los recuerdos de los hechos se vuelvan memorias colectivas. De igual modo, para las generaciones que no han vivido los hechos, las narrativas ficcionales que son basadas en hechos reales pueden funcionar como memorias protésicas, que les ayudan a aproximarse al pasado. La narración, los personajes y las emociones transmitidas juegan un rol clave en este proceso.

Ya que *Narcos* muestra una versión simplificada de los hechos, sin hacer referencia a la responsabilidad del Ejército en la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia y por ende reforzando la supuesta conexión entre el M-19 y Pablo Escobar, se puede suponer que la trama realimenta la verdad que quería establecer el gobierno, declinando toda culpa. Los agentes de la DEA, sobre todo Stephen Murphy y Pablo Escobar, se dejan clasificar fácilmente en buenos y malos, sin muchos matices, lo que hace que la audiencia no recuerde especialmente a la Toma del Palacio, como se podía ver en Twitter. Sin mencionar las víctimas, se deja de lado la perspectiva de las personas que vivieron los hechos sangrientos. Sin embargo, por el alcance global que ha tenido la serie, logró instalar las imágenes de la Toma del Palacio de Justicia en una audiencia mundial. Sin embargo, por la falta de contexto de los hechos presentados en *Narcos* se refuerza una presentación simplificada de los acontecimientos que no apela a la solidaridad ni a la empatía con las víctimas sino a la espectacularización de los hechos aprovechándose de la acción y la violencia. La voz en *off* de Stephen Murphy y el uso de material de archivo, que se usan como una contextualización y ampliación de la narración, hacen aparecer a *Narcos* como un “pseudocumental”.<sup>155</sup> Por ende, es muy probable que una audiencia,

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154 Echeverry y Hanssen, *Holocausto*, 192.

155 Janny Amaya Trujillo, Charlois Allende y Adrien José, “Memoria cultural y ficción audiovisual en la era de la televisión en streaming: Una exploración en torno a la serie *Narcos* como relato de

sin conocimientos profundos del contexto colombiano no cuestione la narrativa establecida, ya que parece creíble y no busque más información. En cambio, *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* puede enseñar algo sobre el pasado a los jóvenes que no han vivido estos tiempos, como lo cuenta también June Erlick en su libro “Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context”.<sup>156</sup> La Toma del Palacio de Justicia se convierte, gracias a la telenovela, en una memoria protésica. Por la identificación con los personajes y la empatía que se genera permite otro acceso al pasado que se diferencia de las clases de historia.

En *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* y en *Narcos*, la Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia se presenta únicamente como una subtrama, abordada en un solo episodio o incluso en una pequeña parte de uno. En *El General Naranjo*, la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia se vuelven la trama principal. Debido a la trama detallada sobre los hechos, y por el hecho de mostrar otras narrativas que no suelen ser parte de la “verdad oficial”, *El General Naranjo* permite una contra narrativa a la verdad oficial. La Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia ya es conocida, sobre todo en una audiencia colombiana, sin embargo, la serie permite una nueva perspectiva sobre los hechos a través del biopic del policía Óscar Naranjo. Esto corresponde sobre todo a la responsabilidad del Ejército en la Retoma, que cobró muchas vidas de personas inocentes. Hasta ahora es la única serie que muestra los acontecimientos de manera más extensa. Los personajes tienen matices más profundos, que permiten una identificación con la audiencia que se solidariza con ellos. La narrativa funciona como una memoria protésica para generaciones que no han vivido los hechos, pero de alguna forma también para las personas que hasta hoy solo habían conocido una versión del pasado. Como se pudo comprobar, existe una relación entre el tiempo de exposición que se le otorga a un hecho histórico en la trama ficcional y la huella que deja en la memoria del público. La representación de los hechos sangrientos que ocurrieron el 6 y 7 de noviembre de 1985 en las telenovelas y series no puede sustituir a la justicia y la búsqueda de la verdad, ni reemplazar la historia oficial de un país. Sin embargo, pueden iniciar debates y dar forma a las memorias más allá de las fronteras nacionales y entrar en diálogo con la historia. Entender la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia como una memoria prostética significa una oportunidad para crear justicia social, aunque sea a pequeña escala y dar voces a las diferentes víctimas que han sufrido hasta hoy.

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memoria transnacional,” *Comunicación y Sociedad*, no. 31 (2018): 30, <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v0i31.6852>.

<sup>156</sup> June Carolyn Erlick, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context* (Nueva York: Routledge, 2018), 118.

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# Telenovelas of Memory

A Didactic Experience

**Abstract:** This paper is about the design and implementation of the course “Telenovelas de la memoria”, which was offered at the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá – Colombia) as part of the general education courses designed for students of all disciplines. The course aimed to lead students to a critical, self-reflective media analysis and consumption, based on approaches and concepts from cultural studies on the one hand and cultural memory studies on the other, and to contribute to the development of a critical historical consciousness. For this purpose, theoretical concepts were first worked out, on the basis of which the students developed an analysis tool. Then, they used this tool to examine telenovelas that deal with recent Colombian history, exploring and critiquing their own perceptions, expectations, and attitudes. The results enabled the students and their teacher not only to analyze telenovelas as a medium for conveying history, but also to understand individual approaches to the contents seen on screen.

**Keywords:** Colombia; history didactics; historical thinking; memory.

**Resumen:** Este artículo trata sobre el diseño e implementación del curso “Telenovelas de la memoria”, que se ofreció en la Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá – Colombia) como parte de la educación general, diseñada para estudiantes de todas las carreras. El curso pretendía conducir a los estudiantes a un análisis y consumo crítico y autorreflexivo de los medios de comunicación, basado en enfoques y conceptos de los estudios culturales, por un lado, y de los estudios de memoria cultural, por otro, y contribuir al desarrollo de una conciencia histórica crítica. Para ello, primero se elaboraron conceptos teóricos, a partir de los cuales los estudiantes desarrollaron una herramienta de análisis. Luego, utilizaron esta herramienta para examinar telenovelas que tratan sobre la historia reciente de Colombia, explorando y criticando sus propias percepciones, expectativas y actitudes. Los resultados permitieron a los estudiantes y a su profesora no sólo analizar las telenovelas como un medio para transmitir la historia, sino también comprender los acercamientos individuales a los contenidos vistos en la pantalla.

**Palabras clave:** Colombia; didácticas de la historia; memoria; pensamiento histórico.

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## Introduction

How does a *narcotraficante*, a drug lord, look like? Colombian students – and certainly not only Colombian students – will most likely describe a chubby person with a dark moustache, dressed for a warm climate with light colored pants and a striped shirt. If this description sounds familiar, you possibly have watched *Narcos* or *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* on streaming platforms like Netflix. Both productions have used and reproduced the already iconic image of the Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar transmitting this story to a global audience.

Collective memory depends on media. To an ever-greater extent, it is popular culture media that shape ideas about the past. Television in particular has become a leading medium for conveying history, whether through documentaries, historical feature films, or productions that use the past merely as a stage on which daily *telenovelas* or series play out every-day experiences.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of what the original intention of the creators was, all of these productions contribute to what their audience “remembers” of the past. Since the brain does not distinguish between fictional and authentic images, even fictional productions turn their viewers somehow into eyewitnesses of past events, thus generating imaginaries of the past that do not necessarily correspond to historical reality, but which are integrated into collective and individual memories.<sup>2</sup>

Audiovisual productions therefore undoubtedly contribute to a ‘knowledge’ of the past: to what we actually think we know as well as to what Astrid Erll calls implicit collective memory; that is common beliefs of the past that through permanent and ongoing remediation of contents and images become part of a general, yet unconscious knowledge.<sup>3</sup> To what extent, however, they shape historical consciousness remains in question.<sup>4</sup> It is also questionable to what extent they go beyond transmitting mere information and actually contribute to historical thinking. Finally, it is unknown how the narratives and meanings presented in television connect to the individual experiences and how the spectator engages with the scenes seen on screen.

The course *Telenovelas de la memoria*,<sup>5</sup> taught for the first time in the second semester of 2022 at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá – Colombia, took up this

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1 Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 158.

2 Harald Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis. Eine Theorie der Erinnerung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2002), 185–96.

3 Astrid Erll, “The Hidden Power of Implicit Collective Memory,” *Memory, Mind & Media* 1 (2022): 1–17.

4 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 159.

5 This course is part of a general education cycle, the so-called Ciclo Básico Uniandino (Basic cycle),

last question to invite students to explore serial productions. Based on their personal experiences and perceptions, students could take a critical look at this way of historical-cultural appropriation of the past and their own way to deal and to connect with the representation of history. For this purpose, an analysis tool was developed with the students, with the help of which they could carry out a self-exploration and which enabled them to gain an understanding of the questions mentioned above.

In the following, the fundamental conceptual framework of the course is presented first. Then the analysis tool will be described and finally some results collected during the second semester of 2022 will be examined; results that show how the students interacted with the telenovelas and what imaginaries of the past they associated with them.

## Telenovelas and memory

Colombia's past has reached the telenovela genre for quite some time now.<sup>6</sup> A broad variety of different historical settings has conquered the evening prime time: Series about the lives of historical figures such as the heroine of independence Policarpa Salvarrieta<sup>7</sup> or the comedian and local politician Jaime Garzón,<sup>8</sup> so-called *narcovelas*<sup>9</sup> about Pablo Escobar<sup>10</sup> or the founder of the paramilitary organization *Autodefensas de Colombia*, Carlos Castaño,<sup>11</sup> to reconciliation telenovelas<sup>12</sup> such

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a set of seven courses students have to see from other disciplines than their own. It has a trans- and interdisciplinary approach and is meant to contribute to the transversal competences of critical thinking and ethical attitude to educate competent citizens. See Universidad de los Andes. “¿Qué es el CBU?”, accessed June 17, 2023, <https://educaciongeneral.uniandes.edu.co/cbu>.

6 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Narcotráfico y telenovelas en Colombia: entre narconovelas y “telenovelas de la memoria.” *Hispanorama* 157 (2017), 26–31. The title of the seminar was inspired by the concept “telenovelas de la memoria” proposed by Mónica Contreras Saiz’s research.

7 *La Pola*, directed by Sergio Cabrera, written by Juan Carlos Pérez Flórez, aired September 9, 2010–July 17, 2011, on RCN.

8 *Garzón vive*, directed by Juan Carlos Pérez, written by Patricia Rodríguez, Felipe Forero, and Elkim Ospina, aired January 15, 2018–June 1st, 2018, on RCN.

9 Omar Rincón, “Amamos a Pablo, odiamos a los políticos Las repercusiones de Escobar, el patrón del mal,” *Nueva Sociedad* 255 (2015): 94–105.

10 *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, directed by Carlos Moreno and Laura Mora, written by Juan Camilo Ferrand, aired May 28, 2012–November 19, 2012, on Caracol.

11 *Tres Caínes*, directed by Mauricio Cruz and Carlos Gaviria, written by Gustavo Bolívar, aired March 4, 2013–June 18, 2013, on RCN.

12 Franziska Englert, *The Transition Will be Televised. Telenovelas, Reconciliation and Transitional Justice in Colombia* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2022).

as *La Niña*,<sup>13</sup> which tells the life of a young ex-guerrillera who reintegrates into society, just to name a few.

What all these productions have in common is that they are not only set in a historical context, but are constructed based on true events, as viewers are told at the beginning of each episode. This claim to authenticity is sometimes reinforced by the fact that the fictional images are combined with real footage of historical events and people (especially in *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*). This circumstance leads to telenovelas taking on a hybrid function in the field of memory media. For on the one hand, the telenovela genre raises the expectation of seeing universal human experiences and behaviors, and audience expectations of credibility and truthfulness are low.<sup>14</sup> In that sense, telenovelas are not memory media, because to function as such, the audience must accept them as such.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the telenovelas mentioned above show a documentary truth that is repeatedly referred to through interludes or off-screen commentaries.<sup>16</sup> Many Colombian viewers remember the time depicted from their own experience. Telenovelas therefore confirm everyday experiences and, if watched with the family, can also stimulate exchange between generations. Both aspects are characteristics of memory media.<sup>17</sup>

While some telenovelas are quickly forgotten, others have achieved an impact over a longer period, such as when they are available on streaming platforms beyond the original broadcast. *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* and *La Niña* even have made the leap to the international non-Spanish speaking stage, as both productions run or have run on Netflix.<sup>18</sup>

In the course “Telenovelas de la memoria” three productions were analyzed in particular: *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* (*Escobar* in the following), *Tres Caínes*, and *La Niña*.<sup>19</sup> *Escobar* tells the story of the boss of the Medellín drug cartel and his

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13 *La Niña*, directed by Rodrigo Triana, written by Juana Uribe, aired April 26, 2016–September 16, 2016, on Caracol.

14 Englert, *Transition*, 75–8, Petra Anders et al., *Einführung in die Filmdidaktik. Kino, Fernsehen, Video, Internet* (Stuttgart, Metzler, 2019), 174.

15 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 145.

16 Rincón, “Amamos a Pablo”, 95.

17 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 144.

18 *La Niña* was available on Netflix until the end of 2022; *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* is still available on this platform.

19 Additionally, *Narcos* and *Distrito salvaje* were also taken into account but will not be considered in this article. *Narcos*, directed by Mauricio Vidal et al., written by Chris Brancato, Carlo Bernard, and Doug Miro, aired August 28, 2015–September 1, 2017, on Netflix. *Distrito Salvaje*, directed by Javier Fuentes-León, and Carlos Moreno, written by Cristian Conti, aired October 19, 2018–November 8, 2019, on Netflix.

fight against Colombian authorities mainly from the point of view of Pablo Escobar himself but shows also the perspective of his prominent victims, as the owner of the daily newspaper *El Espectador*, Guillermo Cano, the liberal politician Luis Carlos Galán or the minister of justice, Rodrigo Lara. *Tres Caínes* traces the history of the founders of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), Carlos Castaño and his brothers. *La Niña* follows the life of the young ex-guerrilla Belky alias Sara who was forcibly recruited as a girl and who successfully reintegrates into society.

The decision of choosing these telenovelas depended on the one hand on their availability; on the other hand, they were to be situated in a more recent past so that students had contextual knowledge and their own or mediated experience of the historical situations presented.

## Concepts

The concepts seen in the course provided students with the necessary tools to understand and analyze the memory-productive power<sup>20</sup> of telenovelas as well as their own interaction with the representations of the past presented on the screen. Since telenovelas are on the borderline between a pure entertainment medium and a memory medium, the theoretical approach considered cultural studies, where culture is comprehended as an everyday practice and consumer product and cultural memory studies where historical culture is grasped as a visible and concrete manifestation of a group-specific historical consciousness.

A central category that considered perspectives from sociology, media theory and cultural memory studies was the image. Taking visual sociology as a starting point, we defined the image as a representation of a reality on the one hand and as a communication strategy on the other. In this sense, the image is contextual in two directions: It is a product made in a specific situation and with a specific intention, consequently a product of a specific culture. As a vehicle of meaning, however, it can only function if it is observed and the observer understands this image from his or her situation and agenda and brings it into a relationship with him or her.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, we considered the image as an icon, that is, as a topos of a visual memory culture and the associated diachronic and intermedial dynamics.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 157.

<sup>21</sup> Marta Cabrera, and Oscar Guarín, “Imagen y ciencias sociales: trayectorias de una relación,” *Memoria y Sociedad* 33 (2012), 16–8.

<sup>22</sup> Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 160.

telenovelas in question reproduce familiar images; as mentioned above, they sometimes adopt documentary material and integrate it into their narratives. This remediation of images not only contributes to their iconization, but the associated re-contextualization that takes place in the telenovela turns the image into a third-order sign,<sup>23</sup> with the help of which versions of the past are constructed and consolidated.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, we understood the image also as memory image, an analysis category proposed by GUMELAB.<sup>25</sup> This concept refers to the interaction between the observer and the observed.<sup>26</sup> Images not only convey information or knowledge, but in their quality as a memory medium, they function as memory triggers. This involves not only a possible own or mediated experience with the depicted historical situation, but also memories that are related to one's own context such as the situation in which one first saw the image or the activation of implicit collective memories: the recognition of familiar situations and the feelings associated with them, the identification of cultural patterns and traditions, the approval or rejection of shown values and social norms that form the framework to interpret the past.<sup>27</sup> Memory images are “visual, emotionally linked ideas that convey an interpretative framework of a certain past, which have been created in a certain historical and audiovisual context”.<sup>28</sup>

Memory was therefore another transversal category. As historical memory, we defined it as the way in which people live with their past and attribute meaning to it.<sup>29</sup> It was emphasized that memory is shared, constructed, and perspectival. Historical memory is created narratively. It therefore only becomes tangible and emerges when it is narrated. This narrative is socially negotiated and pursues a certain intention. Based on the present needs for self-assurance and legitimization, those events and developments find their way into the narrative that gives meaning to the past in the present and turn them into recommendations for action in the future. In this sense, historical memory is identity-concrete, that is, it is linked to

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23 Roland Barthes, *Mythen des Alltags* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2013), 253–61.

24 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 160–2.

25 Memory Images,” GUMELAB. Accessed June 17, 2023. <https://www.gumelab.net/en/forschung/zentrale-begriffe/index.html>.

26 Cabrera and Guarín, “Imagen”, 18.

27 Erll, “Implicit Memory”.

28 GUMELAB, “Memory Images.”

29 Jörn Rüsen, “Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function and Ontogenetic Development,” in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 66–8.

the ideas of identity of a particular group.<sup>30</sup> It therefore reflects the dominant perspectives of a society, while others are excluded.

There is a reciprocal relationship between historical memory and historical consciousness, that is, the way people experience their existence in time as well as the cognitive factors that shape individual and collective understandings of the past. Historical memory is constructed out of a particular historical consciousness and, at the same time, contributes to the formation of historical consciousness.<sup>31</sup> The visible manifestation of this interplay between historical memory and historical consciousness is historical culture: all those products, practices, and objectifications that show how the past lives and produces meaning in the present.<sup>32</sup>

Telenovelas, in that sense, are historical-cultural manifestations: visual representation that look at the past from a present-day perspective and reflect and shape current social discourses about this past.<sup>33</sup> When, for example, the life of Pablo Escobar is filmed, it is done in the awareness that this person played a role in Colombia's history, the consequences of which can still be felt today. The events of the 1970s and 80s are still present in a communicative memory. They are recalled and reinforced by the telenovela.

While collective commemoration of identity-relevant events is a conscious process, there are also processes that take place unconsciously, as the implicit collective memory already mentioned above. It means all the knowledge and emotions that form views of the world without being concretely detectable in memory frames. An important characteristic of implicit memory is the absence of cognitive sources. Constant repetition is sufficient for content to become familiar and thus "true". Remediation of content and images therefore plays a central role in the unconscious memory processes that are schematized in visual icons, narrative patterns, stereotypes, values, and norms.<sup>34</sup> Telenovelas have all the prerequisites to contribute to the remediation of implicit collective memory, because their success is based on the recognition effect and their recourse to human experiences and the associated emotions and perceptions of good/evil and right/wrong.

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**30** Jan Assmann, "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität," in *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, ed. Jan Assmann, and Tonio Hölscher (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19.

**31** Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness", 66–8.

**32** Jörn Rüsen, "¿Qué es la cultura histórica? Reflexiones sobre una nueva manera de abordar la historia". Unpublished versión of "Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken," in *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, ed. Klaus Füssmann, Heinrich Grütter, and Jörn Rüsen (Köln, Weimar: Böhlau, 1994), 7.

**33** Christian Winklhöfer, *Urteilsbildung im Geschichtsunterricht* (Frankfurt/Main: Wochenschau Verlag, 2021), 34–5.

**34** Erll, "Implicit Memory," 4–5.

Finally, we also considered memory as prosthetic. Prosthetic memory describes a memory that is no longer embedded in specific group experiences but is de- and then recontextualized.<sup>35</sup> Memory content is available globally in almost unlimited quantities via digital media and is thus first and foremost a consumer product. Viewers from other contexts then negotiate the content with their own experiences and their specific historical consciousness and interpret it in a way that creates meaning for them.

The consequence of globalized memory is not so much a collectivization of content as a privatization of interpretations, because these are context-dependent. Through platforms like Netflix, some of Colombia's telenovelas of memory reach an international audience. It is a question, however, to what extent they are memory-productive outside the Colombian context. Pablo Escobar at least, although he has become a reference point when talking about drug traffickers,<sup>36</sup> seems to be more of a pop-cultural phenomenon whose tragedy for Colombia is not perceived elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> In the context of the fragmented memory of the Colombian conflict,<sup>38</sup> the question arises, however, whether under certain conditions it is possible to speak of a prosthetic memory within the same context, for instance when there is a speechlessness with regard to certain topics between the generations or when historical experience is limited to certain regions.

Lastly, the course also addressed aspects of historical thinking, on the one hand as a category of analysis, and on the other with regard to the question of whether telenovelas of memory contribute to the development of historical thinking.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the telenovela was classified as a source in two dimensions: First, as an expression of a certain way of dealing with history and as a non-scientific offer for historical-cultural interpretation and orientation, which was deconstructed in the course. Furthermore, it was categorized as an offer of knowledge. All telenovelas considered in class are based on true events and use the constant reference to reality as

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35 Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory: The Ethics and Politics of Memory in an Age of Mass Culture," in *Memory and Popular Film*, ed. Paul Grainge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 144–61.

36 Rincón, "Amamos a Pablo", 96.

37 As an example, I refer here to the series *Sketch History* in which Pablo Escobar appears as a not very smart man who always ends up shooting everyone (episode 13 and 19). *Sketch History*, directed by Sven Unterwaldt, Erik Haffner, and Tobias Baumann, written by Chris Geletneky, and Roland Slawik, aired October 9, 2015–October 25, 2019, on ZDF.

38 Gonzalo Sánchez, *Guerras, memoria e historia* (Medellín: La Carreta Histórica, 2006).

39 Peter Seixas, and Tom Morton, *The Big Six. Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013).



an authentication strategy. The telenovela thus enters into competition with other sources of information, a fact that is recognizable to the spectator.

Based on this theoretical foundation, students should develop questions that helped them approach our object of analysis, taking historical thinking concepts as a starting point. Questions of relevance, the identification of cause and consequence, the perception of continuities and changes or the historical perspective were considered mostly in relation to the interaction in which the students engaged with the telenovela. Questions as to why stories seem relevant, to what extent the content shown in the telenovela influenced the students' historical imaginaries, or whether and what connections they made to their own lives, could be analyzed on this basis. Another focus of analytical interest was the question of historical perspective, e.g., whether the perspective shown can be considered socially acceptable, under what conditions it can be accepted, and whether it helps to better understand historical actors. The ethical dimension also played a role, such as the question of criteria for evaluating the behavior of historical actors or the question of the orienting function of historical learning, in short, the formation of historical judgment.

## The analysis tool

The analysis tool was a questionnaire that helped the students to explore and interrogate their approach to and interactions with the telenovelas. On the one hand, it collected quantitative data, such as if the students already knew the telenovela or if they had seen it on TV or on a streaming platform. On the other hand, it included the questions students had developed based on the concepts and theoretical considerations seen in class.

Students' inquiries essentially evolved around five broad guidelines. In a first step, they examined how they perceived the historical significance of the situations depicted. Some questions were for example:<sup>40</sup>

- Could you identify events in the telenovela that really happened in Colombian history?
- Do you consider that the telenovela deals with a relevant topic of Colombian history? How is this perception of relevance created?

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<sup>40</sup> The development of the questionnaire was also an exercise for constructing qualitative questions. It was an important experience for the students that not every question collects the desired data. In fact, it turned out that a direct question about memory images hardly yielded any relevant results. Therefore, the questionnaire underwent changes throughout the semester.

Other questions addressed the possibility of historical learning, as for example:

- Does this telenovela match what you know about the historical situation?
- Do you consider that you learned something about the past that you did not know before?
- After watching the chapter, do you consider that your perception of the historical moment has changed? How and why?

A third set of questions examined the perception and significance of the historical perspective:

- Which historical actors are being given a voice?
- Does the telenovela allow you to understand the historical events from a perspective that you did not know before?
- Do you think it is important to know these voices?

Another group of questions explored the relation students perceived between the historical situation and the present in general as well as their own present.

- How does the historical situation in the telenovela relate to the present?
- How does the telenovela relate to your life, your experiences, and your memories?
- Do you see situations that are familiar to you?
- What memory images come in your head when you watch the telenovela?

The last set of questions invited to reflect on their own judgment:

- How do you feel about the events, characters and situations presented in the telenovela? Do you feel any kind of conflict about decisions or acts?
- Do you consider that the telenovela is a positive / negative input for the confrontation with the past?
- Do you consider that the telenovela allows a better understanding of the events of the Colombian past? How?

This questionnaire had to be answered for every telenovela considered during the course and was answered by a total of 49 students<sup>41</sup>, although the number of participants in the various applications varied.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Students were between 18 and 22 years old, 23 were women and 26 were men. Although they came from all social classes and different regions of Colombia, the majority were from urban contexts and had socio-economically stable family backgrounds.

<sup>42</sup> Out of a total of 4 possible surveys, students were required to submit 3 as part of the deliverables set for the semester.

In the following, some replies will be presented that show how students related with the telenovelas.<sup>43</sup> In particular, questions about historical significance, historical perspective, historical learning, and the relations students saw with the present or their own personal experiences proved to elicit responses that revealed information about the ways in which students interacted with the telenovelas.

## Familiarity of the telenovelas and viewing habits

The telenovelas considered in the course were known to the students to varying degrees. *Escobar* was clearly one of the most well-known productions. Almost 70 % of the students stated that they had seen this telenovela. About a third (31 %) knew *La Niña*. The least well-known telenovela was *Tres Caínes*; only one student stated that he knew it. This can be explained by the fact that, unlike the first three telenovelas, *Tres Caínes* is not available on a major streaming platform. At the time the telenovela was broadcast in 2013, most students were probably still too young to have been allowed to watch it.

Although watching telenovelas together is still a family activity in Colombia,<sup>44</sup> this was not always the case here. *La Niña* had been seen on television as an evening family activity by 83 % of the students who knew this telenovela. *Escobar*, on the opposite, had been watched by over 60 % alone or with friends on Netflix and not at the time of broadcast. Again, it certainly plays a role that students were not yet allowed to watch the telenovela in 2012, when it aired. This is noteworthy because in the latter case, the telenovela gives less opportunity to comment in the family on what they have seen and to pass on transgenerational knowledge or to get feedback on whether what is shown on the screen corresponds to historical truth.

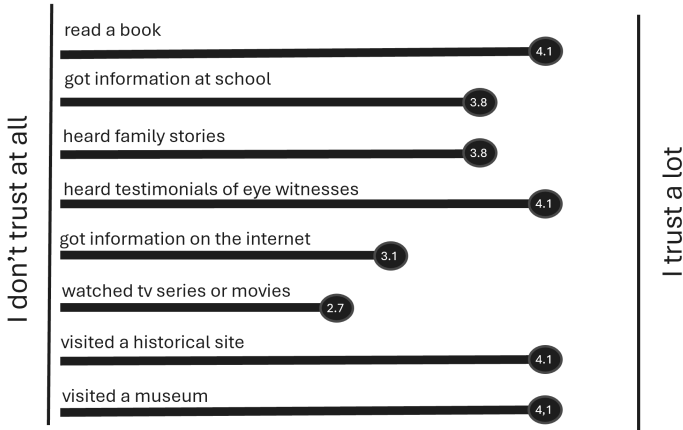
The initial conversations in the course showed that the students perceived telenovelas primarily as an entertainment medium. Accordingly, their trust in the veracity of the format was low. Asked about the confidence they have in various information channels; the value was lowest for telenovelas compared to other media such as, for example museums that received a high value.

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<sup>43</sup> The use of this data was approved by the Universidad de los Andes' Ethics Committee on January 30th, 2023 (Acta No. 1678 de 2023). In the case of verbatim quotations, students explicitly consented to their use. In the case of anonymous quotations, students agreed only to the use of their response, but not to the publication of their name. I would like to take this opportunity to explicitly thank all students who consented to the publication of their answers.

<sup>44</sup> Englert, *Transition*, 17–9.

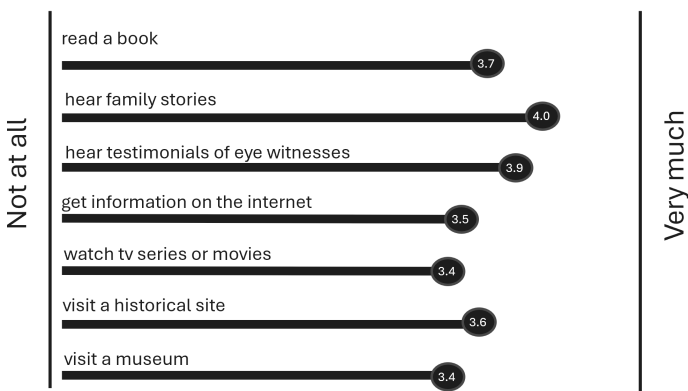
How much do you trust information about the past when you...?



**Fig. 1:** How much do you trust information about the past when you ... Own elaboration with data collected with menti.com.

At the same time, however, students also believed that telenovelas help them to better understand historical situations. The value is slightly higher compared to the previous question and closer to those of other media; it is actually the same as for museums.

How much has each activity helped you to understand the past?



**Fig. 2:** How much did these activities help you to understand the past? Own elaboration with data collected with menti.com.

At first glance, this result is not very surprising, considering that the purpose of telenovelas is to tell a story which the audience can easily follow. For the students, however, it was a first moment to become aware that ‘something’ happens while watching TV, even if it is only for pure entertainment. So, this discrepancy between the lack of confidence on the one hand and a perceived increase in understanding on the other was a starting point for the analysis of the telenovelas and the question about what we actually learn through the screen.

## The perception of historical significance, historical perspective, and historical learning

The questions about historical significance, historical perspective, and historical learning gathered information about whether students thought they had learned something new, whether they found it important to know about the historical situation and from the chosen perspective, and why they found it important. The responses allowed us to draw conclusions about what narratives about the past were present among the students, what assignments of meaning they made, and how accepted were the perspectives from which the telenovela were told.

With *Escobar* and *Tres Caínes* we analyzed two telenovela in which the main character is the ‘bad guy’. In the first case, we watched the first chapter that follows Pablo Escobar through his childhood to the point where he is introduced into the drug dealing business. The second episode we analyzed was chapter 17 (on Netflix) about the so-called *Toma del Palacio de Justicia* (Palace of Justice Siege), the occupation of the Palace of Justice in 1985 by the guerrilla group M-19. This event is still present within the Colombian communicative memory, as it had violent consequences: When the Colombian armed forces retook the building, it was destroyed, and numerous hostages and guerrillas died. Evidence against Pablo Escobar was also burned in the process. The telenovela presents this guerrilla action as being financed by the drug lord, so that M-19 would destroy the evidence against him, thus preventing Escobar’s extradition to the United States. This is the version confirmed by the final report of the inquiry commission of 2010.<sup>45</sup> Lately, it has been challenged when in 2020 members of M-19 insisted on the contrary during their

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45 Jorge Aníbal Gómez Gallego et al., *Informe Final. Comisión de la Verdad sobre los hechos del Palacio de Justicia* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2010), 313–4.

hearing at the Colombian Truth Commission.<sup>46</sup> Finally, we saw the end of the last chapter, where Pablo Escobar is killed by Colombian authorities.

In the case of *Tres Caínes*, the first chapter shows how the Castaño brothers came to form the AUC as revenge to the guerrilla's murder of their father. Then, we watched episodes of chapter 3 that proposes that Pablo Escobar helped financing the AUC's weapons and of chapter 67 that refers to the Bojayá massacre. The Bojayá massacre occurred in 2002 when the population of the town of Bellavista in the department of Chocó got caught in a battle between FARC guerrillas and paramilitary and died in the FARC bombing of the church where they had sought shelter.<sup>47</sup> We also saw the end of the last chapter where Carlos Castaño is killed by order of his own brother.

The students agreed that the historical situations portrayed in both telenovelas were important to understand Colombian history. However, there were differences in how they perceived veracity, the acceptance of perspectives and whether they thought they had learned something new.

The story of Pablo Escobar was familiar to the students, regardless of whether they had seen the telenovela. There are different reasons for this prominence: First of all, the crimes of the drug lord, the contemporary political events and the atmosphere of the times are part of family histories and school curriculums. Many students mentioned to have heard about Pablo Escobar from their relatives or in school. Furthermore, Pablo Escobar's story is widely commercialized and has become part of merchandizing campaigns to promote touristic visits to Medellín, where in some neighborhoods Escobar still has a hero status. Finally, there is a broad iconography around the drug lord that can repeatedly be seen in the media or as merchandising objects, such as Escobar's mug shot or the image of his dead body on a rooftop in Medellín. The Palace of Justice Siege also has produced widely known images, as for example the army tanks in front of the occupied building. All these images have a high recognition effect and are reproduced in the telenovela.

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46 El Espectador, "La toma del Palacio no fue por orden de Pablo Escobar, dicen exmiembros del M-19," *El Espectador*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/la-toma-del-palacio-no-fue-por-orden-de-pablo-escobar-dicen-exmiembros-del-m-19-articulo/>. The Truth Commission is a part of Colombia's peace process and transitional justice system after the peace agreement of 2016. Although its final report (2022) actually dedicates a whole chapter to the Palace of Justice Siege, the question of Pablo Escobar's responsibility does not appear: Comisión de la Verdad, *No matarás. Relato histórico del conflicto armado interno en Colombia* (Bogotá: Comisión de la Verdad, 2022), 203–8.

47 Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación, *Bojayá: La guerra sin límites* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2010).

Therefore, students saw their knowledge of Pablo Escobar's era mostly confirmed. What was new to them was the drug lord's view, which is a central, yet not the only perspective assumed in the telenovela. The students felt that this new information was relevant, as it helped them to better understand Escobar's development and decisions. In this context, the character of the mother and the advice she gave to young Pablo<sup>48</sup> were repeatedly referred to, as in the following quote by Alejandra Beltrán:

I found it very interesting and at the same time I was surprised to see how from childhood on the environment in which they [Pablo and his cousin] grow up and that surrounds them affects their vision of what it is to be successful or what is the 'only' way out of poverty, through drug trafficking. (...) I was also surprised by the role played by the teachings that Pablo Escobar's mother instills in him, for example, when he cheats or does something unethical at school and his mother scolds him, not for doing something wrong but because he got caught.<sup>49</sup>

They also highlighted that the telenovela gave them a feeling of the violent context in the 1970s and 1980s, the period in which their parents grew up. Andrea Cruz observes that

It puts in images those stories of my relatives about how they lived that period of violence, and even materializes the teachings that were given to me at school. It also generates sadness and pain in me to realize the suffering that one person can cause to an entire country, so I think the novel is very well done and I sense that catharsis was one of the objectives of the author of the audiovisual production.

Other comments referred to the historically authenticated events shown in the telenovela, such as the Palace of Justice Siege and the possible financing of this guerrilla action. Samuel Freire states that

The telenovela corresponds exactly to what I knew about the event in real life. One of the things I knew was the army entering the palace or the beginning of the M19 plan. On the other hand, the telenovela shows Pablo's relationship with the taking of the palace which I personally did not know was that he had financed the M19.

The possibility of Pablo Escobar having financed the guerrilla attack which actually connects to the socially shared narrative of the events seemed plausible to many

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<sup>48</sup> "El día que usted haga algo malo, hágalo bien hecho. No sea tan pendejo de dejarse pillar." (Chapter 1, min. 13:37), "The day you do something wrong, do it right. Don't be so dumb to get caught", is the advice the mother gives to young Pablo.

and was accepted as true. Only in rare occasions, students questioned this narrative, as did Juan Camilo Arrieta:

The novel is consistent with what is known about the story, although it leaves many doubts as to how much we know about what really happened if we review the statements presented in the truth commission.

This last comment is noteworthy, because the student mentioned different sources that helped him to establish his doubt. In other occasions, students expressed their doubtfulness regarding the narratives, but did not feel sufficiently competent to really question the representations on screen as we will see particularly with *La Niña*.

In the case of *Tres Caínes*, not only was the telenovela less familiar, but the subject of paramilitarism seemed to be more distant to the students. Even though paramilitary crimes are dealt with in the transitional justice panorama and therefore play a role in the media from time to time, paramilitarism produced significantly fewer images with a high recognition effect. Only the uniforms with the characteristic shoulder piece were mentioned by the students as iconic images. Moreover, paramilitarism seems to be not that present in family histories – at least, the students mentioned family transmission less as with *Escobar*. A reason might be that the AUC were active primarily in rural regions and not all Colombians were equally affected.

However, students agreed on paramilitarism playing a relevant role in Colombian history. But their opinion whether it is necessary to know the particular perspective of the Castaño brothers was diverse and oscillated between the extremes of very important to not important at all. Many of them found the focus on the perspective of the ‘bad guys’ problematic and less illuminating than with Pablo Escobar. Their criticism was mainly related to the one-sidedness of the perspective – in *Tres Caínes* the victim’s perspective hardly plays a role.<sup>50</sup> Another point of critique addressed the reduction of the complex dynamics of the armed conflict to the opposition between guerrillas and paramilitaries.

The narrative structure of *Tres Caínes* and *Escobar* is similar – both telenovelas begin in the childhood of the protagonists. Analogous to Pablo Escobar, students also cited childhood information as surprising and new, as does for example Juan Camilo Arrieta about the idea that young Carlos Castaño had harbored sympathies for the guerrillas.

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50 This was also a central criticism of the telenovela at the time it was broadcast. Victims’ associations in particular rejected the portrayal, cf. Leo Ospina, “Iniciativa ciudadana ‘#Noen3caines’. Análisis del discurso de un acontecimiento,” *Enunciación* 21 (2016), 297–312.



I was surprised that Carlos Castaño, who would later become the best-known paramilitary commander, had an affinity for the guerrillas.

Students did not question this suggestion, but on the contrary to the case of Pablo Escobar, they were less willing to accept the influence of Carlos Castaño's youth experience as an explanation, let alone a justification for his development. They considered the motif of revenge, which the telenovela offers as a justification, inappropriate. María Paula Cubides comments:

As I mentioned earlier, empathy goes from the pain of losing a dad, however I don't believe in taking revenge at one's own hands which is what they did and I am conflicted with that.

The possibility of violence as a way of coping with grief seems problematic to this student:

I think that, in general, the justification presented in the telenovela for the creation of paramilitarism is very simple, because thousands of Colombians lost their parents, and they did not act like them [the Castaño brothers]. It is not an adequate justification, because it presents violence as an alternative to deal with the mourning of a loss in the framework of the armed conflict.

Gabriela García has a similar observation:

Although at the beginning of the novel the tragic death of the father is emphasized and the creation of the group is justified, it is not a sufficient reason to do all the damage.

While the social circumstances seem to make a criminal career like that of Pablo Escobar at least understandable, the same is apparently not true of the founding of a paramilitary association. This is the essential difference between Pablo Escobar and Carlos Castaño: drug trafficking is not political violence, but paramilitarism under certain circumstances can be considered as such. Indeed, crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict are tried before the Special Peace Jurisdiction, which does not apply to organized criminal gangs.

However, the students did not fundamentally reject perpetrator perspectives. On the contrary, they felt that perpetrator perspectives also provide relevant information, and are even essential to better understand the past, under certain circumstances. This became clear in their evaluation of *La Niña's* perspective.

Although the topic of the life of an ex-combatant was even more distant to the students than the subject of paramilitarism, they considered the perspective of the young ex-guerrilla Belky was very important. In this telenovela, we saw the first two chapters in which Belky arrives at a center for underage ex-combatants where she begins her journey back into society. Through flashbacks it is told how she fell

into the hands of the guerrillas as a child and how she was abused by a member of the Colombian armed forces during combat operations. Belky is initially in the grey zone between a victim and a perpetrator (as alias Sara), but she gets clearer victim's traits during the telenovela.

Students agreed widely that the portrayal from the perspective of Belky helped them to understand a reality that was completely unknown to them. Like paramilitarism, forced recruitment and reintegration into society are in the media, but as an issue of the transitional process, and again there is a lack of iconic images to put a face to it. Similar to paramilitarism, students mentioned as common images the uniforms of the guerrillas, this time with rubber boots and a rifle that must never be put down. According to the distance to the topic students identified, they were aware that they did not have enough context information to decide whether the situations shown on screen were realistic. Juan Angel Correa points out:

The telenovela covers a subject that I know nothing about and cannot confirm how plausible it is to reality, however in terms of representing a situation, it represents something that I believe to be real.

Aspects students stressed out as being new were the perspective of the person who lives the re-integration, how it works, what challenges the affected must face and what implications it can have for the family, as explains Luisa Perdomo:

Also, I could notice that the reincorporation process is hard not only for the person but also for those who are part of his or her family since they do not know how to handle the situation, they may be exposed to danger and may also feel far from the ideal they had of him or her.

Andrea Cruz also emphasizes the emotional implications of the reintegration process:

When I first saw the telenovela, it completely opened my eyes to another side of the conflict that was distant to me. While I was aware that the guerrillas recruited children, I had not delved into its social and emotional implications.

In her following statement, Andrea explains why she considers that Belky's perspective is relevant:

This is a fundamental perspective for understanding the Colombian armed conflict, since it is necessary to consider the gray area between being a victim and being a perpetrator.

Here she refers to a social discourse that has gained importance as the category of victim is better understood in the context of the Colombian conflict; namely, that the line between victim and perpetrator cannot always be clearly drawn.<sup>51</sup> Introducing Belky rather as a victim as a perpetrator and thus establishing her perspective as socially acceptable is one of the strategies that is used in the telenovela to give a message of reconciliation,<sup>52</sup> a message that, as we will see below, might contradict individual experiences.

Some of the aspects we could discuss based on these reflections were for example how we deal with the credibility of what we see on screen. The little survey we realized at the beginning of the course had shown that we are well aware of the fictionality of the telenovelas. However, if the narrative is plausible and does not oppose directly our knowledge, experiences and values, contents are not strongly questioned.

But that does not mean that we agree with everything we see. Another aspect we could approach was whether we accept perspectives that do not reflect dominant social discourses and under which conditions we are willing to do so. In the case of Pablo Escobar, although a criminal, his perspective seemed to convey us information we found useful. Carlos Castaño's view, on the contrary, was more difficult to accept or was even rejected. Belky's position, who, at least at first glance, is on the perpetrator's side, in turn, was considered relevant.

We concluded that what made acceptable Pablo Escobar's story was the fact that his point of view was contextualized with other narrative threads, as for example the view of his victims, that helped to put it into perspective and to understand the complexity of the situation. In *Tres Caínes*, we felt that this complexity was reduced to the point that the Castaño's view became de-contextualized and one-sided. Belky's perspective was easier to accept as she joined the guerrilla against her will, in a situation of total powerlessness and as a sacrifice to protect her brother. Where the Castaño brothers took action – they could have decided otherwise – Belky was not in that position and was a victim of the circumstances. So, under determined conditions, perspectives that are not part of the hegemonic discourse, can reach social acceptance.

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51 Ana Guglielmucci, "El concepto de víctima en el campo de los derechos humanos: Una reflexión crítica a partir de su aplicación en Argentina y Colombia," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 59 (2017): 90.

52 Englert, *Transition*, 151–3.

## Relation to students' personal lives

In the following, the relationships students established between the situations depicted in the telenovela and their own experiences will be examined. Specific questions included: How does the historical situation relate to the present? How does the telenovela relate to your life, your experiences, your memories?

In general, there were three ways in which students made a connection between the events depicted in the telenovela and their own lives. On a first level, they saw no particular relationship beyond the fact that the events are part of national history. On a second level, they identified personal involvement, either through their own experiences or as part of their family history. On a third level, they made the connection by seeing themselves as part of the panorama within which the events took place, much in the sense of an implicated subject who bears no personal responsibility but is part of the social structures that make the problems possible.<sup>53</sup>

Overall, the group of those who saw no or very little connection to their lives was relatively small for all three telenovela. The students came to this conclusion especially when they focused on the specific subject matter of the telenovela. "This telenovela has no relevance to me other than the historical facts", concludes for example Angelo Abatte about *Escobar*. Similar comments were made about *Tres Caínes* and *La Niña*, pointing out that there were no individual experiences with paramilitaries, guerrillas, or re-inserted ex-combatants.

More students could connect to the telenovela on the second level. In the case of Pablo Escobar, many explained that they heard stories about that time by their parents, as does the following student:

The telenovela is not totally related to my experiences since fortunately I have not lived through such a violent time, but I can see events such as kidnappings that have happened in my family and also Escobar's actions that have been told by members of my family.

With regard to *Tres Caínes*, some students referred to family histories as well. Here, it became clear that paramilitarism had primarily regional effects, since the students named the specific place (anonymized here) where they or family members had had experiences with paramilitary practices, as explain these students:

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject. Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

In [...] (where I am from) many stories are known about the paramilitaries who “protected” land from the guerrillas, yet it is also known how bad they were and how many bad actions they committed.

(*María Paula Cubides*)

I am from the department of [...] and many times the illegal groups asked for security payments so that they would not do anything and could work in those areas.

(*Carlos Céspedes*)

Regarding *La Niña*, a few students mentioned similar experiences with guerrilla zones. Daniel Pedraza writes that

The telenovela is very much related to the present, (...) the issue of reinsertion and the guerrillas is still very present in Colombian history, we continue to live their actions and their consequences continuously, both good and bad. This allows for different ways of relating to what we already know and what is presented to us. I feel that it relates in a way, although not directly, very close to my experiences, since during my childhood and adolescence I lived in an area that was always considered a “hot spot” for the guerrillas.

Even the topic of forced recruitment was part of family histories as in the following example where Juan David Saldaña shares a story of his grandfather:

On the other hand, this reminds me a lot of my paternal grandfather, who for a period of his life lived in [...]. One of his most frequent stories was about a little boy named ‘Pedro’ (who was the son of a close neighbor), who unfortunately was captured and recruited by the FARC guerrillas, which he relates as one of the most disturbing scenes he ever witnessed.

The relation to the individual experience made also clear, that the narrative presented on screen might challenge the personal experience, as in the following statement:

The telenovela is quite related to my life, because first of all since I was little I remember hearing and seeing things in the news about the armed conflict, since at that time there was still a lot of violence and persecution. Also, when I was a little older I remember the whole peace process and the political conversations that existed around this among family and friends. On the other hand, my family was a victim of the FARC guerrilla group, because a few years ago they killed my cousin on a farm. For this reason, at the time of watching the telenovela it was a little difficult for me to accept and digest the message of peace and forgiveness that they intend to leave in the viewers, because the conflict affected me directly and forever.

This statement shows that the representation of the recent past is a topic that has not yet been socially negotiated and where individual experiences can be difficult to reconcile with mediated interpretations.

A new aspect that appeared on a few occasions with *Tres Caínes* and was mentioned a lot in the case of *La Niña*, was the personal memories that students had

of the peace process. The next examples refer to the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC guerrillas in 2016 and the following referendum with which the Colombian population voted on the approval of the agreement (and rejected it):

This telenovela is related to my life and my experiences after the 2016 plebiscite, in which all Colombians took a determined position on the reinsertion of the guerrillas. I believe that this telenovela, ultimately, revives those positions and those feelings awakened by the plebiscite.  
(*About La Niña*)

On the other hand, within my memories I have very present the plebiscite that was held in 2016 under the mandate of Juan Manuel Santos, where Colombians were consulted whether they agreed or not with the signing of the peace agreement and I was shocked that the NO won since I would have expected people to seek peace and a cessation of violence.  
(*Luisa Perdomo about Tres Cañes*)

Finally, on the third level, students assumed the events depicted in the telenovela to be part of their context, for which they are not responsible but in which they live. The following examples show how they justified this perception.

In my personal experience, I have not been directly related to violence, but like all Colombians I am aware of the violence that a large part of the country's population has gone through.  
(*About Escobar*)

It relates to my life in general since I think it portrays a telenovela of events that involve all of us as Colombians, as I consider that most of the actions that Pablo Escobar carried out were an offense towards the general identity of Colombians and their state institutions.  
(*About Escobar*)

The telenovela relates to my life only marginally. This is because I don't have much relation to what happened in the telenovela, internally. However, it is impossible not to say that in a certain way I have been related (...) in these events.  
(*Samuel Freire about La Niña*)

The students' answers to the question about the reference to their own experiences also allowed conclusions to be drawn about implicit memories and memory images.

They often referred to the fact that overall, the setting was familiar to them: street scenes and village life, certain idioms and generally the way of speaking, the value of the family, the portrayal of religiosity and the male-dominated society. These implicit memory contents correspond to socially circulating ideas and those transported through other media. The religiosity of drug traffickers, for example, is the subject of the novel "La virgen de los sicarios" by Fernando Vallejo. Pablo Escobar must speak in the dialect of the region around Medellín – if he does not,

it is noted as false or inauthentic. This was the case with the production *Narcos*, in which the Brazilian actor of Pablo Escobar's character, Wagner Moura, did not sound right to the students' ears.

In addition to these implicit memory contents, concrete memory images crystallized for the events depicted in the particular chapters. Regarding Pablo Escobar, students frequently mentioned the fear that had prevailed during the time and that their parents and grandparents had experienced, as do these students:

From the fear with which my parents and grandparents live, consequently, of attacks, such as the Palace of Justice Siege (...), of this happening again, having me in another city, the capital, accompanies me.

(*Gabriela Chávez*)

I relate the telenovela more to the stories my parents used to tell me about the fear they had living in Bogota because they didn't know when a bomb would explode. I don't relate it directly because it didn't exist at that time and many things that happened in the telenovela didn't happen again today.

(*María Paula Cubides*)

Another image mentioned several times is the bad reputation Colombia has abroad, which is attributed to drug trafficking. Daniel Pedraza observes

Although I would not say that it currently affects the lives of all Colombians, it does do invisible damage to people's perception of us.

The difference of opinion was an image related to *Tres Caínes*. Paramilitarism, despite the damage it has done, is a controversial topic. In some regions that were heavily affected by the guerrillas, it was perceived in part as a necessary evil because the state could not effectively protect the population. This went so far, that local politicians allied themselves with paramilitaries, which is described as so-called *parapolítica*.<sup>54</sup> The different positions and the resulting quarrels in the families are mentioned by some students.

Personally, I don't know how much influence that has in my memories, but I do have memories in the story that my family tells me, also placing in doubt the concept of my relatives where they portray the paramilitaries as the 'salvation'. This makes me understand that in the country there are different experiences that have created polarization.

(*Gabriela Chávez*)

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54 Juan Diego Restrepo, *Partidos políticos y paramilitarismo: el Estado de Autodefensa* (Bogotá: Comisión de la Verdad, 2022), 8–23, <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/caso-parapolitica>.

My family defended the actions of the paramilitaries in their concept of fighting the FARC. And for this I find great resentment.

*(Julio Sandoval)*

Finally, in *La Niña*, an image that makes sense in the context of a male-dominated society emerged particularly clearly: the condition of women. Several students emphasized that they felt connected to Belky because she is a woman as in the following example.

Although I cannot relate directly to the armed conflict, I can relate to Sara because she is a woman. The gender of the protagonist makes her more susceptible to suffer violence and be vulnerable to the treatment of men, something that I have experienced in my life and that makes my life more complicated.

The students' statements about the relationship they saw between their personal experiences and the representations of the telenovelas allowed us to elaborate on the following aspects. First, we were able to establish that the development of historical meaning takes place from one's own context. Depending on the students' own experiences and the context in which they located themselves, they constructed the connection to the content on the screen and established relationships of different complexity and proximity. It was in this context that the question arose whether the exercise of reconstructing a shared memory of the conflict, as it is happening within the frame of the transitional justice panorama, might be a prosthetic memory for some parts of society.

Furthermore, we saw that certain perceptions were shared despite individual contexts. These collective perceptions may be conveyed through media – such as the notion of a drug dealer mentioned at the beginning – or may be based on experiences that are individual but the same over and over again. Collectiveness is also created through shared frames of interpretation – the 'right' accent for Pablo Escobar can only be determined if the audience knows how people speak in Medellín.

Finally, we found that memories can be triggered that do not necessarily depend on historical evidence, but on the particular way students experienced situations related to the past. These memories vary more and connect differently: Emotions like fear or sadness can be evoked or certain situations such as the moment of intergenerational talk or family disputes. Even connections can be made that have nothing to do with the historical situation and its consequences, but still allow the person to generate relevance from his or her own context.



## Conclusions

In the course *Telenovelas de la memoria* we explored how television productions that show historical situations affect the audience. To achieve this, we understood ourselves as an audience and questioned ourselves to find answers to the questions posed at the beginning. How do telenovelas contribute to our knowledge of the past? Do they contribute to historical thinking? How do we individually engage with the content shown?

None of our specific answers has absolute validity nor were they very surprising. Rather, they represent a snapshot of a particular group at a particular moment confirming tendencies that had been found in other contexts.<sup>55</sup> The added value of the exercise consisted in the fact that students were able to confirm that what is stated in the theoretical texts that were the basis of the course was true. We are not passive spectators, but in fact enter in an engagement with what we see.

First, we were able to establish that telenovelas do indeed transmit information that are perceived as knowledge. Although students were aware that a telenovela de la memoria is first and foremost a story that aims to entertain and that for this reason is not a particularly trustworthy source, they were willing to first believe what they saw. This was especially the case when the telenovela's narrative reflected what students knew about the specific historical situation through family lore, educational institutions, or remediated images. Even if no concrete contextual knowledge was available, the representation was accepted because it corresponded to general experiences and was therefore plausible.

Telenovelas, then, do not necessarily invite to a critical approach to history. Only when the telenovela's portrayal challenged one's own experience and values or was called into question by other information was the portrayal viewed more critically or even rejected.

However, even though we do not usually practice source criticism, we do not accept everything that is shown to us without exception. This became clear when we looked at historical perspectives. One added value of telenovelas is undoubtedly that they give viewers a sense of what life was like in a particular time, what courses of action people had and could perceive. This also includes the fact that stories can be told from perspectives that do not correspond to the socially dominant points of view. Using the three telenovelas as examples, we were able to determine that not all perspectives are equally accepted socially and that some perspectives are only recognized under certain conditions. Therefore, we expect that perpetrator perspectives are contextualized and thus can be classified. All too one-

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<sup>55</sup> For tendencies see Contreras, *Telenovelas*.

sided representations from unpopular perspectives, as in the case of *Tres Caínes*, are viewed critically. Or we must find certain elements that allow us to ethically justify taking the perpetrator's perspective, as in the case of *La Niña*, who guiltlessly became a guerrillera. As an audience, we have a point of view defined by our own context.

Finally, we have found that our engagement with the telenovela begins in our own context. It is our wealth of experience, our memory, that allows us to enter in a sense-generating relationship with the historical situation shown – or not. It became obvious that this memory is equally shared and individual – and shaped by the media. The images and meaning attributions that we use to classify what we see are shared. The feeling of fear that many students mentioned in relation to Pablo Escobar is an experience that has been individually repeated over and over again – and thus becomes a collective experience. The frustration in the face of different points of view in families is situational – and a reflection of what is happening in society.

With this seminar, it was possible to practically apply theoretical concepts with the students in a concrete way and to develop an understanding of how they become effective in our everyday life. At the same time, the students were able to understand an object from their everyday life as a historical-cultural manifestation, analyze it critically, and think about how they personally connected with the interpretations of the past offered through the telenovelas.

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Omar Rincón

## Ensayo: Narrar al narco-capitalismo pop

**Resumen:** Este ensayo hace parte del proyecto “Narcolombia” que recoge las reflexiones sobre narrativas narco construidas desde el 2011. Partimos de la idea que existe una narco-cultura, que esta se narra vía las ficciones neorealistas televisivas, los influencers digitales y los estilos pop. Se argumenta que los narcos lo que hacen es “hacer” el capitalismo puro y duro: tener dinero y exhibirlo en los consumos. Así hemos llegado a que los narcos como personajes se hayan convertido en los superhéroes del capitalismo. Y, por eso, su estilo estético y de vida sea el nuevo deseo de hacerse élite porque ya no se busca pertenecer al poder cultural del siglo XX, sino que se construye un estilo brillante, pop y popular propio. Para demostrar esta idea analizamos cómo se narra al narco mediáticamente y cómo el “estilo” narco es el mainstream de la cultura pop en el siglo XXI. Al final se reflexiona sobre el narco-capitalismo.

**Palabras claves:** bichota; buchona; Narcolombia; narco-capitalismo; television.

**Abstract:** This essay is part of the “Narcolombia” project, which collects reflections on narco narratives constructed since 2011. We start from the idea that there exists a narco-culture, which is narrated through neorealist television fictions, digital influencers, and pop styles. It is argued that what the narcos do is to embody pure and unadulterated capitalism: having money and showcasing it through consumption. This has led to narcos becoming the superheroes of capitalism. Therefore, their aesthetic style and way of life have become the new desire for aspiring to an elite status. It is no longer about belonging to the cultural power of the 20th century; instead, a shiny, pop, and popular style is being constructed. To demonstrate this idea, we analyze how the media portrays the narco and how the narco “style” has become mainstream in 21st-century pop culture. Finally, there is a reflection on narco-capitalism.

**Keywords:** *bichota; buchona; Narcolombia; narco-capitalism; televisión.*

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## Introducción

La *narco cultura* existe como un modo de vivir donde el “ascenso social” y el ganar el cielo capitalista se da con ayuda de dios y mucha astucia que sin pudor inventa tácticas para lograr hacer dinero. Este relato nos ha sido contado en literatura, cine, televisión, medios, periodismo, música, arquitectura, moda, mercado. La narcocultura es, entonces, un entramado de códigos, prácticas, lenguaje, músicas, performances y estilo de imitación pop “para pretender aparecer ante la sociedad como un individuo que posee el poder y el dinero que tienen sus ‘role models’ (los narcos)”.<sup>1</sup>

Su modo de narrar es la cultura pop. Phillippe Bourgois<sup>2</sup> cuando investigaba/convivió con los sujetos de la droga en Harlem describió que ese mundo le parecía “una *soap opera* de la realidad”, una telenovela diríamos nosotros, y desarrolló una fascinación por ese “drama del sufrimiento” y una admiración por ese “deseo de ser importantes que tienen ellos, ese deseo de tener alguna razón para estar aquí en la tierra”.<sup>3</sup>

Lo *narco-cultural* triunfa en la vida real, en la política y en la industria por la fuerza de su relato popular. Se reconoce que “el narcotráfico ha ganado batallas culturales e informativas en una sociedad” gracias a su “leyenda”.<sup>4</sup> Leyendas, mitos, relatos que nos habitan en las narrativas mediáticos donde el narco representa una revuelta de lo popular, una revolución de clase, un relato irónico del nosotros mismos, los integrados.

Y esa leyenda atrae, nos seduce, se hace símbolo pop porque “el narcotraficante o el jefe del círculo de mafia son vistos como se veía al indígena en la literatura de la colonia, como el ‘otro’, el desconocido. Exóticos que provocan fascinación y, a la vez, conforman una imagen de lo que es prohibido, del criminal que se desconoce pero que atrae al lector y al escritor”.<sup>5</sup> Su fascinación y seducción está en su mundo que vive al borde del abismo, su estilo exhibicionista, su exceso de violencias y su capitalismo ganado. Esa atracción es la que fascina a las máquinas

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1 Javier Delgado Martínez, “Narco-aesthetic and Simmel’s Theory of Fashion,” *javierdelgadomatiz.medium.com*, junio 8, 2021, <https://javierdelgadomatiz.medium.com/narco-aesthetic-and-simmels-theory-of-fashion-2c64cb3bc1ec>.

2 Cristian Alarcón, Phillippe Bourgois “Narrar el mundo narco: diálogo con Cristian Alarcón y Phillippe Bourgois,” *Salud colectiva* 6, no 3. (2010): 357–69, [http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1851-82652010000300008&lng=es](http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1851-82652010000300008&lng=es).

3 *Ibid.*, 360.

4 Juan Villoro, “La alfombra roja,” *El Malpensante*, no. 105 (febrero 2010).

5 Carrillo, Diana, La narco-guerra mexicana da auge a la narco-literatura, *bordersine.com*, diciembre 1, 2011 <http://borderzine.com/2011/12/la-narco-guerra-mexicana-da-auge-a-lanarco-literatura/> – consultado marzo 4, 2012.

del entretenimiento, la emoción y morbo del ver y gozar a ese otro al nosotros (burgués, escritural y culturoso). El narco, el nuestro mejor espectáculo.

Aquí me interesa la perspectiva global que convierte lo narco en un estilo estético que se consigue teniendo dinero, se exhibe consumiendo y se celebra en una narrativa que lo convierte en protagonista de la sociedad deseada. El capitalismo pop encontró en lo narco un maravilloso universo narrativo.<sup>6</sup> La pregunta es si son los narcos los que hacen la narcocultura o es la industria del entretenimiento la que la crea. Hay dos discursos hegemónicos al respecto: uno moralista, el narco es el demonio de nuestro tiempo que enuncian los políticos y los bienpensantes, el otro es que lo narco es fascinante como objeto y experiencia estética que recrean las ficciones mediáticas y los influencers digitales.

Para analizar el fenómeno de la narco-narrativa quiero desarrollar tres ideas: primero contar cómo la televisión es la referencia prioritaria de los universos y estética narco, segundo analizar el estilo de vida a lo narco como estética mainstream del siglo XXI, tercero argumentar que el que siempre ha estado ahí es el capitalismo como la máquina productora de este modo cultural de habitar la vida.

## La narco-narrativa: de músicas, literatura, cine y televisión

La narrativa narco es exitosa porque asume que la seducción no está en el contenido o las morales sino en las narrativas para interpelar y conectar con la sociedad. La narrativa tiene que ver con el diseño de un *storytelling*, unas estructuras dramáticas, unas estéticas, unos formatos que atraviesen el ecosistema de especies mediáticas y digitales y generen viralidad. En nuestros días, las narraciones exitosas son remixadas y retratos *DJ* de las sensibilidades, los formatos, las densidades, los afectos que nos habitan. El narco, el remix más pop.

El modelo narrativo del siglo XXI es el video juego, por eso, narrar se ha convertido en algo que implica que interactúes, juegues, ganes a través de un sistema de recompensas y que active algo que nos genere placer y adrenalina. La clave está en que provean autenticidad y singularidad (artificial), controversia digital, relevancia en la conversación cotidiana, felicidades instantáneas, humor permanente. Que nada quede, que todo sea para pasar el tiempo, habitar la seguridad del yo (selfie

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6 Omar Rincón, “Todos llevamos un narco adentro – un ensayo sobre la narco/cultura/telenovela como modo de entrada a la modernidad,” *Matrizes*, 7, no. 2 (2013): 1–33.

culture) como estilo de vida. Y de eso están hechas las culturas narco: adrenalina video-juego sin “game is over” porque se reinicia en cada héroe muerto.

Y lo contundente está en que lo narco y el entretenimiento tienen un encuentro feliz en que ofrecen historias alucinantes y mágicas, prometen yo-pitalismo de felicidades en el que todos podemos ser héroes en el consumo. Narco y entretenimiento se conectan en provocar, seducir, emocionalizar a la sociedad sin tener en cuenta contenidos o éticas. Además, lo narco se expresa en el estilo y narrativa creado por el mercado del entretenimiento pop. Los héroes pop y el estilo narco lucen idénticos: mucho dinero, exceso de consumo, brillante apariencia.

Por eso, la narrativa narco se enuncia en el cine, la televisión, la música y la literatura que han encontrado en este universo el mejor espectáculo de nuestra actualidad capitalista: uno gustoso, sabroso y polémico.

**Narco-música.** La música narco mezcla la ranchera mejicana con la cumbia tropical colombiana y se expande a toda la cultura pop contemporánea que va en modo reggaetón y corrido tumbado. Esta nueva música ha creado “una intensa polémica por el contenido de letras que hablan de narcos, violencia, armas, autos de lujo, mansiones, tráfico y consumo.”<sup>7</sup>

En estos ritmos bailables (¡sin fiesta no hay narco-pop!) se celebra un destino trágico y se justifica que ante la exclusión social y la pobreza se rebelan contra la corrupción política y el desprecio de los ricos; que entonces lo que se hace es para celebrar los modos de hacer de la gente marginal, que todo lo hacen por el orgullo patrio y lograr el sueño del capitalismo. Las historias son las mismas que cuentan los periódicos, el cine y las narco-telenovelas: héroes, valientes y leales, seres nacidos del pueblo y luchadores por el pueblo, *robin hoods* que dan lo que la ley, los ricos y el gobierno quitan.

Música gustadora, encantadora y seductora porque celebra la filosofía del instante. Un caso para ejemplificar, en el 2018 en México un video muestra a una quinceañera en su celebración de quince años bailando con su padre un narcocorrido, en lugar del tradicional vals. La quinceañera inspirada en la narco-telenovela *La Reina del Sur* usaba un vestido blanco, más corto que el tradicional traje de fiesta en colores pastel y representa una escena en la que la atacan sicarios, antes de que la policía llegara a rescatarla y la salvara, mientras al fondo sonaba la canción del narcocorrido “Sanguinarios del M1”, de Movimiento Alterado. “Con cuerno de chivo y basuca en la nuca, volando cabezas a quien se atraviesa, somos sanguinarios, locos

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7 Cecilia González, “¿Alegoría narco, moda o arte? El polémico éxito de los ‘corridos tumbados’ en México y EE.UU.,” *RT*, mayo 18, 2023, <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/467319-alegoria-narco-moda-arte-corridos-tumbados-mexico>.



bien ondeados, nos gusta matar”. Hubo escándalo, el Miguel “son simplemente canciones que adornan el tráfico de drogas, son críticas a las realidades que enfrentan muchos mexicanos y mexicano-americanos afectados primero por la llamada “guerra antinarcóticos” en Estados Unidos, y luego por la guerra antinarcóticos emprendida por México con apoyo de Estados Unidos”.<sup>8</sup> El estilo rebelde y popular musicalmente se mitifica, justifica, comparte y baila.

**Narco-literatura.** La narco-literatura,<sup>9</sup> por su parte, es definida como “un producto cultural que incluye tanto obras de ficción –novelas, cuentos, teatro, cine y música–, como obras de no ficción –como el periodismo y el documental–. Un género narrativo que expone de manera cruda los crímenes ligados al mundo del narcotráfico pero que se acotará a la esfera de lo literario”<sup>10</sup> Santos, Urguelles y Vásquez<sup>11</sup> establecen como características de este género:

- *Narrador*: relato autodiegético donde el yo cuenta lo que sucede desde su vivencia.
- *Personajes*: una literatura de personajes que pueden ser victimarios, policías, detectives, amigos, familiares, políticos y víctimas de la violencia.
- *Espacios*: relatos reconocibles en lo geográfico tanto que hacen referencia a ciudades emblemáticas como Culiacán, Ciudad Juárez, Sinaloa y Tijuana en México, Medellín en Colombia o Río en Brasil.
- *Temporalidad*: “el tiempo de la narcoliteratura es un presente circular, un corte sobre una acción temporal sin progreso y sin un cambio real, que condena a los personajes a actuar como fichas reemplazables dentro del tablero de la violencia colectiva.”<sup>12</sup>
- *Acciones*: este es un género que se basa en situaciones que mueven la trama y cuenta el ascenso y caída de los personajes intercambiables, ya que siempre habrá nuevos líderes o atrevidos que intentan el negocio. En este sentido, es una trama infinita y circular.

<sup>8</sup> Parker Asmann, “Narcocorridos en México: ¿un malentendido?,” *insightcrime.org*, abril 24, 2019, <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/narcocorridos-en-mexico-malentendidos>.

<sup>9</sup> La clasificación de este tipo de obras como género literario aún es cuestionada como se puede ver en Diana Carrillo, “La narco-guerra mexicana da auge a la narco-literatura”, *Borderzine.com*, diciembre 1, 2011, consultado en junio 27, 2023, <http://borderzine.com/2011/12/la-narco-guerra-mexicana-da-auge-a-la-narco-literatura/>.

<sup>10</sup> Danilo Santos, Ainhoa Vásquez e Ingrid Urgelles, “Introducción: lo narco como modelo cultural,” *Mitologías hoy* 14 (2016): 10.

<sup>11</sup> Danilo Santos, Ingrid Urgelles y Ainhoa Vásquez, coords., *Narcotransmisiones: neoliberalismo e hiperconsumo en la era del #narcopop* (Chihuahua: El Colegio de Chihuahua, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

- *Pacto de lectura*: esta narrativa establece su verosimilitud de relato y disfrute de consumo en que hay mucho contenido reconocible por informaciones que ya se conocen, la seducción realística de los modos de habla, la oralidad del contar. Santos, Urgelles y Vásquez concluyen que la lectura de la narco-literatura no es “puramente estetizante” porque a quien lee lo relaciona con “el presente trágico de la realidad”.<sup>13</sup>

**Narco-cine.** El cine se ha enamorado de los mundos del narco porque su visualidad permite un juego de colores extremos y ritmos frenéticos, sus personajes tienen epopeyas “cinematográficas” ya que sus historias están hechas de secuencias maravillosas, sus modos de habla que permiten exploraciones populares en los diálogos, sus violencia sin moral para accionar la trama y las escenas sexuales para provocar morales. Todo un coctel maravilloso para hacerlo de manera audiovisual. La evidencia está en que se ha hecho mucho cine como *La virgen de los sicarios* (Barbet Schroeder, 1999), *La Vendedora de rosas* (Víctor Gaviria, 1998), *Sumas y restas* (Víctor Gaviria, 2004), *María Llena Eres de Gracia* (Joshua Marston, 2004), *El rey* (Antonio Dorado, 2004), *Rosario Tijeras* (Emilio Maillé, 2005), *Colombian dream* (Felipe Aljure, 2006), *Soñar no cuesta nada* (Rodrigo Triana, 2006), *Perro come perro* (Carlos Moreno, 2007). Se pueden destacar, además, las brasileñas como *Ciudad de Dios* (Meirelles y Lund, 2002) que en forma de alucinante el videoclip cuenta el vivir y morir joven en el tráfico de drogas en una favela de Río de Janeiro; y la gringa *Traffic* (Steven Soderberg, 2000) que cuenta sobre comercio de drogas entre Estados Unidos y México. También existe el “cabrito *western*” que era tan norteño como su nombre: Monterrey y Tijuana eran el Hollywood del momento”. En este género destacan obras como *El infierno* (Luis Estrada, 2010) y *Miss Bala* (Gerardo Naranjo, 2011).

**Narco-tevé.** La telenovela del narco se inventó un relato ficcional basado en hechos reales para hacer otra versión de nuestra historia en una especie de laboratorio de la identidad que combina entre memoria y contingencia.<sup>14</sup> Y crean un modelo narrativo propio ya que pierde el melodrama para irse hacia otros géneros que celebran el ascenso social y presenta a lo narco como una expresión de la lucha de clases. En estas historias a las mujeres solo les queda el cuerpo-sexo como táctica del éxito mientras en los hombres la estrategia válida para salir de pobres es el crimen-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Omar Rincón, “Colombianidades de telenovelas,” *Cátedra de Artes* 10 (2011): 37–52, <https://xdoc.mx/preview/colombianidades-de-telenovelas-catedra-de-artes-5e5582bab856d>.

muerte. En ambas performances se actúa una estética y ética popular directa que mata la metáfora.

La narrativa televisiva de lo narco rompe con la ética del melodrama basada en la ética del amor romántico para asumir la ética del héroe posmoderno para lograr el ascenso social. Pasamos de las historias de amor tradicionales (el melodrama) para contar la lucha de los excluidos sociales que logran el sueño capitalista (épica), pero con la moral premoderna de que quien la hace la paga con un final de cárcel o muerte (tragedia), sin perder el modo de vida de lo popular latinoamericano que es el humor (la comedia). Esta narración celebra los valores narco-capitalistas que se concretan en el consumir apariencias como el objetivo de la vida, la diversión como el estado de ánimo para vivir el presente y el negocio (en este caso de la cocaína) como la manera de alcanzar el poder y la visibilidad social.

Los televidentes de todo el mundo global disfrutan estos relatos narco-populares para gozar de estos éxitos precarios de los pobres (éxito capitalista momentáneo), que además son divertidos, estridentes, brillosos (éxito narrativo-estético) y porque les lleva a disfrutar estas vidas estrafalarias (éxito de placeres) como documentos de ese mundo popular mágico de narcolombia (éxito de lo exótico). Verlas brinda una miradita culposa y sabrosa a ese mundo extraño, prohibido y excesivo del narco: se mira para escandalizarse, pero también para reconocerse y desear su éxito.

Las narco-telenovelas crea una narrativa televisiva singular porque tiene una tesis potente, historias reconocibles, personajes identificables y modos populares de relato:

**Tesis.**<sup>15</sup> <Todo vale para salir de pobre>. O, <más vale ser rico que pobre>. O, <quien tiene plata marranea>. O, <el sueño capitalista se hace con billete y en el consumo>. Relatos que nos dicen cómo es vivir aquí en el territorio de los excluidos de la sociedad del bienestar:

- modo de pensar (billete mata cabeza),
- forma de hacer (justicia es lo que yo pueda comprar),
- forma del gusto (para qué plata si no la nuestro),
- forma de hombre (con dios, mujeres y billete alcanza para la felicidad, Pablo Escobar en *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* dice: “la fe mueve montañas, pero el dinero hace temblar al mundo”),

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<sup>15</sup> En las narrativas populares cada género y formato tiene una “ética” o “tesis” de base para construir el relato. Por ejemplo, en el caso de las telenovelas es <mujer pura salva hombre equivocado>, en el caso de los superhéroes es <todo por la justicia>, en el caso de las series de médicos es <el médico es dios en la tierra> y así sucesivamente.

- forma de mujer (el éxito tiene cuerpos en venta y en versiones siliconas, Pablo Escobar en *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal* dice: “las mujeres de hoy en día quieren que las ames como a la antigua y que las putees a lo moderno”),
- forma de los políticos (“Con esos políticos que tenemos, ser bandido es un honor”, dice Pablo),
- forma de gobierno (para qué la ley si con el billete basta: Pablo Escobar en *El patrón del mal* dice: “no existe una empresa en Colombia que le mande más dólares a Estados Unidos que nosotros los narcotraficantes”).

**Historias.** El relato que se vende es de unos seres alucinantemente recursivos para lograr hacer fortuna desde el negocio del narco, siempre llevados por el deseo de ayudar a la familia, salir de pobre y cumplir el sueño capitalista. Se justifica todo desde la pobreza y la exclusión injusta en la que los tienen los ricos. El enemigo es el statu quo representado por los policías, los jueces, los políticos, los gobernantes, la iglesia, los ricos. Todos posibles de doblegar vía el dinero que se obtiene y el miedo que les causa su violencia. La clave mágica es el sueño capitalista de las apariencias (joyas, autos, tierras, casas, moda), adornado con mujeres guapas, alcohol, drogas, fiesta, exceso de emociones y el poder político que se adquiere. Historias que narran desde el margen y la pobreza y como se sale adelante en esta sociedad del capital: la gran épica latinoamericana, esa de hacer desde el rebusque y como se pueda la vida. Realismo de ficción que narra la *otra* historia a la oficial de América Latina.

**Género.** El formato narco-telenovelas parte del melodrama (el destino, dios y el amor nos salva) y la épica (un hombre hace su destino y lo logra), algo de comedia (la vitalidad verbal, corporal y humorística de lo popular) y final de tragedia (al final todo termina en la derrota). Un género remix popular. Estos cuatro tonos narrativos tienen en común la alta expresión emocional y el exceso como marca visual, actoral y de diálogos. Todo género justifica algo, en este caso es que se llega al narco por necesidad (el destino y para salir de la pobreza en que los tiene el sistema); que la ley es perversa y contra los pobres y la encarnan la policía y el gobierno (el villano son los poderosos de siempre); que las mujeres son parte del trofeo del éxito (un machismo ancestral que ve a la mujer como objeto); el éxito total se expresa en el consumo de las apariencias (hacer posible el sueño capitalista). Nuevos heroísmos populares que mezclan lo premoderno (familia, dios, tradición y propiedad) con la postmodernidad (capitalismo extremo). Una narrativa que documenta el capitalismo *express*.

**Ética.** Historias que justifican, argumentan y exculpan el cómo se llega a ser narco o mujer de silicona; que celebran los métodos paralegales para ascender socialmente. Y todo esto lo hace con “la” verdad de lo real de la geografía y sus personajes que en estética del grotesco hacen evidente la forma del nuevo rico (new money)

y las nuevas mujeres (la buchona o baby), la vitalidad popular del lenguaje, la hermosura del exceso, el ritmo frenético de las drogas. Todo para celebrar una moral posmoderna del todo vale para tener billete y ser exitoso, tener sexo y fiesta.<sup>16</sup>

**Pacto de lectura.** Las audiencias se reconocen, gozan y disfrutan porque esos mundos y esos personajes se parecen a su mundo cotidiano.<sup>17</sup> Historias con *rating*. Rating que llega porque se celebra el mundo narco y poco se cuestiona su valor ético o moral. A este universo dramático es al que llamamos narco-cultura. Un saborear la cultura del narcotráfico y su capitalismo para todos. Las narco-ficciones gustan tanto porque permiten altos niveles de reconocimiento a la masiva sociedad de los excluidos.

**Mujeres.** En las narco-novelas hay muchas historias que tienen como protagonista a las mujeres. Las colombianas creadoras del “género” exponen la versión femenina del asunto con *La viuda de la mafia* (2004) sobre una mujer que se reinventa ante la muerte de “su patrón” esposo; *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (2006), *Sin tetas SI hay paraíso* 1, 2 y 3 (2016, 2017, 2018), que documenta a las mujeres como hembras sagaces y seductoras que asumen la autonomía para ganar el capitalismo; *Las muñecas de la mafia* (2009) donde las mujeres son trofeos y marcas del éxito de los capos; Rosario Tijeras (2010) para la versión femenina del sicario o asesino por paga; *La mariposa* (2001) donde la mujer es la poderosa en el negocio; *La piloto* (2017) que recupera esa idea de glamour de las aerolíneas pero adobado con la posibilidad de delinquir. Merece mención especial la mexicana *La reina del Sur* (2011) que imagina a la mujer como la poderosa del negocio.

Ainhoa Vásquez e Ingrid Urgelles<sup>18</sup> afirman respecto a los estereotipos de género en las narcoseries que “han cambiado mucho desde *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (2006) hasta la segunda temporada de *La reina del sur* (2019)”<sup>19</sup> y que se nota que hay “un esfuerzo por incorporar” la autonomía de la mujer, “de debatir lo que por años se ha normalizado y desmontar ideas de princesas y príncipes, tan presentes en los melodramas tradicionales”.<sup>20</sup> Las nuevas mujeres no son puras y santas,

<sup>16</sup> Omar Rincón, “Amamos a Pablo, odiamos a los políticos: Las repercusiones de Escobar, el patrón del mal,” *Nueva Sociedad* 255 (enero-febrero 2015): 95.

<sup>17</sup> Este fenómeno de identificación y reconocimiento es clave para el éxito de los productos populares y se le llama el drama del reconocimiento o estética de la identificación. Ver: Jesús Martín-Barbero y Sonia Muñoz (coords.), *Televisión y Melodrama* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Ainhoa Vásquez Mejías e Ingrid Urgelles Latorre, “Presentación. Mujeres en el narco: entre el estereotipo y la subversión,” *Cuadernos de Humanidades*, no. 35 (enero-junio 2022): 37.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

“son mujeres valientes y capaces de utilizar la violencia cuando es necesario, sin embargo, la usan sólo cuando su vida está en riesgo. Al contrario de los capos, ellas no andan por la vida disparando a diestra y siniestra ni por mero capricho... empoderadas, pero no sanguinarias”.<sup>21</sup> Lo más liberador es que “el amor no domina sus vidas y que el enamorarse no les quita racionalidad. Tienen aventuras amorosas, se enamoran de hombres equivocados, pero nunca pierden el control de sus vidas ni de sus decisiones”.<sup>22</sup>

**Los hombres.** “El narcotráfico es un mundo de hombres o, al menos, es lo que nos han hecho creer. Nombres masculinos tenemos por montones: Pablo Escobar, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, Rafael Caro Quintero, Joaquín Guzmán Loera y una lista interminable de capos y sicarios que, además, han sido elogiados en múltiples representaciones culturales: son protagonistas de narco-corridos, narco-películas, narco-series, etc. Ellos son los meros machos que desafían las normas, al Estado, violentos pero solidarios con sus pueblos, la imagen perfecta de bandidos generosos y/o justicieros”.<sup>23</sup>

Esta versión machista está con *Los protegidos* (2008)<sup>24</sup> y la versión trágica de ser informante que delata a sus colegas de la mafia; *El Cartel* (2008)<sup>25</sup> escrita por el ex-narcotraficante Andrés López y cuenta la historia colombiana desde la mirada justiciera del Cartel de Cali, algo así como la otra historia a la mediática y oficial. *Soñar no cuesta nada* (2008)<sup>26</sup> sobre el sueño capitalista como posibilidad; *El Capo* (2009)<sup>27</sup> que crea un héroe narco que deja el estereotipo latino para ir al estilo de la mafia italiana y de New York; *Pandillas, guerra y paz* (1999)<sup>28</sup> muestra la vida de barrio popular y los jóvenes sin futuro que delinquen por necesidad. Sobre los capos de la droga están *Pablo Escobar, El patrón del mal* (2012)<sup>29</sup> que revive el mito

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21 Vásquez y Urgelles, “Mujeres,” 13.

22 Ibid., 47.

23 Ibid., 41.

24 *Los protegidos*, dirigida por Luis Eduardo Jiménez et al, transmitida en 2008, por RCN Televisión.

25 *El Cartel*, dirigida por Luis Alberto Restrepo, guion por Andrés López y Juan Camilo Ferrand, transmitida en 2008-2010, por Caracol Televisión.

26 *Soñar No Cuesta Nada*, dirigida por Yaky Ortega et al, guion por Omaira Coromoto Rivero y Verónica Suárez, transmitida en 2005-2006, por Univisión.

27 *El Capo*, dirigida por Lilo Vilaplana y Riccardo Gabrielli, guion por Gustavo Bolívar Moreno, transmitida en 2009-2014, por RCN Televisión.

28 *Pandillas, Guerra y Paz*, dirigida por Mario Mitrotti, guion por Gustavo Bolívar Moreno, transmitida en 1999-2005, por RCN Televisión.

29 *Pablo Escobar, El Patrón del Mal*, dirigida por Carlos Moreno y Laura Mora Ortega, guion por Juan Camilo Ferrand, transmitida en 2012, por Caracol Televisión.

de Pablo Escobar, *Alias El Mexicano* (2013)<sup>30</sup> que de manera crítica cuestiona al narco Rodríguez Gacha, *Tres Caínes* (2013) sobre los hermanos Castaño líderes de los paramilitares, *Sobreviviendo a Escobar; Alias JJ* (2017)<sup>31</sup> sobre el sicario más famoso que se llama Popeye. La mexicana *El señor de los Cielos* (2013)<sup>32</sup> que presenta como el gran capo mexicano, el Escobar mexicano. Netflix con *Narcos* (2015)<sup>33</sup> cuenta la versión USA del mundo narco: capos exóticos y fascinantes y policías justicieros de la DEA.

**Escobar.** El relato paradigmático de la narrativa audiovisual es Pablo Escobar.<sup>34</sup> Su figura es mágica porque es “El Maradona del crimen”, ya que es “un narcotraficante innovador, ostentoso, carismático y muy cruel”.<sup>35</sup> Su relato es poderoso porque identifica al héroe popular del siglo XXI: un hombre *hecho a sí mismo* con una capacidad fascinante para hacer el capitalismo a su imagen y semejanza, una mente

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30 *Alias el Mexicano*, dirigida por Diego Mejía Montes, guion por Gerardo Reyes Copello et al., transmitida en 2012–2023, por RCN Televisión.

31 *Sobreviviendo a Escobar; Alias JJ.*, dirigida por Luis Alberto Restrepo et al, guion por Jhonny A. Ortiz y Gerardo Pinzón, transmitida en 2017, por Caracol Televisión.

32 *El Señor de los Cielos*, dirigida por Jaime Segura et al., guion por Juan Manuel Andrade et al., transmitida en 2013 hasta hoy (11 de septiembre de 2023), por Telemundo.

33 *Narcos*, dirigida por Andrés Baiz et al., guion por Carlo Bernard et al, transmitida en 2015–2017, por Netflix.

34 Audiovisual: *Killing Escobar* (David Whitney, 2021), *Escobar, la traición* (León de Arana, 2018), *Loving Pablo* (León de Arana, 2017), *Pablo Escobar: Countdown to Death* (Pablo Martín Farina y Santiago Díaz, 2017), *El infiltrado* (Brad Furman, 2016), *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015), *Escobar paraíso perdido* (Di Stefano, 2014), *Los dos Escobar* (Michael and Jeff Zimbalist, 2010), *Los pecados de mi padre* (Nicolás Entel, 2009), *El ciudadano Escobar* (Sergio Cabrera, 2004), *Los Archivos Privados de Pablo Escobar* (Marc de Beaufort, 2004), *The True Story of Killing Pablo* (David Keane, 2002), *Pablo Escobar: King of Cocaine* (Steven Dupler, 1998). Libros: *Caza al hombre: Cómo atrapamos a Pablo Escobar* (Peña, Javier F. y Murphy, Steve, Península, 2020), *Pablo Escobar, mi padre. Radiografía del narco más famoso de todos los tiempos* (Juan Pablo Escobar, Planeta, 2019), *Pablo Escobar; lo que me contó mi padre* (Juan Pablo Escobar, Península, 2019), *¿Por qué amamos a Pablo Escobar? Cómo Netflix revivió al narcotraficante más famoso del mundo* (ed. Santiago Giraldo Luque, Editorial UOC, 2018), *Pablo Escobar. Mi vida y mi cárcel* (Victoria Eugenia Henao, Planeta, 2018), *Amando a Pablo, Odiando a Escobar* (Virginia Vallejo, Planeta, 2017), *Sobreviviendo a Pablo Escobar* (Popeye, Dipon editores, 2015), *Pecados de mi padre* (Entel, 2009), *Pablo Escobar; ángel o demonio* (Granier, 2007), *La parábola de Pablo* (Alonso Salazar, Debate, 2001), *El patrón: vida y muerte de Pablo Escobar* (Cañón, Luis, Planeta, 1995). Prensa: “Pablo Escobar, el ‘pop star’ de Brasil, Vinícius Mendes,” *El Espectador*, febrero 25, 2016; “Pablo Escobar: de narcotraficante a icono pop,” Mauricio Bernal, *El periódico*, marzo 09, 2019; “Medellín contra el Pablo Escobar ‘superstar,’” *Felipe Sánchez, El País*, 11 de diciembre del 2017.

35 Jesús Ruíz Mantilla, “Pablo Escobar: un asesino como icono de ficción,” *El País*, agosto 27, 2017, [https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/08/24/actualidad/1503565000\\_958680.html](https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/08/24/actualidad/1503565000_958680.html).

prodigiosa para delinquir ya que era creador de ideas para traficar, un encantador ser humano en los valores básicos de familia, amigos y lealtad y justiciero impecable en sus castigos. Su ética es muy básica y compartida por lo popular: ayudar a los suyos, vivir de fiesta, castigar a los falsos y desleales, premiar a los incondicionales, defender a la familia. Para unos (los sectores populares de Medellín, Colombia y Latinoamérica) es un héroe, una especie de Robin Hood – repartía riquezas – y El Zorro –un justiciero vengativo que luchaba por los pobres-; para otros (los Estados Unidos y el Estado colombiano) es un criminal: el más grande de la historia. Su personaje es tan atractivo que ya es una marca (administrada por su hijo); tiene música (narco-corridos); se cuenta en muchos libros (*La parábola de Pablo* de Alonso Salazar es el más importante); y tiene cine y una telenovela de éxito (Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal). La industria pop del siglo XXI lo ama con sentimiento culposo y lo ha convertido en un héroe global.

En lo narrativo mientras el formato colombiano trabaja al narco como héroe popular, el formato USA Netflix construye un relato muy de ellos, uno de balas y sexo, un western kitsch que tiene como a los Estados Unidos como el policía justiciero del mundo.

***Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*** (2012) se “vendió” como la versión del mal de Escobar; la verdad de las víctimas y la valentía del Estado Colombiano. Pero si esta era la intención, el planteamiento dramático no fue consecuente porque Escobar reinó sin enemigos en la construcción de su destino de niño a hombre, allí documentó que tenía buenos motivos para matar y traficar y chantajear, además amaba a su familia y amigos y ayudaba a su pueblo; era intuitivo, creativo, de pocas palabras, activo para salir de la nada, un exitoso emprendedor de un negocio ilícito y con un código ético claro: castigaba a los falsos y desleales, premiaba a los incondicionales, y por la familia y la plata, todo. Se quiso mostrarlo como demonio y se le terminó contando como ídolo.

***Narcos*** (2015) reactualiza el mito del realismo mágico, eso de lo real invadido por la extrañeza imaginativa. Un Pablo que es mágico. Juliana Martínez (2015) nos dice que narcos construye “una versión seductora y entretenida – aunque altamente manipulada – de la historia reciente de Colombia”<sup>36</sup> y que responde más a “una técnica de mercadeo” que busca “capitalizar el aura de peso cultural” del fenómeno narco. Este look mágico *for export* y su excelente campaña de mercadeo la han posicionado como un éxito. Más que la obra en sí lo que llamó la atención fue su estrategia de narco-

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36 Juliana Martínez, “Narcos’ de Netflix: ¿‘Peso cultural’ o maquila cultural?,” *insightcrime.org*, noviembre 30, 2015, <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/narcos-netflix-peso-cultural-maquila-cultural/>.



marketing que tenía como base la producción del escándalo.<sup>37</sup> En síntesis, *Narcos* es maquila cultural que exagera la exotización de lo narco y construye un bárbaro moral que aunque exitoso capitalista recibirá el castigo del policía del mundo; una realidad colombiana para el entretenimiento de los colonizadores que les confirma sus estereotipos sobre lo que somos por aquí en el sur.

La producción de “maquila cultural” que según Yúdice se da cuando la producción se controla desde el extranjero, los ingresos llegan a manos de los conglomerados internacionales que poseen los medios de producción, y los elementos locales se utilizan en tanto agreguen valor a un producto (cultural) diseñado para un público específico y geográficamente distanciado. Mientras que las maquilas tradicionales producen ropa y otras mercancías baratas, el resultado más valioso de la maquila cultural es una versión comercial de las diferencias culturales.<sup>38</sup> Y esto es *Narcos*.

**La marca Escobar.** Es tan evidente este usufructo de la imagen de Escobar para el bien pensar del mundo y el mercado cultural que su hijo al hablar de sus explotaciones comerciales de su padre<sup>39</sup> justificó que “cansado de películas, series y novelas que “glorifican” a Pablo Escobar”, él asumió el relato de su legado y por eso le ha dedicado dos documentales, dos libros y recorre el mundo con sus conferencias sobre el fundador del cártel de Medellín. “Me he lucrado con el nombre de mi padre, pero tengo más derecho que Netflix”.<sup>40</sup>

Esa narco-narrativa que se documenta en la literatura, el cine y la televisión se convierte en el siglo XXI en el estilo de vida *mainstream*, una estética y ética que performan influencers, músicos, políticos, deportistas y ricos del mundo. Y eso se da porque el estilo narco han encontrado en el capitalismo pop su campo de reconocimiento y expresión.

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37 Diego Daza, “Netflix y sus 5 originales (y cuestionables) maneras de promocionar ‘Narcos’,” *Perú 21*, septiembre 3, 2017, <https://peru21.pe/cheka/series/narcos-tercera-temporada-netflix-originales-cuestionables-formas-promocionar-serie-374320>.

38 Juliana Martínez, 2015, “Narcos’ de Netflix: ¿‘Peso cultural’ o maquila cultural?,” *insightcrime.org*, noviembre 30, 2015, <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/narcos-netflix-peso-cultural-maquila-cultural/>.

39 El hijo ha vivido lucrando de su padre a través de una tienda de ropa que en el 2012 creó la colección “Poder Poder”, elaborada por “Escobar Henao”; los documentales “Los pecados de mi padre” (Nicolás Entel, Buenos Aires: Entel, 10/12/2009, 94 min) y “Escobar al descubierto” (Sebastián Marroquín, 2018, 55 min), y los libros *Pablo Escobar, mi padre: Las historias que no deberíamos saber* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2014) y *Pablo Escobar In Fraganti: Lo que mi padre nunca me contó* (Bogotá: Planeta 2016).

40 “Hijo de Pablo Escobar: ‘Tengo más derecho a lucrarme con mi padre que Netflix,’” *Agencia EFE*, febrero 28, 2018, <https://www.elprogreso.es/articulo/gente/juan-pablo-escobar-tengo-mas-derecho-lucrarme-padre-netflix/201802282359261298070.html>.

## El estilo de vida de narco se vuelve mainstream

La fascinación por la forma narco y ese mundo narco-popular, por esa realidad del vivir rápido, gozar a plenitud, morir pronto; por ese vivir al límite se concreta en una estética narco-pop que hace remix de Hollywood y lo pop con lo popular colombiano mexicano latino. Por ejemplo, *Alias J.J.* (2017) eleva a *celebrity* al criminal Popeye, el matón más cínico de don Pablo Escobar, quien se convirtió en youtuber. O la historia de Lindolfo,<sup>41</sup> un buen muchacho que se convirtió en líder de la ‘oficina’ de Envigado dedicada al sicariato, narcotráfico, la extorsión y cobro de deudas. Lindolfo cuando lo arrestaron pensó como celebridad y le dijo a la policía: “¿Les puedo pedir un favor? ¿No será que podemos repetir la grabación en la que ustedes entran y me arrestan? Es que mire cómo me veo y yo no puedo aparecer así”. El motivo de repetición de la captura era que “Hermano, al menos déjeme bañarme y arreglarme un poquito para la foto de la reseña judicial. A mí me conoce mucha gente y no puedo aparecer desarreglado”. Quiere cuidar su fama más que pensar en ética o legalidad.

En la escena del arte, también, la estética de lo narco cuestiona y subvierte tanto los criterios de lo bello como los modos de circulación y consumo de la obra de arte, y a su vez, pone en debate público los modos de funcionar del mundo del arte. Ese blanquear los dineros vía el arte es una tendencia de nuestra sociedad como lo documenta Lucas Ospina.<sup>42</sup> El arte se nutrió del narco como negocio, pero también como inspiración para hacer obra.<sup>43</sup> Tanto que el arte narco como creación llegó al 41 Salón Nacional de Artistas de Colombia 2008–2009.

Donde mejor se condensa esta narrativa narco es en la obra *colombianización*.<sup>44</sup> Una serie de videos y contenidos para un sitio web hipermedia, una exhibición de video y un Cabaret Político Multimedia compuesto por performance, texto y video a

41 “Escena ridícula en captura de narco ‘Lindolfo’ le explica por qué se llama así”, *Pulzo.com*, noviembre 2, 2018, <https://www.pulzo.com/nacion/anecdota-captura-sebastian-murillo-alias-lindo-PP437724>. Video de su captura: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQKZu4PPDsY>.

42 Algunos textos de Lucas Ospina sobre arte y narcotráfico son: Lucas Ospina, “Arte y narcotráfico,” *Arcadia*, septiembre 21, 2010, <https://www.revistaarcadia.com/opinion/articulo/arte-narcotrafico/23108>. Lucas Ospina, “El Matrimonio Fritanga-Ordoñez”, *La silla vacía*, 2013, <http://lasillavacia.com/elblogueo/lospina/41449/el-matrimonio-fritanga-ordonez>. Lucas Ospina, “Los Santos Boteros,” *La silla vacía*, 2013. <http://lasillavacia.com/elblogueo/blog/los-santos-boteros-46757>. Lucas Ospina, “Sobre la pureza del artista,” *Lucas Ospina, Textos*, 2013, <http://lucasospina.blogspot.com/2013/04/sobre-la-pureza-del-artista.html>.

43 Rueda, Santiago, “Una línea de polvo en Colombia (y América),” acceso 11 de septiembre de 2023. <http://www.mac.org.co/exposiciones/pasadas/una-linea-de-polvo>.

44 *Colombianización*, dirigida por Nadia Granados, estrenada en 2022. Ver: <https://colombianizacion.com/>.

partir de una investigación en torno a la manera como se relata la historia reciente de Colombia por medio de ficciones en los tiempos de la post verdad. Este proyecto surge como una pregunta sobre la manera en que se ha conformado una visión de realidad política sobre Colombia desde los medios y la propaganda, a lo que la artista Granados llama proceso de “colombianización” o serie de violencias confusas propiciadas por las élites políticas que vendieron las estructuras económicas, sociales y culturales en Colombia al capitalismo gore. <El capitalismo gore se ha infiltrado en nuestra vida y desde nuestro papel de simples somos simples consumidores/espectadores> y <Lo gore ya no es un género cinematográfico, ni las fotos en los periódicos sensacionalistas. Lo gore es nuestra realidad ahora> regateona la artista. Y rapea <somos la gente de bien de bien de bien de bien. Un tiro en la sien la sien la sien la sien la sien>. Y termina cantando <Ando con el combo de los perros ganadores. Mi tiempo es pa’ las mujere’, la hierba y los millone’ Y de vez en cuando alguna party, cabr\*nes>

También existe la narco-arquitectura que Carlos Niño<sup>45</sup> la describe como “una celebración de la apariencia y de las formas banales” que en construcciones de “lujo gratuito”, llegan a “despreciar el patrimonio” e imitan “lo importado y el arribismo Miami”. En la misma línea Adriana Cobo<sup>46</sup> define la *narco-arquitectura* como “ostentosa, exagerada, desproporcionada y cargada de símbolos que buscan dar estatus y legitimar la violencia”. Afirma que esta estética en la arquitectura se caracteriza por “fachadas de portones griegos forradas de mármoles y enrejados dorados, carros estridentes y cuerpos de hombres engallados con oro y mujeres hinchadas de silicona”. Una arquitectura que más que “un grupo de edificios ilegales y de mal gusto” son un “sistema de copia” del gusto capitalista, una especie de nuevo “sistema de cohesión social” desde y en lo pop. Una estética ornamentada, ostentosa y desproporcionada que genera estatus y reconocimiento desde el dinero y la apariencia.

La *estética narco* es, en síntesis, producción de fusión de temporalidades, experiencias, sentidos de la cultura popular (celebración de los modos vecinales y tradicionales de sobrevivir: la lealtad como máximo valor), la celebración de la pre modernidad (religión y familia por encima de democracia e institucionalidad), y una poscultura irónica (pastiche donde todo símbolo juega des-referenciado de su valor de origen de clase o gusto). Así se crea la *forma-narco-mundo* como producto capitalista que hace posible el sueño del mercado liberal: serás libre para consumir, mostrar y ser feliz. Estética hecha de nostalgia rural y postmodernidades Miami donde se mezcla lo popular con lo gringo con lo mexicano con lo colombiano con

45 Carlos Niño, “De la narcoarquitectura,” *Revista Número* (agosto–octubre, 1995): vii–iii.

46 Adriana Cobo, “¿Es el ornamento un delito? Observaciones para arquitectos sobre la arquitectura del narcotráfico en Colombia,” *Esfera Pública and Documenta 12 Magazines*, agosto de 2006.

el exceso caribe. Pastiche de lo latinoamericano, *happening* de nuestra identidad fusión, *performance* de nuestras sobrevivencias, *instalación* pop-capitalista.

“El poder de ostentar”<sup>47</sup> en una estética hecha del collage. Un gusto con un código común de pertenencia popular que en el siglo XXI no se elude, sino que se hace parte de su orgullo y presencia pública. A ese gusto se le reconoce más en modo femenino, ya que los machos son la violencia y las mujeres la estética, en Colombia se le ha denominado zunga, grilla, guabalosa,<sup>48</sup> prepago, loba, diabla, bichota.<sup>49</sup>

En lo mexicano actual se le llama estilo buchón. “Buchona” comenzó describiendo en México las extravagantes mujeres de los narcos. La periodista Carolina Miranda<sup>50</sup> describe a la buchona como la que “usa atuendos llamativos que revelan lo que Dios y un buen cirujano plástico le dieron” y que usa “ropa muy ajustada y mostrando marcas de lujo, preferiblemente Versace o Louis Vuitton” o “Chanel, Gucci, Swarovski.” y que aman “la fiesta, el dinero y los hombres”. Y que “como con cualquier cosa narco, el rasgo definitorio de ese estilo es el exceso: Los senos son grandes, el trasero es redondo, la cintura es muy fina y los labios suaves”. También cuenta que la buchona máxima es la ex reina de belleza Emma Coronel Aispuro, esposa del famoso Chapo Guzmán.

En los Estados Unidos esta estética se reúne en el concepto BBL por la sigla en inglés de “Brazilian Butt Lift”. Miranda afirma que estamos en una “cultura pop buchona” donde ellas se han convertido en un estilo fascinante y glamuroso que se ha tomado las series de televisión, las músicas, la moda, las fiestas y las redes digitales. Y concluye que “si alguna vez hubo un deseo en Latinoamérica de crear una distancia entre la narcocultura y el *mainstream*, ese deseo casi se ha evaporado”. Ahora la narcocultura es el gusto hegemónico legitimado por la *new money* que celebra el capitalismo pop. La fotógrafa mexicana Mayra Martell<sup>51</sup> afirma que “es una nueva clase social”<sup>52</sup> que no aspiran a la respetabilidad de la clase alta, ya que

47 Alonso Salazar, *No nacimos pa' semilla* (Bogotá: Cinep, 1990).

48 José Ignacio Henao y Luz Stella Castañeda, *El parlache* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 2001)

49 *Bichotas* era otro modo de nombrarlas a las mujeres del narco, pero Karol G. la asumió en su canción “La bichota” donde la resignifica para significar autonomía y empoderamiento femenino

50 Carolina A. Miranda, “La influencer Jenny69 se llama a sí misma una ‘buchona’. Cómo un estilo inspirado en el narco llegó a dominar las redes sociales,” *Los Angeles Times*, noviembre 8, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/entretenimiento/articulo/2021-11-08/el-estilo-buchona-que-hace-alarde-de-excesos-consumistas>

51 Mayra Martell ha publicado “Chuladas” (Sinaloa 2018), “Culichitown” (Culichi Town Sinaloa 2018) y “Gore” (Sinaloa 2017). Ver: Mayra Martell, “Editorial y Multimedia,” fecha de acceso 24 de octubre de 2023, <https://mayramartell.com/portfolio/editorial-y-multimedia/>.

52 *Narcolombia.club*, proyecto artístico, ya había afirmado en el 2018 que el narco expresa y significa una nueva clase social, una manera de entrar al capitalismo desde el consumo y que, ahora, es el estilo de los nuevos ricos, los corruptos, los deportistas, los reggaetoneros. O sea, el look del capitalismo global.

“la estética del buchón la rechaza”. Su ícono global es Kim Kardashian. Su deseo ser *influencer*.<sup>53</sup> Un nuevo modelo estético *made in* lo narco se toma el mainstream.

Ante este fenómeno los analistas del crimen organizado afirman que este nuevo estilo responde a “una campaña de propaganda diseñada para enmascarar el baño de sangre y mostrar una promesa de riqueza infinita para atraer a reclutas jóvenes y descartables”.<sup>54</sup> Se afirma que existe un *narco marketing* que vende una ficción del ser o pertenecer al narcomundo como ideal social. Y que esto se logra porque el crimen organizado usa las redes digitales para venderse a través de una “publicidad hedonista”.<sup>55</sup>

Estos expertos analizan desde los criterios de la modernidad crítica para cuestionar la legitimidad y dignidad de este estilo, poco dan cuenta que este fenómeno expresa un gusto y una ética perteneciente a la élite pop del siglo XXI cuyo máximo valor es el capitalismo. A ese estilo se le llama en la república del capitalismo “new money”: “*the new money* es llamativa y está llena de una extravagancia que es fácilmente perceptible para la persona promedio. Siempre a la moda y generalmente cubierta con etiquetas de marca de la cabeza a los pies, la estética del nuevo dinero grita nueva riqueza. Buscar siempre lo más nuevo, brillante y brillante es la forma en que la estética del nuevo dinero se mantiene relevante y a la vanguardia. Con menos énfasis en la clase y más énfasis en llamar la atención, a los jugadores de la estética del *new money* les encanta hacer alarde de su estilo.”<sup>56</sup>

Lo evidente está en que “el narcotráfico es una revolución cultural”<sup>57</sup> ya que legitima el cambio de valores, “ese cambio de la moral del pecado por la moral del dinero”. No hay pecado, hay dinero. Y toda América latina comulgó en este capitalismo pop.

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53 Algunas cuentas que exhiben el estilo narco como deseable son *ElGueroMendoza*, *Michel Chavez*, *Runty H*.

54 Óscar López, “Los cárteles mexicanos invaden TikTok,” *New York Times*, noviembre 28, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2020/11/28/espanol/america-latina/cartel-tiktok.html>

55 López, “Los Carteles.” Alejandra León Olvera, “La Femenidad Buchona: performatividad, corporalidad y relaciones de poder en la narcocultura mexicana,” tesis para grado de doctora, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2019.

56 Alyssa Vandermeulen, “Old Monery vs New Money Aesthetic: What’s The Difeerence,” *Evie Magazine*, junio 3, 2023, <https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/old-money-vs-new-money-aesthetic-whats-the-difference>

57 Gustavo Álvarez Gardeázabal, “La cultura del narcotráfico,” *Revista Número*, no. 7 (1995): 16.

## Siempre el capitalismo: el principio y fin de todas las cosas

En el 2020 en la exposición *Narcolombia*<sup>58</sup> llegamos a la conclusión de que “lo narco es colombiano por destino, pero capitalista por ética”. Y es que los narcos hicieron posible el capitalismo radical: conseguir dinero, gastarlo en consumos y exhibirlo en apariencias. Lo narco traduce la genialidad del capitalismo que está en que no tiene ética mientras todo sirva para hacer dinero y pasarla bien. Por eso, *Narcolombia* no era una inmersión en la colombianidad sino “un viaje al interior del capitalismo” porque es allí donde se expresa la ética radical de este sistema: buscar el dinero para consumir marcas y exhibir el éxito en las apariencias.<sup>59</sup>

Lo narco expresa la ética del capitalismo ya que es riqueza rápida, alta expresividad visual, gestual y emocional. Un capitalismo de felicidades rápidas (*fast food*) para vivir el presente al máximo. Capitalismo posmoderno que celebra las riquezas express, lava las culpas en la religión y asume el éxito en un estilo pop de la vida. Esta tríada de tradición familia-religión-capitalismo se constituye en aparato cultural que legitima discursos, moral y prácticas populares.

Esta narrativa es construida culturalmente por medios, periodistas, influencers, series de televisión, músicas, artes donde la cultura pop reconoce lo popular para subirlo al cielo de lo *mainstream pop-popular*: “¿de quién estamos hablando? ¿De un actor de Hollywood, de un futbolista, de un jeque árabe, de un magnate de las comunicaciones, de un narcotraficante?” y es que “A cada Capo o nuevo rico que surge del mundo de lo ilícito, la industria cultural le pone una marca y lo vende”.<sup>60</sup> El estilo narco como el sueño del éxito y parque temático del capitalismo. Tal vez por eso Cristián Alarcón,<sup>61</sup> un cronista de la movida cultural narco, escribió “ahora tengo ganas de escribir sobre los narcos rubios: jugadores de la bolsa, bailarinas profesionales, modelos, abogados, personajes que me fascinan porque a veces acaban corriendo más peligroso que alguien que empezó como sicario”.<sup>62</sup>

58 Omar, Rincón, Lucas Ospina y X. Andrade, *Narcolombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2020), 5.

59 Omar, Rincón, “Hacia una teoría de la narcoestética: sin narco no hay paraíso capitalista,” en Santos et al, *Narcotransmisiones*, 53–77.

60 Patricia Coba Gutiérrez, Martha Fajardo Valbuena y Bibian Galeano Sánchez, “Entre gusto oficial y el gusto popular: La otra guerra colombiana: Narcotráfico, exclusión e industria cultural,” fecha de acceso 11 de septiembre de 2023, <https://www.youscribe.com/BookReader/Index/2537828/?documentId=2615807>

61 Cristián Alarcón, *Si me querés, quereme transa* (Buenos Aires: Norma, 2010).

62 Bordón, Juan Manuel, “Cristian Alarcón: el mundo narco habla de un mundo por venir,” *Clarín*, abril 25, 2010.

Lucas Ospina comentando dos matrimonios de la élite de la new money (la corrupta y la narco) comenta que “ambas piezas muestran a grupos sociales emergentes y cómo estos capitalizan sus créditos económicos y políticos, recientemente adquiridos, para pavonearse y mostrar su nuevo estatus. Una pasarela del poder para ver y dejarse ver, una pornografía del anillo y del escote, del esmoquin y del pareo, del implante y del corbatín, del latín del misal y el perreo reguetonero”.<sup>63</sup> Todos están juntos por el afán de poder y el miedo a perderlo, por eso hacer fiesta antes de que se acabe.

Lo paradójico está en que el exótico latino en el siglo XXI es lo narco, ese parque temático hecho de narcos muy machos y de bellas muy putas. Juan Villoro<sup>64</sup> lo expresa cuando dice que para los europeos seguimos siendo un realismo mágico, “una farsa de las autenticidades cruzadas”, “un vértigo de la identidad”, “una absurda *autenticidad artificial*”. Un parque temático de atracciones actualizado por el narco y contado a través de las narrativas de televisión y los estilos de vida digitales. Lo irónico es que ahora lo pop *made in USA* asume este look narco el modo *iconic* y *aesthetic* para vivir en la moda.<sup>65</sup> Y eso se da porque lo latino ejerce activamente la *antropofagia cultural*<sup>66</sup> al comerse el capitalismo pop para hacerlo en modo carnaval popular. La revancha del oprimido legitimado por el opresor.

De ahí surge una identidad latino post-contra-contracultural, un maravilloso latino reactualizado en modo narco y con *look* que no busca la aceptación ni inclusión en los cánones de la burguesía (*old money*) sino que es el mainstream del capitalismo (*new money*) y que se expresa en políticos como Trump o Bukele, deportistas como el futbolista Cristiano Ronaldo, basquetbolista Lebron James, reggaetoneros como J. Balvin, productores como Jay-Z, grupos como Peso pluma, bichotas como 69, babies como las Kardashian. Todos actúan con el mantra capitalista de que el dinero mata cabeza, la fiesta diluye ideas, el yo está por encima de lo colectivo. Un *kitsch pop* que es el nuevo mainstream.

Esta felicidad capitalista debe ser comprendida, analizada, criticada e intervenida. La crítica más contundente y orgánica a esta glamurización estética y capitalización mercantil del narcocapitalista<sup>67</sup> está en Sayak Valencia y su concepto

63 Ospina, “El matrimonio”.

64 Juan Villoro, “Iguanas y dinosaurios: América Latina como utopía del atraso,” Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes, fecha de acceso 11 de septiembre de 2023, [https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/iguanas-y-dinosaurios-america-latina-como-utopia-del-atraso-0/html/fdc324bc-098b-427e-a99d-88ce6bf68556\\_2.html](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/iguanas-y-dinosaurios-america-latina-como-utopia-del-atraso-0/html/fdc324bc-098b-427e-a99d-88ce6bf68556_2.html).

65 *Iconic* y *aesthetic* así en inglés se usan en la vida cotidiana de los jóvenes latinos.

66 Oswaldo de Andrade, “Antropofagia cultural,” *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1 (mayo 1928), [https://buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/educacion/cepa/manifiesto\\_antropofago.pdf](https://buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/educacion/cepa/manifiesto_antropofago.pdf).

67 Vásquez y Urgelles, “Mujeres,” 13.

de *capitalismo gore*<sup>68</sup> para referirse a un sistema económico que ha convertido la violencia en un negocio rentable, al cuerpo en mercancía y a la muerte en capital. En 2021 escribió que la narcocultura pasó de ser una subcultura periférica a “un dispositivo cultural que amasa grandes capitales, construye ideales biopolíticos del género y la sexualidad, genera adeptos y abre nichos de mercado legal a través de la mercadotecnia” que lleva a que el Chapo Guzmán se convierta en un “una especie de anti-héroe de culto” al pasar de “héroe campirano a un *influencer* inspirador de las juventudes transnacionales que precarizadas buscan subvertir sus realidades a través del dinero fácil para costear una vida de lujos e hiperconsumo, tal como lo muestran algunas canciones de rap de cantantes estadounidenses que hacen apología de su vida y su obra criminal”.<sup>69</sup>

En la misma línea Rossana Reguillo propone la *narcomáquina*<sup>70</sup> que busca la disolución de la persona y la *necromáquina*<sup>71</sup> para cuando ya no basta con morir sino que esta se convierte en mensaje, signo, aseveración de un poder brutal. Reguillo trabaja sobre como la violencia es expresiva ya que su “sentido” se centra “en la exhibición de un poder total e incuestionable” que se hace visible a través de las más “sofisticadas formas de violencia sobre el cuerpo ya despojado de su humanidad”,<sup>72</sup> se mata lo humano, se enuncia con la cifra.

Capitalismo gore, narcocapitalismo, narcomáquina, necromáquina son posibles porque mientras violenta, mata, destruye para producir capitalismo, por el lado cool & pop se diseña ese dispositivo narrativo del que hemos hablado (televisión, música, moda, estilo) que seduce, conforma, blanquea violencias y vende lo narco como el estilo, look y exhibición de vida mainstream ideal. Un cielo de consumos que promete el *yo-pitalismo* donde cada yo puede realizar el *capitalism dream* que tiene como parque temático de exhibición a Miami. Una revolución de clase que ofrece a los excluidos de la educación, la riqueza y el destino “entrar” al capitalismo y disfrutarlo.

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68 Sayak Valencia, *Capitalismo Gore* (México: Paidós, 2016).

69 Sayak Valencia y Lilita Falcón, “Narcomodernidades: de endriagos a CEO’s,” en Santos et al., *Narcotransmisiones*, 47.

70 Rossana Reguillo, “La narcomáquina y el trabajo de la violencia: Apuntes para su decodificación.” *E-Misférica* 82 (2011).

71 Rossana Reguillo, *Necromáquina. Cuando morir no es suficiente* (Barcelona: Ned ediciones, 2021).

72 Reguillo, “La narcomáquina.”



## Finales no felices

Lo narco es el look y estilo mainstream de nuestra época, ya no quiere el cielo burgués (*old money*), quiere el cielo del capitalismo *new money*. Está. Se expande. Es la tendencia. Es latino y “ahora todos quieren ser latinos” como canta el reguetonero Bad Bunny en 'El Apagón'. Y ahora ya es discusión política si “la moda del *ser latino* es apropiación cultural de expresiones culturales e identitarias de personas indígenas o afro caribeñas de la región, así como la estigmatización de una región que, en el campo político, también lucha por el reconocimiento frente a la hegemonía de Estados Unidos y su búsqueda por llevar su democracia y estilo de vida a todo un continente”.<sup>73</sup>

Y el asunto llega a si las mujeres blancas occidentales pueden maquillarse como latinas sin caer en apropiacionismo cultural. ¿Maquillarse como latinas y asumir el narco style es apropiación cultural? “Un tutorial de maquillaje de Hailey Bieber ha recibido una reacción violenta después de que se volvió viral en TikTok, lo que generó dudas sobre la apropiación cultural de los creadores negros y latinos”, todo porque ella se maquilló “delineándose los labios con un delineador marrón y cubriéndolo con brillo”.<sup>74</sup>

La discusión es si eso de las *blt* gringas como las Kardashian o Becky G o españolas como Rosalía es apropiación cultural del estilo latino de fiesta, diversión, sexo y despilfarro. Lo cierto es que este estilo *narcota* es, ahora mismo, el mainstream mundial del gusto pop y el capitalismo. Otra discusión es si lo latino oculta la diversidad cultural de cada una de las identidades que la integran, y si este estilo llega para negar la diversidad de historias y pueblos que nos habitan. Una discusión más es sobre *el tipo de héroes* que se representan y la memoria que se produce sobre nuestras violencias.

El narcocapitalismo se tomó las violencias del mundo y se está ganando las democracias, y esto no es nada bonito, pero para lavar su cara ha convertido al estilo narco en el glamour del mundo y estilo de vida en debemos vivir.

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73 Mariano, Yberri, “¿Por qué “ser latino” está tan de moda: ¿reconocimiento real o apropiación cultural?,” *Sputnik*, agosto 23, 2022, <https://sputniknews.lat/20220823/por-que-ser-latino-esta-tan-de-moda-reconocimiento-real-o-apropiacion-cultural-1129650813.html>.

74 Natalie Brown, “Hailey Bieber’s ‘brownie-glazed lips’ trend bashed as cultural appropriation,” *The New York Post*, octubre 5, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/10/05/hailey-biebers-brownie-glazed-lips-trend-bashed-as-cultural-appropriation/>.

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Roberto Abdala Junior

## ***O bem-amado*, carnavalizando a cultura política brasileira e enfrentando a ditadura**

**Resumo:** Este texto é o resultado de uma investigação sobre o impacto da (tele) novela *O bem-amado* na cultura política brasileira. A obra de teleficção foi escrita por Dias Gomes e exibida pela Rede Globo de Televisão em 1973, no auge da ditadura civil-militar. O método utilizado foi o hermenêutico, clássico para pesquisas históricas dessa natureza. A fim de apreender as artimanhas da linguagem audiovisual empregadas pela obra e sua recepção imediata, bem como seus desdobramentos na cultura política brasileira ao longo do tempo, recorreu-se à semiótica bakhtiniana. As principais categorias analíticas bakhtinianas usadas na análise foram o dialogismo e a reação responsiva dos discursos. A abordagem humorística que a obra confere ao tema do coronelismo foi considerada análoga à carnavalização sugerida por Bakhtin que a define como uma estratégia popular de enfrentamento de problemas históricos complexos em condições políticas opressivas. No campo da História, a pesquisa orientou-se pelas noções de didática da história, cultura histórica e consciência histórica propostas por Rüsen e pelo debate sobre relações entre consciência histórica e consciência crítica apresentado por Contreras Saiz. O resultado da investigação demonstrou que a visão humorística e acidamente crítica (carnavalizada) das práticas coronelistas forjadas pela obra impactou a cultura política brasileira da época e manteve-se como referência crítica às práticas políticas nefastas ao longo do tempo.

**Palavras-chave:** Brasil; didática da história; humor; telenovela.

**Abstract:** This research examines the influence of the TV telenovela *O bem-amado* on Brazilian political culture. The telefiction, authored by Dias Gomes and broadcast on Rede Globo de Televisão in 1973, during the civil-military dictatorship, was subjected to the classic hermeneutic method for historical investigation. To comprehend the audiovisual language strategies utilized by the piece and its immediate reception, along with its effect on Brazilian political culture throughout the years, we employed Bakhtinian semiotics. The primary Bakhtinian analytical categories used in the analysis were dialogism and the responsive reaction of discourses. The comical approach of the work towards the topic of colonelism was considered

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analogous to the carnivalization proposed by Bakhtin, who defines it as a popular strategy for confronting complex historical problems in oppressive political conditions. In the field of History, the research was guided by the notions of history didactics, historical culture and historical consciousness proposed by Rüsen and the debate on the relationship between historical consciousness and critical consciousness presented by Contreras Saiz. The research findings indicate that the satirical and acidly critical (carnivalized) portrayal of the colonelist practices depicted in the work impacted Brazilian political culture at the time and remained a critical reference to harmful political practices over time.

**Keywords:** Brazil; history didactics; humor; telenovela.

## Introdução

Era uma vez uma pequena cidade na zona rural do estado da Bahia cuja eleição para prefeito foi vencida por um fazendeiro chamado *coronel*<sup>1</sup> *Odorico Paraguaçu*. Uma cidade e um prefeito que podem ser encontrados em qualquer lugar do Brasil desde meados do século XIX. As peripécias desse prefeito, suas relações com políticos que o apoiam e lhe fazem oposição, com sua família; mas, sobretudo, seus interesses e os meios que emprega para atendê-los, bem como os desdobramentos que causam à vida da cidade de *Sucupira* são o tema da telenovela *O bem-amado*, exibida pela Rede Globo de Televisão em 1973. A obra foi a primeira em cores da televisão brasileira, obteve grande sucesso de público, nacional e internacionalmente e é o foco desta pesquisa.

A dramatização das experiências do tempo – especialmente como esse fenômeno – foi se convertendo numa prática cotidiana e seu impacto nas formas de compreensão do mundo é uma questão recente. Um fenômeno que emerge de forma mais categórica na vida de brasileiros a partir da década de 1970, quando a telenovela passou a fazer parte do cotidiano<sup>2</sup>, invadindo os lares e *contaminando*

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1 O termo *coronel* nasce a partir do ano de 1831 quando se criou a *Guarda Nacional*: uma milícia formada pelos proprietários de terra. A partir de 1850 a nomeação de coronel – maior patente para um civil – passou a depender do governo central. O *coronelismo*, assim definido por *Vitor Nunes Leal*, foi um sistema político que concedia grande poder aos proprietários de terras devido à importância desempenhada pelos coronéis, assentados no clientelismo e mandonismo local, apoiados por suas relações com o governo central.

2 Esther Hamburger, *O Brasil Antenado: a sociedade da novela* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2005), 22.

as conversas e os temas dos debates do dia a dia. No interior desse panorama nasce a investigação que proponho aqui: estudar o impacto de O bem-amado sobre a cultura, notadamente, a cultura política dos brasileiros que compunham o *grande público*<sup>3</sup> e seus possíveis desdobramentos históricos.

O incremento das questões anteriores abre outra dimensão a ser considerada na pesquisa: identificar quais elementos do repertório cultural do público brasileiro foi mobilizado pela obra para dar vida ficcional aos aspectos da realidade política, considerando que a obra foi alimentada por uma expectativa de oferecer uma narrativa que desse *visibilidade* às práticas em cujas bases se assentava o exercício da política no país, como veremos ao longo do texto.

## Uma abordagem para apreender sentidos de uma obra

### História, historiografia e didática da história

No campo da História, recorro aos argumentos de Rüsen, por três motivos principais: ele formula uma articulação dos principais aspectos da Teoria da História que marcaram os debates do último século e demonstra o papel capital dos processos de ensino-aprendizagem da disciplina. Rüsen<sup>4</sup> defende a *narrativa* como a forma antropológica de compartilhar experiências humanas do tempo e oferece um enquadramento teórico no qual contempla as três dimensões com as quais a pesquisa está envolvida: reflexões sobre a *narrativa* – em sentido ampliado – e como ela fundamenta as relações entre a história, a ciência História e os processos de seu aprendizado.

A noção de *cultura histórica*, também abordada pelo historiador, delimita a complexa composição de manifestações que pretendem expressar interpretações sobre o passado que circulam na sociedade em cada época. A *consciência histórica*, segundo viés rüseniano, importa, igualmente, porque atribui significado à formação de um tipo de conhecimento que é tributário das obras que mobilizam a *cultura histórica* – destacando seu viés público – para dar sentido ao mundo da vida, nas diversas formas segundo as quais o passado é percebido, interpretado, apreendido e compartilhado socialmente.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Dominique Wolton, *Elogio do grande público: uma teoria crítica da televisão* (São Paulo: Ática, 1996).

4 Jörn Rüsen, *Aprendizagem histórica: fundamentos e paradigmas* (Curitiba: W. A. Editores, 2012).

5 Jörn Rüsen, *Teoria da história: uma teoria da história como ciência* (Curitiba: Editora UFPR, 2015).

Outras noções fundamentais para a investigação foram discutidas por Contreras Saiz.<sup>6</sup> Inicialmente, ela reflete sobre um aspecto que é central: o pensamento crítico. Ao fazer um uma síntese dos estudos que tomam a conceito como *objeto*, explica que este é entendido como “a capacidade que têm os indivíduos de adquirir um pensamento reflexivo e transformador.” Acrescenta que *o pensamento crítico* tem foco no tópico que está em debate ou no processo de racionalização a respeito do conteúdo,<sup>7</sup> argumento que se articula aos de Rösen, quando ele explica que a consciência histórica visa a orientação dos indivíduos na vida prática.

A seguir, Contreras Saiz analisa a noção de *consciência histórica*, destacando aspectos importantes: preocupações, individuais e sociais, com o passado; preocupação dos indivíduos para além da esfera privada, em relação a grupos sociais cada vez mais amplos; desenvolvimento progressivo de uma consciência reflexiva, crítica e transformadora.<sup>8</sup> Há que se destacar dois elementos que estão articulados ao pensamento röseniano: a busca de orientação da vida prática, característica da consciência histórica; a visão crítica como elemento de aperfeiçoamento das formas que visam a representar o passado e que Rösen emprega para explicar as mudanças ocorridas nas categorias narrativas históricas.<sup>9</sup> Contreras Saiz finaliza, observando que [...] “o pensamento crítico como a *consciência histórica* se relaciona com um processo de aprendizagem, sendo o pensamento histórico a habilidade que desenvolve a consciência histórica”.<sup>10</sup>

Ao tomarmos essas reflexões de forma articulada, evidencia-se a necessidade da formação de um pensamento crítico para que haja uma consciência histórica, capaz de reconhecer os fundamentos da vida em sociedade e cuja função precípua é a formação da cidadania, segundo dois propósitos principais: [...] “a participação política e colocar em questão o que se lê, vê e escuta nos diferentes meios de informação, e da cultura”.<sup>11</sup> A partir das reflexões anteriores é possível concluir que o pensamento crítico, diante da cultura histórica, consiste no desenvolvimento de uma competência para formar um juízo a respeito dos discursos que circulam na cultura sobre o passado e que a operação inclui [...] “a interpretação, a análise, a avaliação e a conclusão”.<sup>12</sup>

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6 Mónica Contreras Saiz, “Consciencia histórica, pensamiento crítico y telenovelas en Latinoamérica,” en *Escenarios para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico*, coords. Grupo de Trabajo Formación Docente y Pensamiento Crítico (Buenos Aires, Bogotá: CLACSO, 2019), 51–86.

7 *Ibid.*, 53, 58. Tradução minha.

8 *Ibid.*, 56.

9 Rösen, *Teoria*, 247–73.

10 Contreras Saiz, “Consciencia,” 59.

11 *Ibid.*, tradução minha.

12 Contreras Saiz, “Consciencia,” 58–9. Tradução minha.



A historiadora também define as *telenovelas da memória* como aquelas que narram [...] “fatos verificáveis, que são contextualizados dentro de uma orientação melodramática ficcional e que seus telespectadores, ou seus pais ou avós podem reconhecer”.<sup>13</sup> A definição permite incluir *O bem-amado*. A questão central torna-se, então, apreender o impacto de uma obra como *O bem-amado*, averiguando os elementos da cultura empregados, significados a que recorreu e os sentidos que imprimiu a eles para considerar os possíveis desdobramentos sobre o repertório cultural do público, de forma a orientar sua ação política com vistas a realizar uma transformação no futuro do país.

## **Bakhtin: argumentos e subversões das tradições acadêmicas e culturais**

Ao descrever como se dá a mediação entre a experiência do tempo e sua configuração narrativa, Ricoeur contribui para que se possa reconhecer o papel fundamental da recepção das obras, inclusive aquelas em linguagem *cinematográfica*, como prefiro chamá-las. Segundo o autor, é preciso conhecer [...] “o processo *concreto* pelo qual a configuração textual faz mediação entre a *prefiguração do campo prático e sua refiguração pela recepção*. Corolariamente, *aparecerá no final da análise que o leitor é o operador por excelência*.”<sup>14</sup> Temos aí um problema ampliado porque obras forjadas em linguagem cinematográfica demandam uma abordagem mais complexa. A pretensão de responder ao problema de investigação, com seus múltiplos elementos e de forma articulada, me faz recorrer às teses bakhtinianas.

## **Discursos, significados e sentidos em um enunciado definido**

Mikhail Bakhtin, considerando que a função precípua das obras de linguagem é a comunicação, argumenta que a [...] “*real unidade da comunicação discursiva [é] o enunciado*.”<sup>15</sup> Um discurso é um *elo na comunicação cultural* que opera no seio de

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<sup>13</sup> Contreras Saiz, “Consciencia,” 60. Tradução minha.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Tempo e narrativa, A intriga e a narrativa histórica* (São Paulo: Editora WMF Martins Fontes, 2019), 1:95. Destaques meus.

<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem* (São Paulo: Editora 34 Ltda, 2017), 28. Destaque do autor.

um *enunciado*, concebido como uma composição semiótica de elementos verbais e não-verbais, em um contexto sociocultural e histórico. Um discurso, ao ser enunciado interage, então, com os demais que compõem a comunicação cultural – os discursos políticos, científicos, artístico etc. Todos os elementos do enunciado são *significativos* – fazem parte de uma dada cultura – e operam de forma não hierarquizada. A questão central é, portanto, como apreender as múltiplas interações discursivas, verbais e não-verbais, que são engendradas por um discurso ao ser enunciado.<sup>16</sup>

Bakhtin defende que todos os discursos não são monológicos como pretendem os enunciadorees, mas sim *dialógicos*.<sup>17</sup> Os significados culturais que entram na formulação do discurso só adquirem sentido para Bakhtin, assim como para Ricoeur, segundo vimos, em seu destino, na *recepção ou apropriação* (termo mais histórico) que é efetivada pelo público, parte essencial do processo de comunicação. Mas, se todo discurso é *dialógico* – se estrutura como diálogo – e cumpre a função de comunicar, também visa a obter uma resposta do público – individual ou social a partir dessas considerações, outra noção torna-se, então, operatória e essencial: a *reação responsiva*.

A explicação dessa noção por Bakhtin é elucidativa. Segundo ele:

A obra, assim como a réplica do diálogo, visa a resposta do outro (dos outros), uma *compreensão responsiva ativa*, e para tanto adota todas as espécies de formas: busca exercer uma influência didática sobre o leitor, convencê-lo, suscitar sua apreciação crítica, influir sobre êmulos e continuadores etc. A obra *predetermina as posições responsivas do outro nas complexas condições da comunicação verbal de uma dada esfera cultural*. A obra é um elo na cadeia da comunicação verbal; do mesmo modo que a réplica do diálogo, ela se relaciona com as outras obras-enunciados: com aquelas a que ela responde e com aquelas que lhe respondem [...].<sup>18</sup>

Ao encerrar as considerações teórico-metodológicas às quais recorro para investigar obras em linguagem cinematográfica, penso que essa passagem de Robert Stam é decisiva:

[O] *conceito multidimensional e interdisciplinar do dialogismo*, [refere-se] não apenas ao diálogo dos personagens no interior do filme, mas também ao diálogo do filme com filmes anteriores, assim como ao “diálogo” de gênero ou de vozes de classe no interior do filme, ou o diálogo entre as várias trilhas (entre a música e a imagem, por exemplo). Além disso, poderia referir-se também ao diálogo que conforma o processo de produção específico (entre produtor e diretor, diretor e ator), *assim como às maneiras como o discurso fílmico é conformado pelo público, cujas reações potenciais são levadas em conta*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 143–72.

<sup>18</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estética da criação verbal* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1992), 279. Destaques meus.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Stam, *Bakhtin: da teoria literária à cultura de massa* (São Paulo: Ática, 1992), 33–34.

Um discurso é; pois, formulado e modelado com a finalidade de comunicar e, sob viés *dialógico*, pretende *interpelar* o repertório cultural do público, *esperando* provocar uma *reação responsiva* – individual ou social. A reação responsiva do público é concebida pelos realizadores como uma estratégia de recepção da obra. As *respostas* esperadas pelos enunciadores/realizadores, destacadas na citação acima e explicadas por Bakhtin na passagem anterior, podem ser de diversas naturezas: cognitivas (*reflexão*) e/ou práticas (*ação*). Noutros termos, as reações responsivas podem ser ações, respostas verbais e não-verbais, também reflexões a respeito do tema abordado.

As teses bakhtinianas abrem, portanto, a possibilidade de investigar o que se pode chamar de *recepção histórica* de uma obra, uma vez que, passado o tempo, não é mais possível entrevistar os membros desse público no momento da exibição. A fim de minimizar o problema de uma *recepção histórica*, é possível apreender a efetiva *reação-responsiva* desse mesmo público investigando desdobramentos empíricos apresentados por ele no contexto de época.

## A carnavalização da cultura política: o humor como estratégia de enfrentamento

Outra noção formulada por Bakhtin e que nos interessa, estrategicamente, é a de carnavalização. O debate sobre humor e carnavalização proposto pelo autor merece que um excerto no qual a palavra é dele. Explica Bakhtin que,

O riso carnavalesco é em primeiro lugar patrimônio do povo (esse *caráter popular*, como dissemos, é inerente à própria natureza do carnaval); todos riem, o riso é “geral”; em segundo lugar, é *universal*, atinge a todas as coisas e pessoas (inclusive as que participam no carnaval), o mundo inteiro parece cômico e é percebido e considerado no seu aspecto jocoso, no seu alegre relativismo; por último, esse riso é ambivalente alegre e cheio de alvoroço, mas *ao mesmo tempo burlador e sarcástico*, nega e afirma, amortalha e ressuscita simultaneamente.<sup>20</sup>

A noção de *carnavalização* tem sido questionada, mas é possível matizá-la, não aplicando-a horizontalmente; mas sim, preservando seu viés popular, a expectativa de liberdade como elemento de realização humana, de maneira a conferir às práticas de carnavalização um traço mais antropológico. O conceito ganha, assim, um

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Grifos meus.

<sup>20</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *A cultura popular na idade média e no renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2013): 10. Destaque meu.

caráter metodológico e operatório mais categórico. A *carnavalização*, tomada em chave antropológica, assegura seu emprego como forma *tolerada* de subversão de convenções, concordando com as características atribuídas por Bakhtin ao carnaval renascentista.

Seu emprego é interessante como ferramenta teórica para investigar como o humor pode ser usado para instigar a crítica e mobilizar a *consciência histórica* por obras como telenovelas, estudar seu impacto na cultura, bem como outros desdobramentos socioculturais e históricos. Afinal, o próprio Bakhtin<sup>21</sup> argumenta que é nas imagens da cultura cômica que uma [...] “nova consciência histórica se preparava [...]. [Talvez, por] esse motivo, essa consciência encontrou sua expressão mais radical no riso.” A *carnavalização* por meio do humor torna-se ainda mais pertinente à pesquisa se pensarmos que seu emprego constrói um tipo de *cumplicidade*<sup>22</sup> entre o autor e seus públicos que é característica desse gênero de discurso.

## Humor e carnavalização

Há uma vasta bibliografia sobre humor, o riso e seus usos na cultura ocidental que se estende de Bakhtin<sup>23</sup> a Eagleton<sup>24</sup>, passando por Freud, Pirandello, Bergson, entre muitos outros. Privilegiei os dois primeiros por sua afinidade teórica. Procurei cotejá-los com alguns autores que tratam do emprego do humor em viés político ou em diálogo com a cultura brasileira de época.

Vejamos como alguns desses autores colaboram para refletir sobre o problema em foco. Eagleton, por exemplo, afirma que o “carnaval é violência ficcionalizada, virtualizada, alquimicamente transformada em teatro e espetáculo e, como tal, um tipo jovial de beligerância”<sup>25</sup>. A reflexão do escritor e humorista Ziraldo Alves Pinto corrobora com o argumento de Eagleton. Ao definir humor em 1973, em entrevista à revista *Veja*<sup>26</sup> explica que se trata de uma “análise crítica do homem e da vida [...], desmistificadora, reveladora, cáustica.” Acrescentando: “é uma forma de tirar

21 Bakhtin, *A cultura*, 85.

22 Beth Brait, *Ironia em perspectiva polifônica* (Campinas, São Paulo: Editora Unicamp, 1996), 109–10. A autora, cuja abordagem é bakhtiniana, ao estudar a ironia apresenta o argumento de cumplicidade que serve, igualmente, ao meu ver, ao humor e à novela analisada.

23 Bakhtin, *A cultura*.

24 Terry Eagleton, *Humor: o papel fundamental do riso na cultura* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2020).

25 *Ibid.*, 127.

26 A revista *Veja* e sua difusão: no número 251 de 27 de junho de 1973, página 21, o editor Mino Carta nos oferece um panorama da penetração da revista: distribuição em 2500 cidades; além de contar com 50.000 assinantes.

a roupa da mentira, e o seu êxito está na alegria que êle provoca pela descoberta inesperada da verdade.”<sup>27</sup>

Vejam, agora, como podem ser usadas as noções anteriores de forma a revelar aspectos operatórios que a exibição de *O bem-amado* realizou, bem como o uso de elementos da *experiência* e da história; da consciência histórica que a obra buscou mobilizar, os significados com os quais trabalhou com esses fins, além de os sentidos que a novela confere a aspectos da cultura histórica, da cultura política etc; visando a apreender impactos socioculturais que representou.

## Revelando *O bem-amado*: O Brasil na época da novela

O Brasil entre 1964 e 1988 estava submetido à mais sangrenta e radical ditadura militar, apoiada por segmentos sociais mais abastados e parte das classes médias radicalizadas que, não somente apoiaram o golpe e a ditadura; mas, chegaram a saudá-la, inicialmente, influenciados pelas mídias e ações na esfera pública, produtos midiáticos – apresentações culturais, “acadêmicas”, livros, curtas-metragens etc; – patrocinados por proto-instituições de pesquisa, com apoio de órgãos do governo estadunidense.<sup>28</sup> A partir da radicalização da ditadura, com a decretação do AI-5<sup>29</sup> e do crescimento da perseguição política, da violência promovida pelos órgãos de repressão que adquiriram perigosa autonomia em relação aos seus superiores militares, passaram a assustar seus apoiadores de primeira hora na década de 1970.

O Brasil passava por um processo de industrialização e urbanização intenso, desde os anos 1930 que se aprofundou nos anos 1950 em diante. Os segmentos populares que viviam nas cidades eram, pois, compostos por migrantes das zonas rurais que buscavam melhores condições de vida nas grandes metrópoles. Grupos distantes de seus espaços de convivência e sociabilidade e que haviam perdido parte das referências socioculturais que orientavam suas vidas, aspirações, ações políticas etc. Formados por uma maioria de indivíduos com pouca ou nenhuma

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<sup>27</sup> *Veja*, n° 69, 31 de dezembro de 1969, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Skidmore, *Brasil: de Castelo a Tancredo, 1964 a 1985* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> “Atos Institucionais” – AI – era o nome atribuído à legislação imposta ao país pela ditadura. Os AI’s não passavam pelo crivo do Congresso, sendo que o AI-5 (1968–1978) instaura a censura prévia, confere aos governos a possibilidade de suspender direitos políticos e cassar políticos eleitos, entre outras medidas arbitrárias.

escolaridade, essa população experimentara muito bem as práticas representadas pelo *O bem-amado*, uma vez que em suas regiões de origem elas eram operadas de forma mais explícita. Apesar disso, o caráter sórdido de suas práticas espúrias; ilegais, muitas vezes, bem como seus desdobramentos sociais nefastos, podiam não ser tão evidentes para a maioria.

O ano de 1973, em que a *novela* foi exibida, merece especial atenção, tanto ao refletirmos a respeito da *cultura popular* – no sentido da cultura comum, de todos<sup>30</sup> – e, mais ainda, se considerarmos o papel que as obras de teleficção exercem sobre ela; especialmente se pusermos foco sobre o elemento político e o viés humorístico conferido à trama. Afinal, a década que se estende do fim do ano de 1968, com a decretação do AI-5 até 1978, foi um dos períodos mais sombrios e cruéis da ditadura empresarial-militar brasileira. Na mesma época, a televisão e sua programação, especialmente a novela, passaram a fazer parte do cotidiano de amplas parcelas da sociedade brasileira – 22,8% dos lares contavam com televisão.<sup>31</sup>

## ***O Bem-amado*: uma obra em diálogo com a cultura política brasileira**

A novela *O bem-amado* deve ser identificada como um novo gênero de teleficção [...] “que não é uma cópia do folhetim de estilo europeu, nem do seriado americano – ainda que inscrito no dinamismo da serialização”.<sup>32</sup> *O bem-amado* foi a primeira novela em cores exibida pela televisão brasileira. Foi ao ar – jargão de época – entre 24 de janeiro e 9 de outubro de 1973, em 178 capítulos, às 22 horas.<sup>33</sup> A linguagem mais coloquial, abordando temas da realidade brasileira eram inovações que foram testadas pela TV Excelsior em 1963, chegando a conquistar grande sucesso com *Beto Rockfeller* entre 1968 e 1969, na TV Tupi. Mas, além dessas novidades, o sucesso de *O Bem-amado*, “dobrando a audiência no horário,” alcançou 60% de

30 Raymond Williams, *La larga revolución* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 2003).

31 Na época era comum a assistência coletiva da programação. Segundo a revista *Veja* (no 366, 10 de setembro de 1975, 70), formavam-se grupos de treze pessoas nas cidades, pequenas multidões de trezentos e cinquenta na zona rural, lembrando que muitas prefeituras instalavam televisores em locais públicos. Ver também Hamburger, *O Brasil*, 22.

32 Michèle Mattelart e Armand Mattelart, *O carnaval das imagens: a ficção na TV* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1998), 9.

33 Na pesquisa recorri à caixa com dez discos (DVD) produzidos pela Globo Marcas em 2012.

audiência, uma façanha na época, sendo também a primeira a ser comercializada, internacionalmente, pela empresa.<sup>34</sup>

A cultura política que a novela satirizou pode ser considerada um elemento de continuidade na sociedade brasileira, por mais que cause um certo desconforto entre pesquisadores e em segmentos mais cultivados da sociedade. A constatação não é somente pessoal, mas pode ser encontrada na própria sociedade, uma vez que a novela recebeu uma *propaganda* da Rede Globo<sup>35</sup> se referindo à evidente analogia entre o *Odorico* da ficção e o ex-presidente do Brasil, Jair M. Bolsonaro quanto ao tratamento dispensado aos problemas que assolam uma sociedade, a epidemia na ficção e a pandemia na realidade empírica recente.

Historicamente revelador é o fato de nas propagandas do jornal *O Globo* ligado à *TV Globo* ou nas reportagens do semanário *Veja* sobre televisão ao longo do ano de 1973, ou na reportagem sobre Paulo Gracindo, intérprete de *Odorico*; mesmo sobre Dias Gomes, ou noutras matérias sobre *O bem-amado*, quase não se encontra comentários sobre o viés político. O aspecto, quando surge, não se destaca de outros elementos da trama, como o comentário de Paulo Gracindo, o intérprete do coronel, afirma: “*Odorico*, o bem-amado que tem todos os defeitos de um *político* do interior.”<sup>36</sup>

Na mesma reportagem, Gomes comenta: “Através de personagens extrovertidos, e num clima muito aberto, onde não existem conflitos psicológicos, procuro focalizar os problemas através do ponto de vista cômico.”<sup>37</sup> Mas, como ele mesmo explicaria mais tarde numa entrevista, quando o país havia retornado à democracia: sua geração de teatrólogos, dos anos 1950/60, procurou colocar em debate “questões da realidade brasileira”, enfatizando que “a realidade é subversiva, em si”.<sup>38</sup> Cotejando as falas de 1973 e a de 1998 fica evidente que o fato de não comentarem o viés político da obra foi uma estratégia para escapar ao crivo da censura.

O dramaturgo, com seu vasto repertório teatral, profundo conhecimento da sociedade brasileira e um sofisticado senso crítico a respeito da realidade, reunia as melhores qualidades para criar um personagem e uma cidade na qual a vida política do país poderia ser representada com tipos cuja verossimilhança vinha das experiências empíricas dessas populações que inchavam as cidades brasileiras. Além disso, o autor da novela foi membro do Partido Comunista Brasileiro – PCB – até o Golpe Militar de 1964.

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34 *O Globo*, 28 de janeiro de 1973, 28.

35 Conferir em: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQzr406\\_BAM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQzr406_BAM). Consultado em 03/02/2023.

36 *Veja*, nº 230, 31 de janeiro de 1973, 80 Sessão Rádio e TV. Grifo meu.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Gomes, em entrevista ao Museu da Televisão Brasileira (27/11/1998: 37’30”) afirma ter feito adaptações de quinhentas obras da literatura universal para o rádio. Ver em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf37wlp3rI>. Consultado em 23/03/22.

O autor estava, portanto, muito bem informado sobre os debates a respeito do papel das artes do espetáculo na mobilização das massas populares e viu na sua atuação na televisão uma oportunidade rara para realizá-la.<sup>39</sup> Dias Gomes tinha ainda experiência com a linguagem teledramatúrgica, até então incipiente na televisão no início dos anos 1970, além de inúmeros<sup>40</sup> trabalhos em rádio-teatro e também a experiência de ter uma peça *O pagador de promessas* de sua autoria cinematografada que conquistara a *Palma de ouro no Festival de Cannes*, na França (1962), como melhor filme.

Talvez pelas qualidades, pretensões políticas e perspicácia do autor, outro elemento estratégico é inserido na narrativa: o espaço público. A cidade e sua dinâmica entram na composição da trama, conferindo um apelo dramático inovador à obra. Nesse sentido, os personagens atuam e sofrem no interior de um contexto sociocultural e histórico que é *Sucupira*. Muitas cenas são em locações na cidade real de *Sepeitiba* – cidade do interior do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – que estabelecem uma relação dialógica com muitas das peripécias e ardis do coronel.

Nasce, então, de algumas peças políticas do autor e das entranhas das práticas políticas brasileiras, que remontavam ao século XIX – o *coronelismo* – um personagem, satiricamente caricato que representava as bases nas quais se assentavam, em grande medida, a maioria dos políticos que sustentavam a ditadura. O coronel *Odorico* encarnava, pois, os diversos personagens reais que se poderia – e ainda hoje é possível – encontrar em todo o Brasil.

## Enredo e narrativa

A estória de *O bem-amado* é, certamente, de uma simplicidade prosaica, muito ao gosto popular; mas, igualmente, com uma monumental capacidade de mobilizar os repertórios populares mais tradicionais, como pretendi demonstrar recorrendo ao *era uma vez* na abertura deste texto. Mas, como outras grandes obras do teatro, da literatura e do cinema, sua complexidade e arte emergem no engenho dos personagens, nas artimanhas de linguagens empregadas e diversidades de performances – técnicas, teatrais, cinematográficas etc. – usadas na realização da obra.

<sup>39</sup> Alfredo Dias Gomes, “O engajamento é uma prática de liberdade,” *Revista Civilização Brasileira*, Caderno Especial no. 2 (julho de 1968): 1–17.

<sup>40</sup> Dias Gomes, em entrevista ao Museu da Televisão (27/11/1998) afirma ter feito adaptações de quinhentas peças de teatro para o rádio. Ver em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf37wlp3rI>. Consultado em 23/03/22.



O enredo tematiza a trajetória do coronel Odorico Paraguaçu à frente da administração da cidade de *Sucupira*. Ações astuciosas, inescrupulosas e ilegais convertem-se na forma de *governar* a cidade, desde a eleição do *coronel* – como o personagem é, sistematicamente, chamado, embora o termo tenha sido censurado na época –, cuja plataforma de campanha foi a criação de um cemitério. O foco da narrativa consiste em acompanhar Odorico e seu séquito de seguidores, tanto os mais ingênuos, como *Dirceu Borboleta*, assessor do coronel na prefeitura, ou aqueles mais ardilosos, como algumas das irmãs Cajazeiras, demonstrando, por ações e palavras, o caráter dos personagens, especialmente, Odorico.

Sua campanha eleitoral e toda sua trajetória na trama consiste na busca incansável para inaugurar o cemitério. Obviamente, como elemento satírico que orienta a novela está o fato de faltarem mortos para a inauguração. A vida de Odorico e o mote em torno do qual vão se dar os acontecimentos em *Sucupira* e que vão revelando, progressiva e sistematicamente, o caráter do coronel, converte-se na expectativa da morte de algum membro daquela *comunidade imaginada*.<sup>41</sup> Afinal, *Sucupira* é “um microcosmo onde há, em miniatura, todos os problemas do mundo”, comentou Dias Gomes ao jornalista da *Veja*.<sup>42</sup>

O resultado é uma narrativa acidamente crítica à tradicional cultura política brasileira – de época, ou da atualidade – expressa sob uma abordagem satírica. Merece destaque uma das sequências que se destacam desse viés: o enterro de Odorico.<sup>43</sup> No cemitério, quando Luiz (ou Lulu) Gouveia, seu adversário político nas eleições e candidato da oposição faz um discurso, extremamente, elogioso ao defunto, isso parece indicar que Gomes faz uma crítica ou mesmo uma denúncia sobre os políticos brasileiros que não se distinguem muito entre si.

## Humor popular como estratégia discursiva

Humor e carnaval são temas que estão em *diálogo* na cultura popular e/ou nos estudos sobre a cultura ocidental, como vimos na citação de Bakhtin. Alguns dos mais importantes movimentos artísticos brasileiros, como o *Modernismo* dos anos

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41 Faço referência à ideia que fundamenta a obra de Anderson (Benedict Anderson, *Comunidades imaginadas: reflexões sobre a origem e a expansão do nacionalismo* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2005)), bem como indico a possibilidade de reconhecer um papel importante para as novelas na criação da nação, debate que é fundamental na atualidade.

42 *Veja*, n° 230, 31 de janeiro de 1973, 80 Sessão Rádio e TV.

43 *O bem-amado*, dirigido por Milton Gonçalves e Régis Cardoso, roteiro de Alfredo Dias Gomes (Rio de Janeiro, Globo Comunicações e Participações S/A, 1973/2012), 10 DVD, disco 10, 3°, 9°, 41”.

1920, com sua proposta antropofágica e o *Tropicalismo* dos anos 1960, inspirado no primeiro, são expressões da *carnavalização* na cultura do Brasil que nunca se afastam de um toque de humor mais elaborado e sutil.<sup>44</sup> Stam explica esta prática artística como [...] “uma devoração crítica da técnica e da informação dos países metropolitanos que utilizaria a força do ‘inimigo’ contra ele” [...], de forma que o artista, incapaz de evitar a arte e a cultura estrangeira, [...] “tem de engolir-la, carnalizá-la e fazer uma reciclagem para objetivos nacionais [...]”.<sup>45</sup>

Sob o argumento de Stam<sup>46</sup> e tomando o cinema como objeto, as *chanchadas*<sup>47</sup> que pontificaram na cultura brasileira entre a primeira década do século vinte e o final dos anos 1950, também oferecem uma contribuição importante para o tratamento humorístico de questões sociais e políticas brasileiras, sem esquecer que essas obras tinham público, enchiam as salas de cinemas. O Brasil da época apresentou uma novidade jornalística, igualmente política e satírica: o semanário *O Pasquim*. Mas, certamente, foi no carnaval<sup>48</sup> e seu escárnio aberto abordando a vida brasileira que podemos encontrar as maiores inspirações para a estratégia empregada pelo autor.

## Humor em *O bem-amado*

O humor foi aplicado de forma indiscriminada ao longo da novela. A abordagem das práticas coronelistas é caracterizada em viés acidamente satírico. A pretensão de satirizar práticas políticas nacionais expressa-se desde o nome da cidade, Sucupira, denominação de uma árvore, como Brasil. *O bem-amado*, também faz troça com os políticos brasileiros, sempre eleitos por uma população que ignora seus ardis e suas práticas sórdidas. A obra lança mão de uma estratégia muito mordaz, pois todas as ações corriqueiras são objeto de viés humorístico, embora as questões mais abomináveis sejam criadas e encenadas em abordagem *realista*, ou seja, poderiam ocorrer na realidade.

44 Dilmar Miranda, “Carnavalização e multidentidade cultural: antropofagia e tropicalismo,” *Tempo Social* 9, no. 2 (1997): 125–54.

45 Stam, *Bakhtin*, 49, 55.

46 Stam, *Bakhtin*, 53.

47 A chanchada foi um gênero de filmes difícil de definir por ter passado por diversos momentos que pode ser caracterizado, genericamente, como versão brasileira, burlesca e/ou carnalizada de apelo popular e comercial.

48 Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha, *Ecoss da folia: Uma história social do carnaval carioca entre 1880 e 1920* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001).

O título *O bem-amado* também escarnece com os políticos brasileiros, sempre eleitos por uma população que ignora seus ardis, suas práticas sórdidas e tende a reverenciá-los, pelo poder e as benesses que podem advir daí, pela distinção que a afinidade pode atrair ou até por ignorância. O resultado é uma narrativa acidamente crítica à tradicional cultura política brasileira – de época, ou da atualidade – expressa sob uma abordagem satiricamente humorística.

Gomes imprime um tratamento paradoxal aos temas políticos, especialmente, e práticas sórdidas, concordando com algumas teorias sobre a ironia, segundo as quais e parafraseando Brait,<sup>49</sup> a forma de discurso adotado prevê e convoca, sob a forma de uma piscadela lúdica, um público cúmplice, particularmente, *ativo* – influência bakhtiniana –; capaz de identificar os universos de valores encenados e de participar da visão crítica oferecida pela obra. Importa observar que, embora haja uma explicação teórica para a elaboração empreendida por Gomes na obra, sua *expertise* em realizá-la é, ainda hoje, impressionante.

Tudo na narrativa ganha ares de sátira, desde o uso de uma linguagem rebuscada, com traços de academicismos inventados e, obviamente, incompreensíveis para a grande maioria da população e que eram e são usadas, sistematicamente, pelos políticos, surgem nas falas de Odorico. As flas do coronel ganham um tom burlesco, em expressões como, “Vamos botar de lado os entretantos e partir para os finalmente”; ou “Isto deve ser obra da esquerda comunista, marronzista e badernenta”, ou “Vai ter uma confabulância político-sigilista sobre as nossas candidaturas”. Até a imagem de *Odorico* foi objeto desses usos, uma vez que esse era um repertório compartilhado na cultura com outros personagens da vida prática e/ou da cultura histórica e política brasileira; Getúlio Vargas, por exemplo.<sup>50</sup>

O cinismo, a hipocrisia, a falta de ética, de honestidade e até de humanidade que permitem ao coronel manipular todos que se relacionam com ele – desde o cangaceiro *Zeca Diabo* que é perdoado com a intenção de que volte a matar e assegure a inauguração do cemitério, até *Dirceu Borboleta* que se casa com *Dulcineia*, uma das irmãs cajazeiras, culminando com a instalação de uma *escuta* – inspiração atribuída ao escândalo de *Watergate*, nos EUA – no confessionário da igreja de Sucupira.

As relações de sedução, com viés sexual que Odorico pratica com as irmãs Cajazeiras é outro testemunho explícito desse caráter conferido à trama. Mas, o mais estarrecedor talvez seja a tentativa de Odorico de impedir a chegada de trata-

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<sup>49</sup> Brait, *Ironia*, 110.

<sup>50</sup> Anne Araújo Vilela, “As performances de Odorico Paraguaçu em “O bem-amado” (1973): uma sátira à política brasileira no século XX” (diss. para Mestrado em Performances Culturais, Universidade Federal de Goiás, 2020.)

mento para uma epidemia que se disseminava em Sucupira. O imbróglio ficcional foi usado como analogia ao ex-presidente do Brasil, Bolsonaro, em relação à abordagem que seu governo dispôs à pandemia de COVID-19 pela TV Globo, em propaganda de uma nova exibição da novela pela empresa de Streaming ligada a ela, a Globo Play.<sup>51</sup>

O humor não se restringe, entretanto, às expressões orais e imagéticas dos personagens. Na chegada do cangaceiro<sup>52</sup> Zeca Diabo à Sucupira<sup>53</sup>, por exemplo, é possível observar uma sátira aos filmes de *faroeste* em *diálogo* com as *chanchadas*; é a linguagem *cinematográfica* que serve de ferramenta satírica. A analogia com o cangaceiro *Lampião*,<sup>54</sup> personagem histórico ícone do banditismo no sertão brasileiro, representado e mitificado pela literatura de cordel por todo o Nordeste, também é muito evidente.

As tomadas – recorro à nomenclatura do cinema – que compõem a sequência imitam os clássicos do gênero no cinema. Iniciam-se pelas patas do cavalo que anda pelas ruas de Sucupira, com acompanhamento sonoro análogo aos dos *faroestes*. Enquanto isso diversos personagens comentam e são apresentadas tomadas sobre a vida de banditismo e violência do cangaceiro. A cidade vai se esvaziando...

O personagem desce da montaria e entra no bar da cidade. A seguir, ele, diante de alguns *clientes* amedrontados do bar se dirige ao proprietário e pede uma bebida. Nesse momento, ouvimos a voz estridente, um tanto histriônica de um personagem que deveria ser a personificação de um cangaceiro, matador e sanguinário, artifício humorístico semelhante ao das *chanchadas*. Depois, confirmando a desconstrução do cangaceiro – afinal, a linguagem é de novela! –, *Zeca Diabo* se dirige à Igreja, onde vai rezar e explicar ao padre que deixou a vida do cangaço. O personagem converte-se, imediatamente, em anti-herói.

51 *Globoplay*, “O bem-amado | Novela | Globoplay,” YouTube, 22 de fevereiro de 2021, vídeo. Ver em: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQzr406\\_BAM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQzr406_BAM). Consultado em 22/03/22.

52 O cangaço foi um fenômeno social, político e cultural ocorrido na região nordeste do Brasil, entre a segunda metade do século 19 e a primeira do século 20. Caracterizava-se pela organização de grupos de bandoleiros – cangaceiros – que andavam armados, cometendo crimes e vendendo proteção pela região da caatinga. A prática do cangaço está associada a questões econômicas, sociais e humanitárias relacionadas às secas da região que provocava o crescimento da miséria, a migração e criava um clima de caos social que alimentava clientelismo e/ou coronelismo.

53 *O bem-amado*, disco 3, 1°, 09”, 20”.

54 Marcos de Araújo Clemente, “Lampião e o cangaço: trajetórias de vida, histórias como flagelo (1920–1938),” *Escritas Do Tempo* 2, no. 4 (2020): 108–32.

## Recepção no tempo: Odorico, um personagem convertido em cultura política popular

O debate sobre a recepção de *O bem-amado* pode ter início com algumas matérias jornalísticas publicadas recentemente em veículos de comunicação de massa brasileiro. Os títulos demonstram a dimensão que as personagens de algumas novelas conquistaram na cultura. O portal de notícias UOL publicou uma matéria em 30 de janeiro de 2010, na sessão *Congresso em foco* com o seguinte título: *Veja como Odorico Paraguaçu ainda vive, e bem perto*.<sup>55</sup> Quase uma década depois, em 17 de novembro de 2019, o jornalista político Ricardo Noblat, da revista *Veja*, publicou em seu blog um artigo de Gustavo Krasuse intitulado “A Síndrome de Odorico Paraguaçu”.<sup>56</sup>

Interessa reconhecer nas publicações que *Odorico* foi citado, não em reportagens sobre novelas, mas em duas matérias que tratam de política. Isso comprova, não somente a permanência e atualidade do personagem, como também sua conversão em ícone cultural brasileiro. Além disso, observamos que o personagem está sendo citado como um representante das piores práticas políticas, a personificação de um estereótipo e que os comunicadores o citam, certos de que será reconhecido pelos leitores médios desses veículos. Se refletirmos sobre as reportagens de época e uma quase ausência de menção ao caráter político da trama, é evidente que os profissionais de comunicação silenciaram sobre a abordagem da novela, reconhecendo o risco da censura e o perigo que representava esse destaque para todos. As vozes de época contribuem para confirmar esta conclusão.

A autora de novelas mais popular na época, *Janete Clair*, esposa de *Gomes*, ao responder à revista *Veja* sobre o papel cultural das novelas no Brasil oferece dados e argumentos importantes: “se você quiser saber se elas [as novelas] despertam a atenção do público para problemas sociais, basta ler as cartas que recebemos ou simplesmente escutar as conversas de rua, onde esses problemas, quando levantados, são debatidos como coisa acontecida.”<sup>57</sup> Ora, se o impacto de uma novela na época era, assim, tão avassalador, situação que não parece ter alterado segundo as pesquisas dos anos 1980, como veremos, ainda pode ser observado recentemente. Acrescente-se

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55 Edson, Sardinha, “Veja como Odorico Paraguaçu ainda vive, e bem perto,” Portal de notícias UOL, 30 de janeiro de 1998. <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/reportagem/veja-como-odorico-paragua-cu-ainda-vive-e-bem-perto/>.

56 Gustavo Krause, “A síndrome de Odorico Paraguaçu” Blog do Ricardo Noblat, *Veja*, 17 de novembro de 2019, <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/noblat/a-sindrome-de-odorico-paraguacu/>.

57 Lucia Rito, “A arte popular das novelas,” *Veja*, no 229, 29 de janeiro de 1973, 3.

que o próprio autor, em entrevista ao programa de televisão *Roda Viva*,<sup>58</sup> revela sua estratégia de trabalho na época: ao escrever sob censura é preciso empregar metáforas.

Não seria absurdo considerar que Dias Gomes optou por apresentar uma trama na qual as mazelas políticas brasileiras, arraigadas em práticas sociais centenárias, eram praticadas por políticos sem quaisquer constrangimentos – sobretudo aqueles que apoiavam a ditadura – e a *carnavalização* dessas práticas e seus agentes, por meio da novela, poderia lançar luz sobre seu caráter ardiloso e nefasto para a sociedade. Também não seria especulativo considerar que Gomes *dialogava* com Chaplin e sua obra lapidar de denúncia sobre Hitler de 1942, *O grande ditador* – filme proibido durante a ditadura, obviamente. A noção, nesse caso, seria a de *antropofagia cultural* dos modernistas, ou o *Tropicalismo*, mais contemporâneo à obra.

Noutros termos, a novela não somente impactou a cultura popular, como recorreu às experiências empíricas e/ou escolares dos telespectadores para forjar um personagem que, a partir de então, iria converter-se em símbolo de políticos sem escrúpulos, com a única preocupação de manter seu poder e derrotar os adversários, sem qualquer ética, honestidade ou compromisso social, humanitário, ou de outra natureza.

## Recepção histórica

*O bem-amado*, diferentemente, de outras experiências de mobilização das quais a teleficção participou ao longo da história brasileira, como em *Anos Rebeldes*,<sup>59</sup> encena aspectos da realidade brasileira que fariam qualquer pessoa se escandalizar. Diante de um ambiente extremamente hostil, um profundo conhecedor da cultura brasileira recorreu às experiências e práticas de seu público com os políticos da vida real, a fim de sintetizá-los em um personagem que viesse a ser representado em uma novela para denunciar suas artimanhas.

As reflexões teóricas corroboram o argumento anterior. Por exemplo, se Contreras Saiz explica que um pensamento crítico motiva à participação na vida

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58 Entrevista de Dias Gomes ao programa *Roda Viva* da *TV Cultura*, ligada à Fundação Padre Anchieta concedida em 12/06/1995. Conferir em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9MydY702io:14':27>". Visto em: 13/04/2022.

59 Roberto Abdala Junior, *Memórias da ditadura, TV e os 'rebeldes' anos 1980: um estudo sobre o papel da minissérie Anos rebeldes na cultura histórica de brasileiros em 1992* (Goiânia: Editora Visão, 2021).

pública,<sup>60</sup> para os adultos que não têm mais o suporte de um/a profissional da história, “a análise crítica parece ser mais importante que a produção especializada,” defende Borries.<sup>61</sup> Ou, de forma mais categórica, ele afirma que muitos adultos se “lembrarão que suas realidades historicamente relevantes foram apreendidas e introduzidas por um dramaturgo, um museu [...].<sup>62</sup> Vejamos então o que nos revela a historiografia sobre a época, analisando as eleições de 1974 a fim de averiguar a pertinência dessas considerações.

Se em 1970 o partido do governo, a Aliança Renovadora Nacional – ARENA – venceu as eleições, como explica Skidmore em novembro de 1974 [...] “o clima político mudou rapidamente”.<sup>63</sup> Mesmo não sendo possível concordar plenamente com Sodré (2001, 29), pesquisador de televisão, ao defender que foi a televisão que decidiu as eleições; a verdade é que o Movimento Democrático Brasileiro – MDB, partido que abrigava a oposição à ditadura, saiu com uma vitória “surpreendente”, nas palavras do historiador. A [...] “derrota do governo não parou ao nível do parlamento federal. As eleições para as assembleias legislativas estaduais foram profundamente adversas para a ARENA”, afirma o brasilianista.<sup>64</sup>

Ao recorrer aos argumentos anteriores, à luz das teses de Bakhtin e Stam, é possível considerar que *O bem-amado*, ao dialogar com o repertório cultural no qual os ardis do coronelismo atávico que caracteriza a vida política brasileira desde o século XIX, bem como o cinismo com o qual *Odorico* era capaz de tratar os nefastos desdobramentos de suas atividades, possa ter levado alguns segmentos da população a formar uma consciência crítica a respeito do jugo ao qual estavam submetidos e buscar, com uma votação mais atenta, evitar aqueles candidatos assemelhados ao *coronel*.

Obviamente, não é possível atribuir a mudança, exclusivamente, à exibição de *O bem-amado*. Mas, seguramente, a participação da novela e suas denúncias nos debates da esfera pública – mesmo de forma humorística, talvez até por isso – seja uma contribuição importante para “explicar por que ela [a classe trabalhadora] votou tão maciçamente no MDB em 1974” – questão apresentada por dois renomados pesquisadores brasileiros.<sup>65</sup>

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60 Contreras Saiz, “Consciencia,” 58.

61 Bodo von Borries, *Jovens e consciência histórica* (Curitiba: W&A Publishers Ltda, 2018), 23.

62 Von Borries, *Jovens*, 117–8.

63 Skidmore, *Brasil*, 336–7.

64 *Ibid.*, 377.

65 *Ibid.*, 388.

## Considerações finais

*O bem-amado* demonstrou como a noção de *carnavalização* é uma dimensão muito mais extensa do que aparece nas considerações bakhtinianas e mais, o quanto uma novela é capaz de *carnavalizar* a cultura ao *dialogar* com o repertório da cultura histórica brasileira, especialmente sob um viés político e empregando uma abordagem humorística; com desdobramentos difíceis e importantes de serem investigados.

As possibilidades de refletir sobre o papel das novelas no Brasil e, por extensão, na América Latina é, pois, fundamental para ampliar nosso conhecimento desse amplo e diverso universo das culturas do continente, sobretudo para avaliar seu impacto nos processos históricos. A extensão de um capítulo restringe as dimensões de debate sobre o tema, mas espero ter demonstrado o quanto isso é incontornável.

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Karen Genschow

## Familiarizing the Audience with Dictatorship

Memory and Mediation of the Collective Trauma of Dictatorship  
Through the Family in Two Television Series of the Southern Cone

**Abstract:** In several television series that deal with the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina (*Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Mary and Mike*, *Montecristo*) diverse family constellations play an important role in the narratives and the representation of different (and partially opposed) actors in the political and social conflicts. But it is in the TV series *Los 80* (Chile, 2008–2014) and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Argentina, 2017) that the family in its entirety is brought to the fore and becomes a collective “main character”. Both series tell the stories (and history) of the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone from the perspective of “ordinary” and middle-class families and mediate in this way between a past related to collective traumas of the respective societies and the current and daily experience of the public in the sense proposed by Martín-Barbero. They function thus as a paradigm of perception and (“correct”, i.e. consensual) interpretation of the past, shared by the audience.

The article explores the function of family as a dispositive of mediation (that operates via identification and recognition), based on Ahmed’s reflections about family as a “happy object” linked to a “promise of happiness”. I will contend that – in agreement with these concepts – especially the latter productions transport a message of consensus and aim at a collective (national) apprenticeship of the common (traumatic) past as a lost happiness that has to be recovered in the key of memory.

**Keywords:** Argentina; Chile; dictatorship; family; happiness; memory.

**Resumen:** En varias series de televisión que abordan las dictaduras de Chile y Argentina (*Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Mary y Mike*, *Montecristo*) diversas constelaciones familiares juegan un papel importante en las narrativas y en la representación de diferentes (y parcialmente opuestos) actores en los conflictos y configuraciones políticas y sociales. Pero es en las series *Los 80* (Chile, 2008–2014) y *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Argentina, 2017) donde la familia en su totalidad pasa a primer plano y se convierte en “protagonista” colectiva. Ambas series cuentan las historias (y la historia) de las dictaduras militares del Cono Sur desde la perspectiva de familias “comunes” y de clase media y median de esta manera entre un pasado

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relacionado con traumas colectivos de las respectivas sociedades y la experiencia actual y cotidiana del público en el sentido propuesto por Martín-Barbero. De este modo, funcionan como paradigma de percepción e interpretación (“correcta”, es decir consensual) del pasado, compartido por el público.

El artículo explora la función de la familia como dispositivo de mediación (que opera a través de la identificación y el reconocimiento), a partir de las reflexiones de Ahmed sobre la familia como “objeto feliz” vinculado a una “promesa de felicidad”. Sostendré que –de acuerdo con estos conceptos– especialmente las últimas producciones transportan un mensaje de consenso y apuntan a un aprendizaje colectivo (nacional) del pasado (traumático) común como felicidad perdida que tiene que ser reconquistada en clave de memoria.

**Palabras clave:** Argentina; Chile; dictadura; familia; felicidad; memoria.

## Introduction

The television series *Los 80* (Chile, 2008–2014) and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Argentina, 2017) tell the stories of Chile and Argentina during the dictatorships from the perspective of “ordinary” families and thus mediate between a past related to collective traumas of the respective societies and the current, everyday experience of the public.

*Los 80* was a highly successful production broadcast on Chilean television channel 13 between 2008 and 2014 with 7 seasons starring “serious” and renowned actors such as Tamara Acosta and Daniel Muñoz, in the roles of the mother and father of the Herrera-López family respectively. The plot is set between 1982 and 1990 in one of the lower middle-class neighborhoods in Santiago under Pinochet. The Argentinian TV series, broadcast at the end of 2017 by the Argentinian public television channel Televisión Pública Argentina in a single season of 71 episodes, presents itself as an “Argentinian version” of the highly successful Spanish TV series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* – even making an important concession by dispensing with the variety of the Río de la Plata, since it should strictly speaking be called “*Contame cómo pasó*” (“Tell me how it happened”). The narrative begins, in historical terms, with the death of Perón, and ends with the return to democracy.

The success of the Chilean TV series shows that this mediation was achieved through a family narrative that apparently manages to represent the nation as a whole –by bringing a large part of it together in front of the television set– and to confront it with a mass media version of its past. The Argentinean TV series, on the other hand, did not have a major impact on the country’s memorial plot since it did not have a major repercussion either in terms of critics or audiences – despite

having touched on a still burning issue in Argentinean society and having recurred to a cast with a certain prestige and a highly successful previous model, as Aprea et al. sustain: “Despite the production effort made, the telenovela did not exceed the low levels of audience that the state network has”,<sup>1</sup> thus insinuating the network itself as a reason of the failure. On another occasion I have referred<sup>2</sup> to possible causes of this failure as a commercial “product” which – in that context – I determined in relation to the treatment of the audiovisual archive in the TV series. According to Erll, one has to think that “television viewers are not passive consumers of a predetermined agenda of televised history. [...] The influence of consumers of memory is described by Kansteiner as a ‘veto power’”.<sup>3</sup> These coordinates are reflected also in terms of scholarship: *Los 80* has a considerable number of critical studies to its credit, while there is hardly any study to *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. There could be, however, other reasons, which in my opinion are strictly related to the family-based narrative model, that could explain this difference in reception between the Chilean and the Argentinean TV series. In the following, however, it is not my aim to delve further into the reasons for success or failure as a primary concern, but rather to analyse the narrative supported by the family as a model of national integration and the way it does not only inscribes itself into but also actively constructs a consensual narrative. My analysis focuses on some specific aspects of these conciliatory versions of the past and family norms, their articulation with the narrative of collective memory as well as the serial and television logic of the TV series as a “product”. To do so, I also consider the differences between the two productions (despite many similarities), which make it possible to establish the current state of memory politics in each country (signified in the versions themselves, the ratings, and the discussions on social networks that they provoked).

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1 Gustavo Aprea, Mónica S. Kirchheimer, and Ezequiel A. Rivero, “Argentina: the year in which national fiction did not find its audience,” in *Obitel 2018: Ibero-American TV Fiction on Video on Demand Platforms*, ed. by Maria Inmacolata Vasallo de Lopez and Guillermo Orozco Gómez (Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2018), 91.

2 Karen Genschow, “Archivos en serie(s): Efectos y afectos del archivo (audiovisual) en *Los 80* (Chile) y *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Argentina),” in *Archivar, desarchivar, anarchivar: Memoria y estrategia*, ed. Leo Cherri and Daniel Link (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2023), 195–210.

3 Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2011), 163.

## Narrating the past – temporality and seriality

In the first place, it should be noted that neither *Los 80* nor *Cuéntame cómo pasó* are strictly speaking “telenovelas”, which is related both to the forms of production and broadcasting as to the narrative structure. Mateos-Pérez speaks, in relation to *Los 80*, of a “fiction TV series” and delimits it as such from the telenovela, which he places in an earlier period as “the most important productions of the domestic television industry” until the 21st century with its turning point in 2006, when “in Chile more TV series than telenovelas were already being broadcast”.<sup>4</sup> Obitel’s diagnosis of the failure of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* does refer to it as a telenovela, without further explanation (for example, the fact that, with only 70 episodes, it is an extremely short telenovela). This points to a terminological problem and a differentiation between television series and telenovela that undoubtedly has to do with modes of production (Mateos-Pérez reminds us for the Chilean case of “the role that state subsidies have played in this panorama”);<sup>5</sup> as well as reception, time slots, etc. Suffice it to point out that both productions share with the telenovela, not only seriality but also some of its narrative elements such as melodrama, to which I will return in the following.

It is worth noting the transnational configuration in both cases – a characteristic feature of serial productions since the 2000s on a global level<sup>6</sup> – whose origin, in this specific case, lies in the US, with *The Wonder Years*. This TV series was later adapted in Spain with *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, from where it returned to the American continent, first with *Los 80* in Chile (2008–2014) and in 2017 with *Cuéntame cómo pasó* in Argentina. In these cases of transnational formats, a fictional serial narrative is usually transferred to another society, another language and sometimes even another era. Buonanno refers to this translation as “indigenisation” (a term she takes from Appadurai), as the process of appropriation by the local culture of forms and expressions made by foreign societies that belong to an external culture, reworking and re-establishing them in coherence with its own systems and meanings, “giving life to forms and expressions that in their hybrid

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4 Javier Mateos-Pérez, “Series de Televisión, Chile y Dictadura: El caso de Los 80, Los archivos del Cardenal, No, la serie y Ecos del Desierto,” in *Miradas al pasado: Lecturas generacionales de TV Series de ficción televisiva sobre el Golpe de Estado y la Dictadura en Chile*, ed. by Lorena Antezana Barrios and Cristian Cabalin Quijada (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 2022), 24.

5 Mateos-Pérez, “TV Series,” 25.

6 Andreas Jahn-Sudmann, and Frank Kelleter, „Die Dynamik serieller Überbietung: Amerikanische Fernsehserien und das Konzept des Quality-TV,” in *Populäre Serialität: Narration – Evolution – Distinktion: Zum seriellen Erzählen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Frank Kelleter (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 205–24.

and syncretic nature, fruit of the mixture of native and non-native ingredients, appear recognisably marked by domestic specificities, and constitute under each profile original and authentic creations of the local culture”.<sup>7</sup>

As serial productions, both face the challenge of any TV series that Jahn-Sudmann/Kelleter call “paradoxical”, since it is a matter of “producing reproduction as innovation”.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as competition (for the TV series as a commercial product) is articulated on two levels, the interserial (between different TV series) and the intraserial (between chapters and seasons of the same TV series), a different configuration of *Los 80* and *Cuéntame* can be observed. The Chilean TV series was broadcast in seven seasons, while the Argentinian TV series in only one,<sup>9</sup> which makes competition at the intra-series level a greater challenge for the former than for the latter. The most common strategy to face this challenge consists, for these scholars, in augmentation, defined as “the repeated intensification of the distinctive marks established in inter- and intraserial competition”.<sup>10</sup> The logic of augmentation – as a characteristic of the serial structure – governs within each of the productions.

As historical TV series, they also face the challenge of producing augmentation (and innovation) within a (pre)determined historical, political and social framework, the outcome of which is known to the viewers, at least as far as the aforementioned coordinates are concerned. The augmentation is linked here, then, to the ways in which the familiar story is articulated in the historical coordinates, as well as the emotions that a TV series arouses or should arouse in terms of reception, especially in the fictional part, in which the narration has complete freedom. Labanyi, in her study of the term “affect”, mentions, in relation to the audiovisual, the concept of the “haptic” which refers to the “tactility of vision” and maintains that “theories of the haptic suppose that viewers abandon themselves corporeally to the flow of the images on the screen”.<sup>11</sup> Insofar as the productions integrate melodramatic elements –often interwoven with the historical-political plot– that constitute a narrative pattern familiar to the viewer (from the soap telenovela, for example), both TV series admit and seek the haptic gaze of the audience, which is reinforced, in turn, by the historical (and nostalgic – as we will see below) perspective embodied not only in the plots, but also in certain objects.

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7 Milly Buonanno, *El drama televisivo: Identidad y contenidos sociales* (Barcelona: Ed. Gedisa, 1999), 20.

8 Jahn-Sudmann, and Kelleter, “Dynamik,” 207.

9 Both, however, have approximately the same number of episodes: 70, *Cuéntame cómo pasó* and 78, *Los 80*.

10 Jahn-Sudmann, and Kelleter, “Dynamik,” 207; translated by the author.

11 Jo Labanyi, “Doing Things: Emotion, Affect, and Materiality,” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3–4 (2010): 230.

The family everyday life that governs and structures both stories is combined with and reproduces a specific temporality, since, on the one hand and according to Martín-Barbero, the family is, in Latin America, the “basic unit of audience [...] because it represents for the majority the primordial situation of recognition”, so that “television interpellates the family without questioning the family everyday life as a social place of a fundamental interpellation for the popular sectors”.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand,

between the time of history – which is the time of the nation and the world, the time of the great events that come to burst into the community – and the time of life [...], family time is what mediates and makes communication possible.<sup>13</sup>

Here seems to lie a key to reading these productions and the link they establish with the fabric of collective memory. In an interview Foucault speaks of a “reprogramming of popular memory” that would operate from hegemonic power and through a media device that, of course, includes television.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to this “apocalyptic” view and for a more precise analysis of these television productions, the perspective deployed by Martín-Barbero/ Muñoz, based on the notion of mediation, seems more productive. They conceive it as the “place” from which it is possible to understand the interaction between the space of production and that of reception: “what is produced on television does not only respond to the requirements of the industrial system and commercial stratagems but also to demands that come from the cultural fabric and ways of seeing”.<sup>15</sup>

In the complex theoretical and historical journey that Martín-Barbero traces to analyse the place of popular culture and the media in the integration of that entity called “masses”, he conceives television as “a medium not only in the instrumental sense – measurable in the effects it produces – but in the more profoundly cultural sense of mediation between reality and desire, between what we live and what we dream”.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, it has been fundamental for “the constitution of collective imaginaries from which people recognise themselves and represent what they

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<sup>12</sup> Jesús Martín-Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones: Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía* (México: Gili, 1987), 233.

<sup>13</sup> Jesús Martín-Barbero and Sonia Muñoz, *Televisión y melodrama: Géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Ed., 1992), 28.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, “Film and Popular Memory: An Interview with Michel Foucault 1974,” *Radical Philosophy* 11 (1975): 25.

<sup>15</sup> Martín-Barbero and Muñoz, *Televisión*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Martín-Barbero and Muñoz, *Televisión*, 15.



have the right to expect and desire”.<sup>17</sup> The timeline implied in this conceptualisation is projected from the present into the future. The two TV series focus on the past (mediated, in turn, by the private-familial and the emotions evoked by and within this space) and establish from there a link with the present of the audience, that is to say, here the mediation takes place between the past and the present, a chronological line that points from the past to the present, projecting at the same time a better, happier and – considering the dictatorial context more democratic – future. This is in turn consistent with Sielke’s reflections, who draws attention to the serial functioning of memory and further argues for its directionality: “Processes of remembering are predominantly in the service (of challenging) the present and the future and not so much (of preserving) the past”.<sup>18</sup> This view dovetails with Landsberg’s optimistic reading of mass media and cultural consumption in terms of memory with her concept of “prosthetic memory” whereby “the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person’s subjectivity and politics”.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it is necessary to take into account that these memorial productions are created in a context that Huyssen calls the “memory boom” since the end of the last century, which he relates to the prospect of a more uncertain future<sup>20</sup> and describes as “a turning toward the past that stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity.”<sup>21</sup> In this sense, from the past represented in the TV series, the future (our present) appears to be full of promise.

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17 Jesús Martín-Barbero and Germán Rey, *Los ejercicios del ver: Hegemonía audiovisual y ficción televisiva* (Barcelona: Ed. Gedisa, 1999), 17.

18 Sabine Sielke, “Joy in Repetition”: Acht Thesen zum Konzept der Serialität und zum Prinzip der Serie,” in Kelleter, *Serialität*, 390.

19 Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic memory: The transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2.

20 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003): 18.

21 Huyssen, *Present*, 18.

## The family as a collective protagonist and instance of mediation

The coordinates described above, although they are articulated differently in both TV series, converge in television narratives in which (both from the point of view of production and reception, as well as the plots) affect (via the family) is combined with the social and political. The family shapes the repertoire of characters and the narrative core of the story, so that the mode of reception described by Martín-Barbero articulates perfectly with the basic configuration of both TV series and their organisation around “typical” middle-class families and is integrated into the narrative itself with repeated sequences in which the protagonist families gather around the TV to watch and comment on programmes and news. This staging is linked to memory and has its correspondence in the family as the basic commemorative unit in the sense that Halbwachs puts it in his reflections on the social frameworks of memory and identifies the family as a fundamental social framework.<sup>22</sup> Ketelaar summarises roughly that

The family also has a memory: like any other collective group, the family has ‘its memories, which it alone commemorates, and its secrets, which are revealed only to its members’. The individual connects with a past he has not experienced for himself through the family memory.<sup>23</sup>

Jelin, in turn, in her study on memory and family configurations in the context of the Southern Cone dictatorships, integrates a gender perspective and distinguishes between habitual and narrative memories, consigning the former, insofar as “habitual”-tasks [...] cleaning, washing, cooking”, to the female space, so that “it would seem that women have nothing memorable to tell”.<sup>24</sup> From here arises the challenge of “turning the habitual into the memorable”,<sup>25</sup> a challenge that the everyday narrative of the family TV series also faces. The repetitive nature of the family and its rituals is articulated in the narratives in a varied and variable rhythm with major and minor chronological jumps (days or weeks), precisely because of the unmemorable nature of the family’s everyday life.

Both productions resort, in accordance with their serial and partly melodramatic logic, to emotions and imply in relation to the family narrative but also in their historical dimension and their memory plot a promise of happiness, since, as Jelin

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<sup>22</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 146–78.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, “Subjetividad y esfera pública: El género y los sentidos de familia en las memorias de la represión,” *Política y Sociedad* 48, no. 3 (2011): 557.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

states, the act of remembering is located not only in the present but also “in terms of a desired future.”<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the melodramatic elements carry their own promise of happiness, as Mazziotti explains:

It is not only a prize for the characters – who fought, overcame obstacles, suffered – but also for the audiences. Because you don’t watch a telenovela every day, for months, to see that the couple doesn’t get together, doesn’t start on a path of happiness, or that the wicked don’t receive the punishment they deserve. In that fictional space – and perhaps only there – there is justice. There is room for happiness.<sup>27</sup>

Happiness, here, is limited by historical reality, which incidentally invalidates one of the telenovela motifs par excellence: the punishment of the villains. In this sense, and reinterpreting an analytical category for telenovelas proposed by Arroyo<sup>28</sup> of an analysis at the micro and macro level that corresponds respectively to the study of an episode and of the TV series as a whole, we can also discern between an analysis of the story (understood as private and familiar) and the History (understood as the macro-social and political narrative in which the former is inserted). The narratives are thus located and mediate in various aspects between temporalities that extend, on the one hand, from the past (dictatorial, but at the same time private and familiar) to the present, where it takes the shape of memory that is not only narrated but also haptic and material (e.g. through the sets). On the other hand, the diegetic present not only evolves towards the future within the diegesis itself (as a serial), but also towards a better future in an economic and political sense, i.e. as a promise.

There is a coincidence with the approaches of Ahmed, who analyses happiness in its Western cultural context, both as a promise and as a mandate. Within this configuration, the family occupies a prominent place:

The happy family is both an object (something that affects us, something we are directed toward) and circulates through objects. [...] That these objects are on display, that they make visible a fantasy of a good life, depends on returning such a direction with a ‘yes’, or even with gestures of love, or witnessing these objects as one’s own field of preferred intimacy. To preserve the family you must preserve certain things.<sup>29</sup>

The (happy) family in Ahmed’s sense appears, in both productions as the mediating perspective between past and present, in which different ideological positions and versions of historical conflicts converge. These coordinates, although the family

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Susana Arroyo, “La estructura de la telenovela como relato tradicional,” *Culturas populares* 2 (2006): 11.

functions in both series as a “happiness project”, are expressed in different ways, both in the family configuration (and its narrative) and in the political-ideological configuration they entail. Both families are presented in general terms as apolitical, concerned with economic progress, but whose (economic) problems are solved with love and unity.

This is evident in the character of Juan in *Los 80*, who is mainly defined by his honesty and total dedication to his family. All his efforts are directed towards the livelihood and progress of his children, thus epitomising the popular expression “bringing up the family”. He himself grew up poor and alone with his mother, the father abandoned the small family in Juan’s childhood, thus becoming legible within the family pattern analysed by Montecino as that of “*madres y huachos*”. According to this scholar, there would be a void “of the masculine as father,”<sup>30</sup> a “symbolic gap” that in Latin American (popular) culture is replaced by “a powerful and violent masculine figure: the caudillo, the military man, the guerrilla”.<sup>31</sup> On this dysfunctional model of masculinity, Juan has constructed his own fatherhood based on responsibility and the model of the father-provider. It is also in this transformation that his ascent is signified by his having abandoned the empty place of the father in the popular imaginary and having entered a model of the bourgeois father.

The comparison with *Cuéntame* is revealing, as there are notable differences in the father figures. Antonio also represents the model of the father-provides, works every day in a printing press, wants a better future for his children, but has a secret and “dark” life with his gambling addiction. On several occasions he gambles away considerable amounts of his salary, incurs debts to such an extent that a thug comes to his house – with the whole family gathered there – to threaten him. In addition, for several episodes he has a mistress, Malena, a *femme fatale*, who shares with him the nightlife of the game. All this leads to a separation from his wife Mercedes, who throws him out of the house on two occasions. This kind of “deficient” masculinity would be unthinkable for Juan. Although he is at one point attracted to a neighbour in his clothes shop, a woman who is independent and obviously interested in him, he manages to “resist temptation.”

Likewise, important differences can be observed in the maternal figures, who make their journey and evolution from an “identity as a mother (mirroring their own, their grandmother’s and all the female relatives)”<sup>32</sup> and embody and repre-

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30 Sonia Montecino, *Madres y huachos: Alegorías del mestizaje chileno* (Santiago: Editorial Sudamericana, 1996), 32.

31 *Ibid.*, 33.

32 *Ibid.*, 50.

sent in *Cuéntame* more, in *Los 80* less emancipating ideas in terms of professional fulfilment beyond motherhood. Thus, both mothers are integrated, throughout the plots, into the labour market, which produces a series of frictions within the family and is inscribed, at the same time, in a logic of emancipation in accordance with the precepts of capitalism, which is gradually entering its neoliberal stage.

Keeping the family together is repeatedly asserted as a major concern and a guarantee of happiness for all the individuals in the family. Moreover, happiness as a promise is articulated in both cases as economic progress that families acquire despite repeated setbacks. In fact, it is these setbacks that often constitute the interruption of the daily plot and thus what is memorable about both families. In this way, the family determines both the narrative structure of the plot and – ideologically – a project of happiness as an affective and at the same time functional collectivity oriented towards the projected future in a (more) happy life of the children:

Parents can live with the failure of happiness to deliver its promise by placing their hope for happiness in their children. Happiness can involve a gesture of deferral, as a deferral that is imagined simultaneously as a sacrifice and gift: for some, the happiness that is given up becomes what they give. To be given happiness is thus to stay proximate to the scene of giving up.<sup>33</sup>

In the concrete present of *Los 80*, this motif of the transfer of the parents' happiness to (the future of) the children is also articulated in the present (momentary) happiness of seeing that the children are upright people.

In this sense, Ana's pregnancy in the second season of *Los 80* also becomes legible as a project for the future at the expense of a tighter and more sacrificed present. It is only consistent, then, that the possibility of abortion is not even mentioned, but rather that the fourth child (who will be a daughter, called Ana) is conceived and received as a gift, once the unexpected news has been digested. When Francisco, the then boyfriend of the eldest daughter Claudia, raises this possibility, he is assaulted by Claudia and vehemently rejected – a reaction that can no doubt be explained by the abortion issue in Chile as well as by the television channel on which the TV series was broadcast: Canal 13, the channel of the Catholic University. In *Cuéntame*, on the other hand, this gesture of projection is denied: in episode 65 Mercedes believes she is pregnant and even feels a moment of happiness at the prospect of a new baby, but in the end, this prospect evaporates when the pregnancy test is negative.

The family narrative in both TV series is, in turn, linked to the image of the family projected by the respective dictatorships, which were very similar in their ideological foundations and in their concrete actions, programs and methods. Thus, what Jelin analyses in relation to the role of the family in the dictatorial configuration in Argentina also seems applicable to the Chilean context. She notes that "The reference to the traditional family was central to the interpretative framing

of the military government and defined society as an organism made up of cells (families),<sup>34</sup> which entails the following ideological implication in relation to the role of the state: “the metaphor of the family was used for the nation as a whole, the Father-State acquired inalienable rights over the morality and physical destiny of citizens. The image of the nation as the ‘Great Argentine Family’ implied that only ‘good’ child-citizens were truly Argentine”.<sup>35</sup> This same metaphor is, in fact, found in the *Libro Blanco del Cambio de Gobierno en Chile*, published in 1973 by the military junta to justify the need for the coup, presented, among other things, as a response to the “increasingly threatened concord of the great Chilean family”.<sup>36</sup> Particularly in *Los 80*, we can see a certain correspondence with this metaphor: when episode 2 recounts the floods in Santiago in 1982, which produce a large number of victims, the call for solidarity is heeded by many Chileans and – of course – also by the Herrera-López family, who donate clothes and food. This act is widely celebrated by television, assisted in turn by the protagonist family, thus becoming a television spectacle (re)transmitted to current viewers (of the TV series), who, in this way, once again have the possibility of celebrating a Chile in solidarity. It is significant, however, that the notion of solidarity, as depicted on television in the story, but also in the story itself, only covers situations of force majeure, i.e. natural disasters, and not more human misfortunes such as unemployment – in the context of an economic crisis – which discredits the myth of the “big Chilean family” of solidarity and reveals that it is actually underpinned by a society of performance and competition. The TV series thematises this through the figure of a homeless man, not because he has lost his house in the floods, but because he cannot get a job as a carpenter. In his case, it is only the 8-year-old Felix who feels called upon to help, and initially only because he thinks he is a victim of the floods (in fact, Felix thinks the word is “amplificado” instead of “damnificado”, so the episode takes on a humorous tinge). The integration of this episode into the narrative can, in any case, be qualified as a critical nuance with the media discourse of solidarity among all Chileans.

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<sup>34</sup> Jelin, “Subjetividad,” 561.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Secretaría General de Gobierno, *Libro Blanco del Cambio de Gobierno en Chile: 11 de septiembre 1973* (Santiago: Editorial Lord Cochrane, 1973), 17.

## (Some) Historical and political events in the TV series – between context and plot

Political and public (dictatorial) history enters the narrative through the relationship with and repercussions in the family sphere, and shape, in both narratives, their contextual framework. It should be noted, firstly, that political events are often transmitted through news broadcasts consumed on the television set in the family's living room – as a mirror and duplication of the original scene of television consumption, as Erll argues: “Television is, today, probably the guiding medium for the transmission/mediation of history. On the sofa, in front of the television most people are first and continuously confronted with images of history”<sup>37</sup> – only that within the fictional narrative it appears as present, while we, the viewers, consume it as past. In both TV series, the “correct” reading of newsreels and government communiqués, which document the official-dictatorial version of reality, relies on a mechanism inherent to any historiographical discourse that consists of a “knowing more” on the part of contemporary spectators in relation to historical actors that Baron detects in appropriation films (of audiovisual archival material): “While this ‘knowing more’ may be fundamental to all modern historiography, it is made palpable in the ironic temporal disparity established between the viewer and the ‘naïve’ or ‘deceptive’ filmmakers and subjects of the footage.”<sup>38</sup> The TV series and its appropriation of the audiovisual archive produce, in this particular case, a difference between “us now” and “them then” and at the same time convey surreptitiously a reflection on the function of the media which, by representing a biased version of reality and excluding repression, terror and violence, did not fulfil its genuine function of informing.

In both cases, the knowledge of what the news programs do not say will gradually become part of the family plot, through their own – violent – experiences with the dictatorial regime. Thus, the harmony that reigns in the two households is disrupted by events that are almost always external, be they political, economic or emotional, and which have a direct impact on one of the family members. The term “affect alien” seems useful for this constellation, whom Ahmed describes as “the one who converts good feelings into bad, who as it were ‘kills’ the joy of the family”.<sup>39</sup> In *Los 80*, it is the eldest daughter, Claudia, who upon entering university

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<sup>37</sup> Erll, *Gedächtnis*, 163. And she adds: “History on TV is first of all a business” – I will return to this aspect in the following section.

<sup>38</sup> Jaimie Baron, *The archive effect: Found footage and the audiovisual experience of history* (London: Routledge, 2014), 39.

<sup>39</sup> Ahmed, *Promise*, 49.

(and falling in love with a student leader) begins to get into politics and join the student protests of the time. Consequently, at the end of the first season she ends up in jail after a protest, and her parents must get her out of the police station. The real family conflict arises in the fourth season, when Claudia, with her new boyfriend Gabriel, who is a member of the armed resistance of the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez, has to flee to Argentina to escape the repressive forces. During the time she spends in Mendoza, she suffers intensely from the separation her family. Thus, Claudia appears at first glance as an “affect alien”, because of her political-amorous commitment, which distances her from the family, but a second look reveals that she still shares the fundamental values, so that her condition is quickly reversed. Gabriel’s death, once they return to Chile, where he is killed in a raid on the clandestine house, allows her to return to the bosom of the family, albeit marked by a deep trauma.

In *Cuéntame*, which begins with the death of Perón, from the very first chapters (while *Los 80* begins in 1982, with the dictatorship already well established), the persecution and disappearance of people are discussed, such as Antonio’s Peronist colleague, Leopoldo, who disappears without a trace – the viewers, in turn, do witness his kidnapping by repressive agents. He thus joins the ranks of the “disappeared” in Argentina, a term to which we “future” viewers can assign its true meaning.

The political and armed resistance plot here revolves around the figure of Toni, the eldest son, with his girlfriend, a militant member of a student group, possibly Montoneros. They meet at university, where she introduces him to the other militants. Once the military junta is installed, she continues to fight underground, but is eventually kidnapped and disappeared, despite the excellent contacts of her father, a member of the Argentine oligarchy. This reversal in terms of gender is relevant and responds to historical coordinates, as Jelin states: “The difference between the participation of men and women was smaller in the student movement and in the armed movements, where already at that time, the presence of women was significant”.<sup>40</sup> In the armed resistance in Chile there was also an active participation of women, so the choice in the case of *Los 80* is also significant: Gabriel as an active member and Claudia who gets involved for sentimental reasons.

A political element in another sense that appears in the Argentinian TV series, declined in a melodramatic code, relates to the daughter, Inés, who falls in love with the young priest, Eugenio. He represents the progressive side of the church: he is Peronist and committed to social justice and human rights. As in Claudia’s case, there is a coincidence between love and an awakening to a more critical view of the reality of the country, and the realisation of love here too demands sacrifices such

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<sup>40</sup> Jelin, “Subjetividad”, 558.



as Eugenio's subsequent renunciation of his cassock. Such a plot would obviously be unthinkable for the Chilean case, again due to the political configurations and above all the broadcasting on the Catholic channel.

*Cuéntame* also integrates the figure of an abducted child, one of the most perverse practices of the Argentinean dictatorship and still a burning (and omnipresent) issue in human rights discourse. This child is adopted by Alberto and Josefina, the owners of the bar that serves, within the narrative, as a popular place of sociability, a space situated between public and private, whose inhabitants understand each other and share an anti-dictatorial position, which is understood to be the true position of the "great Argentine family" – except for Josefina, as an ignorant and ideologically weak female character, whose brother is a military man. The latter has no scruples whatsoever and sometimes gives an indication of his ideological positions, so that his appearance is clearly connoted in a negative way, with no apology or desire to show both sides in a "balanced" way, and he is the one who steals the child for his sister. He thus corresponds to the character commonly called "villain" and called by Martín-Barbero/Muñoz "traitor or 'persecutor or aggressor'" and is "the character who links melodrama with the noir novel and the horror story"<sup>41</sup> or – it should be added for this context – with the reality of the Argentine dictatorship. These "persecutors" also appear in *Los 80*, embodied by agents of intelligence and repression, but here they are always external and at most pretend to be part of the family. In one of the most serious episodes of the TV series, a member of the CNI, the dictatorship's repressive organ, pretends to be Juan's brother to get information about Claudia's whereabouts, and especially about her boyfriend Gabriel. Finally, when he has managed to get hold of Claudia, he nonetheless lets her go and says goodbye to Juan, and although he does so in a threatening tone, he makes it clear that he will now leave them alone because Juan's honesty and sincerity have impressed him. This shows, in short, that Juan's personality and lifestyle are fully consistent with the ideological precepts of the dictatorial regime, except, of course, for the existence of the stray sheep Claudia, who henceforth, in any case, returns to the flock. Thus, in the narrative construction of the Chilean TV series, the real villains always come from outside and have no family either.

While in *Cuéntame* there is no character who represents the repressive side in the political-ideological configuration of that period, except for the aforementioned character, who dies in a car accident shortly afterwards, in *Los 80* the other side of the political spectrum is continuously present, through the character of Don Genaro, the neighbourhood grocer, "who, in a caricatured tone, blindly defends the figure

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41 Martín-Barbero and Muñoz, *Televisión*, 47.

of Pinochet and his different measures regarding the running of the country”.<sup>42</sup> In this way, he responds rather to the role of the “bobo” in melodrama, who “represents the active presence of the comic, the other side of the popular matrix” as a “clumsy and even rude anti-hero, with his anti-sublime and coarse language”.<sup>43</sup> The caricatured representation (which gives the TV series a picturesque appeal) is revealing on an ideological level, because this character thus appears as a crazy, but harmless, old man.

Another interesting episode in relation to the integration of a political theme is that of episode 7 (season 1), which features an exile who returns to Chile along with many others, whose names were published by the regime in the media, giving them permission to return to the country. For Don Genaro, this returnee who suddenly appears in the neighbourhood cannot be anything other than an extremist, and Félix, the Herreras’ youngest son, looks at him with suspicion when he discovers that he communicates by radio and in a foreign language (which Don Genaro understands as Russian). When, together with the latter and his friend Bruno, he goes to spy on the man, he discovers that the language is Swedish and that he is communicating with his family, who have stayed in Sweden. In this way, this character turns out to be a loving father who misses his son, and is thus re-integrated into the family pattern, in a double sense, since it is, through the family plot, the episode of exile and the tragedy it entails, becomes legible again for those who have remained in Chile and have given credence to the dictatorial official account of the “extremists”.

Juan, who is apolitical on principle, also has an early encounter with the repressive forces: when his company goes bankrupt, and Juan’s colleague and friend Ezequiel instigates a demand for his severance pay. By wanting to defend their rights as workers, Juan and Ezequiel are quickly targeted by the CNI agents, kidnapped, and finally released; a secret that Juan will keep from his family, including his wife, Ana.

This episode is consistent with the neoliberal framework established by the dictatorship, where any hindrance to the functioning of the market economy is violently repressed. According to Lorange, Pinochet’s social project consisted of “depoliticising Chilean society, destroying nonmarket sources of social reproduction, and producing responsible, entrepreneurial subjects”.<sup>44</sup> Juan’s way along the

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<sup>42</sup> Karima Maluk Spahie, “Representaciones televisivas de la sociedad chilena de la dictadura: estereotipos de familia y de jóvenes opositores al régimen en la serie *Los 80, más que una moda*,” in *La ficción histórica en la televisión hispanoamericana 2000–2012: Instrucciones del pasado colectivo en Series, telenovelas y telefilms*, ed. María de los Angeles Rodríguez Cadena (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2016), 164.

<sup>43</sup> Martín-Barbero and Muñoz, *Televisión*, 48–9.

<sup>44</sup> Astrid Lorange, “Reading History Against the State Secret: Carlos Soto Roman’s ‘Chile Project

TV series responds indeed to this description: from worker to businessman, who, despite various setbacks, achieves his social ascent and adapts perfectly to the neo-liberal project. A brief interruption of this continuity of promotion and of the story in accordance with the neoliberal narrative, is in episode 10 of the second season, which shows a brief flashback to the day of the coup, in which Juan wants to go out to defend his factory, while Ana, pregnant by Félix, does not let him go out. This flashback – which in terms of political positioning does not flourish within the story – serves the function of showing that Juan is “correct”, but that he is not, like most of us viewers, a hero and martyr, and will always prioritise his “blood” family, as he explains to Claudia: “If your mother didn’t stop me, mija, I would never have seen you grow up, never”.

It is revealing how this story of “getting ahead” is configured in each case, that is, how these stories of progress are narratively approached: In *Los 80*, it is thanks to the efforts of Juan, above all, who often faces setbacks in his employment situation, thus representing both the economic crisis with which a large part of the Chilean population had to deal in the 1980s thanks to the dictatorship’s disastrous economic policies and its liberalisation measures. In the different vicissitudes of losing and finding work, Juan shows himself to be persistent and hard-working, which is why he is finally rewarded with his family’s social promotion. The story thus shows us an optimistic version of neoliberalism, arguing that despite the many setbacks and economic experiments carried out at the expense of ordinary people, they manage to overcome them when there is enough will and love. In this sense, it is also consistent with Lorange’s assertion that human rights discourse reconciles the protection of human rights with a (neo)liberal economic model:

The equation of a free market economy with human rights meant that repressive state power could be accepted to the degree that its ultimate aim was the security of the market and the suppression of what could only be understood as a threat to market interests: social movements, labour formations, and a political imagination beyond the promise of liberal humanism.<sup>45</sup>

In *Cuéntame*, the promotion happens, on the contrary, by a kind of miracle: Mercedes receives an unexpected inheritance, thanks to which Antonio is able to buy half of the printing press where he works. This does not solve the family’s financial problems, nor does it solve the always tense situation between Antonio and his now partner Pablo. The difference in ideological terms is considerable though, although both have their melodramatic side: in one case as an individual effort, in the other as an arbitrary stroke of luck and not as a reward for “good behaviour”.

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[re-classified],’ the remediated archive, and the poetics of redaction,” *Angelaki* 27, no. 2 (2022): 22.

45 Lorange, “Reading,” 21–2.

The last episodes of *Los 80* narrate the last days of the dictatorship, in the context of which Félix commits himself to the NO campaign that will lead to the first democratic government after 17 years, but a transition that – as Lorange argues – condemns human rights violations and does not touch the economic model. And it is in relation to this that the commodification of memory itself comes into play in and through an audiovisual “product” with which many viewers can identify, as we shall see in the next paragraph.

## The configuration of memory/the past – The past as a nostalgic (and happy) object

It is worth reflecting on a final aspect that relates to the happiness situated between promise (of the future) and nostalgia that the TV series *Los 80* proposes above all as a way of affectively linking oneself to the past. There, the future is projected as a promise of well-being and democracy, but it is still anchored in the past which – despite all that a dictatorship implies – is viewed with a certain nostalgia, as Maluk also states, who speaks of “representations of the past that, from the everyday and social identification, achieve the nostalgic complicity of the viewer who recognises himself portrayed and remembers”.<sup>46</sup> To describe more precisely the nostalgic look at the 1980s in Chile that the TV series unfolds, I turn, first of all, to the meaning Ahmed gives to the term nostalgia, defining it from his perspective of “happiness”:

Nostalgia involves affective conversion. Nostalgia is an affective state that resists the presence of a happy object that is no longer or that imagines something as being happy insofar as it is no longer. Things can be happy not only as projections of the future but also as imaginings of what has been lost (if only things are as they were, we would be happy).<sup>47</sup>

Ahmed shows – quoting Beauvoir – how both directions are integrated in a primarily spatial relationship: that of the family home as archive and as futurity:

“The ideal of happiness has always taken material form in the house ... Within its walls the family is established as a discrete cell or a unit group and maintains its identity as generations come and go; the past, preserved in the form of furniture and ancestral portraits, gives promise of a secure future [...].”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Maluk Spahie, “Representaciones,” 155.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmed, *Promise*, 241.

<sup>48</sup> cit. in Ahmed, *Promise*, 45.

In fact, a large part of both narratives takes place in family homes which are, in the sense proposed by Beauvoir, full of objects connoted in an affective sense. This affection of and for the objects, “happy objects” in Ahmed’s words, also works for the viewing public, as Schlotterbeck argues, since it produces in them the “sensation of being in a known world: the house, the clothes, the television set and even the teapot evoked an affective reaction from the audience. This care for material objects and the emotional reaction it generated in the audience gave the programme authenticity”.<sup>49</sup>

A fundamental happy object is the colour television set, the acquisition of which plays an important role in the first episode of *Los 80*. This implies an economic effort and at the same time constitutes a factor of cultural integration; subsequently the new TV becomes the place of sociability of the family, around which its members gather, and at the same time a point of contact with the outside world, which also includes all kinds of consumer objects that are advertised. Through television, the family is also introduced as a consumer instance. Its “happiness” value is already evident in the acquisition: when Juan learns that he will be promoted in his factory and decides to give Ana a new TV as a gift, symbolizing both emotional and economic progress. Later, in the third season, during the 1985 earthquake – which had devastating effects on the capital and surrounding regions – the first thing Juan tries, and succeeds in rescuing, is precisely the television set.

Television also plays a central role for the audience, since it is through it that the various archive fragments are inserted, be they news programmes, football matches, soap operas, commercials etc. At the same time, the use of the audiovisual archive constitutes one of the fundamental strategies through which this exhortation to viewers to reflect on a shared and common past is operated. Both TV series insert audiovisual archival documents from newsreels, sports broadcasts, fragments of fictional films and advertisements of the time from the credits and throughout the episodes. According to Schlotterbeck, it should also be considered that “In the Chilean version, instead of using the youngest son as the narrator, it is the television set that functions as a mediator of nostalgia”.<sup>50</sup> Here the notion proposed by Baron seems useful, who speaks of an “archive effect”, which gives way to an “archive affect” for the spectator, who can look at these documents with nostalgia and affection, because they are what made us what we are today.

In *Cuéntame*, the documentary fragments are mostly inserted outside the diegesis, they serve as a contextualising framework, but are devoid of their affective

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49 Marian Schlotterbeck, “Actos televisados: el Chile de la dictadura visto por el Chile del bicentenario,” *Contracorriente* 12, no. 1 (2014): 141.

50 Schlotterbeck, “Actos,” 141.

function, which constitutes another notable difference in the nostalgic configuration – and as I argue in another context – is also a possible explanation for the failure of the TV series in terms of audience. It is precisely the lack of “knowing more”, that is, the contrast with the naivety of the characters, who, perceiving the audiovisual documents, feel informed (like the Herreras) about the political and consumer facts, which their extradiegetic mise-en-scène deprives us of. In contrast, in *Los 80*, the “excess” of the archive functions “as an inexhaustible intertextual game for the spectator, a game that is in turn the catalyst for the affective torrent of memories”.<sup>51</sup>

A prominent place is also occupied by the family table in both TV series, which with Ahmed becomes legible as a happy object:

The table itself is a happy object, insofar as it secures the very form of the family over time. The table is what we could call a kinship object [...], which gives form to the family as a social gathering, as the tangible thing over which the family gathers. The table is happy when it secures this point.<sup>52</sup>

This is precisely what is shown in a fundamental scene that articulates the ideological discourse of *Los 80* in episode 10 of the first season: at the family dinner in the evening, when Claudia has just been released after her arrest in a student protest, a fight breaks out between her and her brother Martín, at that time pro-regime and an aspiring aviator. Juan breaks up the argument violently, and for the first time articulates his vision of family and society: “In this house there are neither communists nor pinochetistas, there are people” (00:49:56). Then, after explaining the effort involved in paying for Claudia’s studies, he details his political or rather apolitical vision, in good Chilean language of course:

When the broom is left, it’s people like us who pay the price. Those at the top, the generals, the politicians, they never lose, never. Either they stay in power or they are the first ones to go out [...]. And people like us are the ones who stay, the ones who have to keep working and ‘peeling the garlic’ to be able to continue living. That’s the way things are and that’s the way they’re always going to be. (00:52:09)

It is not random that Juan’s discourse on the social origin that implies the duty to stay out of politics is articulated, then, in the context of the family dinner table. His discourse – brief but forceful – entails a depoliticization, because despite being correct in its essence, it implies a naturalisation of the class structure and reproduces

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51 *Ibid.*, 142.

52 Ahmed, *Promise*, 46.

the ideology represented by the right wing and the dictatorial regime – seen from the other side of the social spectrum. It is interesting to read this discourse against the production context of the first season: the bicentenary celebrations in Chile, and the end credits add to the line “Bicentenary” the words “Chileans as we are”, which implies that today’s viewers are a product of those years, including their teachings.

Boym’s distinction between restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia is useful in this context:

Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt. Restorative nostalgia is at the core of recent national and religious revivals; it knows two main plots – the return to origins and the conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones; it loves details, not symbols [...]<sup>53</sup>

TV series invites us to see the past through both versions of nostalgia: the reflective nostalgia is present precisely through the self-reflexivity of the TV series in terms of its mediality, the restorative in the proposal of a community of viewers thought in terms of the national (Chilean), as Schlotterbeck maintains: “Nostalgia as a way of recovering the past is powerful insofar as it points to the desire to elaborate a collective narrative that sustains a shared meaning for the community of viewers”.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the “happy objects” – the audiovisual archive, the set, etc. – which point to the very nature of the TV series as a product that carries a promise of happiness, are embodied as a viewing experience and an instance that manages to bring the Chilean family together around the “family table” at which we are all people.

The aspect of the commodification of memory already appears in Landsberg and her optimistic concept of “prosthetic memory” when she adds that this involves the commodification that “enables memories and images of the past to circulate on a grand scale; it makes these memories available to all who are able to pay”.<sup>55</sup> The reflections of Huyssen, who speaks of a memory market and “mass marketing of nostalgia”<sup>56</sup>, also go in this direction. For Mbembe, who reflects on the archive (as a state institution that preserves the past), in a similar vein to Huyssen, memory is also intimately linked to forgetting (as a state policy):

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Bieke Willem, *El Espacio Narrativo en la Novela Chilena Postdictatorial: Casas Habitadas*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 190.

<sup>54</sup> Schlotterbeck, “Actos,” 144.

<sup>55</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Huyssen, *Present*, 18.

Commemoration, in contrast, is part of the ritual of forgetting: one bids farewell to the desire or the willingness to repeat something. 'Learning' to forget is all the easier if, on the one hand, whatever is to be forgotten passes into folklore (when it is handed over to the people at large), and if, on the other hand, it becomes part of the universe of commodification.<sup>57</sup>

Commodification and consumption, he argues, transform the archive into a talisman "with the consequence of removing any subversive factors in the memory".<sup>58</sup> The price is high according to him: "The commodification of memory obliterates the distinction between the victim and the executioner, and consequently enables the state to realise what it has always dreamed of: the abolition of debt and the possibility of starting afresh".<sup>59</sup> And it is here that it coincides – once again – with nostalgia as elaborated by Boym who "confirms that this emotion is generally regarded as 'an abdication of personal responsibility, a guiltfree homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure.'"<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions: The family as a socialising instance and national model – continuities

Ahmed argues that

Objects become ambivalent in the conversion between negative and positive feeling states: happy objects' can become 'unhappy' over time, in the contingency of what happens, which is not to say that their happiness no longer persists as an impression, available as memory. [...] We can think of narrative as a form of affective conversion. Through narrative, the promise of happiness is located as well as distributed.<sup>61</sup>

If we conceive of the family as a "happy object", as proposed – to a different extent – by both TV series, we can see that this conversion takes place in an ambiguous sense: the dictatorial past, in principle "unhappy", suddenly becomes, in the retrospective and nostalgic gaze, "happy". Both, oriented towards the audience's future/present, locate, and distribute a version of the past that serves as an identifying narrative and producer of a collective narrative mediated and supported by the 'typical' lower-middle-class family. Although the representation of the family in the

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57 Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, et.al. (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 24.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 25.

60 Quoted in Willem, *Espacio*, 190.

61 Ahmed, *Promise*, 44–5.



stories is more complex and nuanced in the face of social, economic, and political changes, as a social and affective instance that organises, structures and loads the story with multiple affections, it responds, to a certain extent, to the dictatorial model.

However, it should be noted that the family as a narrative resource that structures the story (and identification) in both cases does not necessarily produce the same meanings and can integrate or convey different messages on an ideological level, in terms of gender, economics and politics. In the case of *Los 80* Maluk argues that “the social representations of the TV series would be using normalising stereotypes that would trivialise the Chilean identities of the period of the dictatorship” and consequently “the trivialisation of the traumatic period would be legitimising that historical period.”<sup>62</sup> In my opinion, this is not the case in *Cuéntame*, which, although it resorts to certain stereotypes and shares the nostalgia, achieves a less trivialising gaze.

The pedagogical intention in both cases is aimed at “learning about identity” (how we were and, therefore, how we are), as explicitly stated in the formula “Chileans as we are”. In the case of *Cuéntame*, this is evident in the weekly interview programme, which, as an educational supplement, was broadcast every Friday after the broadcast of four episodes of the TV series, with historians, journalists and other guests who endorsed the historical veracity of what they had just seen in the form of an informal conversation.

The dilemma between mediation and manipulation operated by these narratives is not conclusive, and the question remains open as to the price paid for mass dissemination. Both points of view seem reconcilable with these narratives, since, certainly in the Chilean case, although not for the Argentinean, they bring to the fore issues that have long been silenced and – potentially – open up social debates around memory. Being firmly anchored in a structure and perspective of the family, however – consistent with the dictatorial conceptualisation – they nonetheless sustain a consensual version, closed to other memories.

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62 Maluk Spahie, “Representaciones,” 155.

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## Memorias de una década a través de *Los 80*

Vida cotidiana, discurso televisivo y democracia de baja intensidad

**Resumen:** En clave melodramática y nostálgica, a través de las vivencias cotidianas de los distintos personajes de la serie *Los 80* se nos dibuja un país, los principales hitos organizativos e históricos que lo caracterizan y una reconstrucción interpretativa de un pasado traumático que coexiste con una visión de mundo propia del neoliberalismo de fines del siglo XX en Chile. La ficción audiovisual que aquí analizamos ha contribuido a sedimentar un sentido común referido a la permanente elaboración de una memoria colectiva, en especial sobre el periodo de la dictadura, construida desde la llamada “transición pactada” a la democracia, entre los vencedores del Plebiscito de 1988 y la Dictadura. En esa dirección, la familia de “los Herrera” opera como un actor social fácilmente reconocible y que genera múltiples identificaciones con los telespectadores hayan o no vivido en esa época. Así, se construye un discurso sobre el pasado que reivindica a la familia nuclear moderna como el elemento central no solo de la estructura social, sino como el lugar fundamental para la construcción de un sentido de vida, por una parte. Por otro lado, el contexto histórico-político vivido por la sociedad chilena es visto fundamentalmente como fuente de inestabilidad para el núcleo familiar, objeto que padece y sufre sus conflictos que repercuten en él siempre de manera amenazadora y desequilibrante. De esta forma, se termina por construir la imagen y la idea de un país que, superando ese pasado, debe evitar de cualquier forma, volver a vivirlo.

**Palabras clave:** Chile; dictadura; ficción; televisión.

**Abstract:** In a melodramatic and nostalgic key, through the daily experiences of the different characters in the series *Los 80*, a country is drawn to us, the main organizational and historical milestones that characterize it and an interpretive reconstruction of a traumatic past that coexists with the world vision of the neoliberalism at the end of the 20th century in Chile. The audiovisual fiction that we analyze here has contributed to settle a common sense referred to the permanent elaboration of a collective memory, especially about the period of the dictatorship, built from the so-called “agreed transition” between the winners of the 1988 Plebiscite and the Dictatorship. to democracy. In this direction, “the Herrera

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family” operates as an easily recognizable social actor that generates multiple identifications with viewers whether or not they lived at that time. Thus, a discourse on the past is built that vindicates the modern nuclear family as the central element not only of the social structure, but also as the fundamental place for the construction of a sense of life, on the one hand. On the other hand, the historical-political context experienced by Chilean society is fundamentally seen as a source of threat and instability for the family nucleus, an object that suffers and suffers its conflicts that always affect it in a threatening and unbalancing way.

**Keywords:** Chile; dictatorship; fiction; television.

## Introducción

*Los 80* es una serie de televisión chilena, producida por Canal 13, junto a Wood Producciones en el marco del proyecto para la celebración del Bicentenario de la Independencia Nacional en el 2010. Emitida por primera vez el 12 de octubre de 2008 y con un total de siete temporadas con lo que su emisión se prolongó hasta el 21 de diciembre de 2014, la serie se consolidó como el programa de ficción más exitoso de la televisión actual en Chile, además de conseguir ser el programa de transmisión regular más visto del año en el país. El programa también está disponible en la plataforma de streaming de Amazon Prime y, desde su segunda temporada, está en la plataforma nacional gratuita del Consejo Nacional de TV (CNTV), entidad estatal que apoyó su producción con fondos públicos. La primera temporada fue nuevamente emitida en televisión abierta durante la pandemia y canal 13 comenzó a transmitirla nuevamente, en los momentos en que se escribe este texto (2023).

La serie está inspirada en la producción española *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, centrándose en los eventos ocurridos en Chile durante la década de 1980 desde la visión de “los Herrera”, una familia de clase media que vive en Santiago de Chile. Las siete temporadas en su conjunto abordan el periodo comprendido entre 1982 y 1989, por tanto, la etapa final de la dictadura.

Utilizaremos como base para esta reflexión ejemplos de la primera temporada que se centró en el periodo 1982–1983, aunque eventualmente tomaremos algunos otros ejemplos de las siguientes. Elegimos la primera temporada, no solo porque de acuerdo con la crítica de la época fue catalogada como el mejor programa del año 2008, alcanzando los 20 puntos promedio de sintonía, sino porque hasta esa fecha la dictadura no había sido abordada por la televisión abierta, en la que imperaba

más bien un silencio sobre el tema, muy acorde al clima de época de la llamada *transición a la democracia*.<sup>1</sup>

Poner como sujeto social protagónico a una familia, “los Herrera”, implica reconocerlos como un actor social de la época que, además de facilitar la identificación de distintos grupos etarios y sus experiencias de vida, responde también a uno de los pilares sobre los cuales se construyó la transición: la familia. En clave melodramática, las experiencias cotidianas de cada uno de los integrantes de “los Herrera” consolidan una serie de sentidos comunes acerca de qué se recuerda o cómo debe ser recordado ese periodo y para qué hacerlo y nos permite comprender la historia y la sociedad en función de las significaciones que revisten para la vida de los individuos.<sup>2</sup>

Aunque analizamos todas las temporadas de la serie como parte de un trabajo de investigación colaborativo realizado en el marco del proyecto GUMELAB, en este texto y como ya lo adelantamos nos centramos fundamentalmente en la primera. Para la recolección de la información realizamos un visionado preliminar de todos los episodios tomando notas acerca de la evolución de las tramas, el desarrollo de la intriga y los aspectos audiovisuales que se utilizan (música, luz, sonidos, vestuario, espacios, etc.). Estas notas fueron parte del “diario de recepción”.<sup>3</sup>

Junto con el visionado, levantamos información vinculada con el lugar de producción,<sup>4</sup> para determinar la relevancia concreta que, en la toma de decisiones sobre el contenido y la forma del relato audiovisual, tuvieron aspectos de carácter económico, mercadotécnico e incluso políticos exógenos a la producción.<sup>5</sup> Esta información fue parte de los contenidos desarrollados en la primera parte de la pauta de recolección de información denominada “estrategias de comunicabilidad” referida a los “modos en que se hacen reconocibles y organizan la competencia comunicativa los destinadores y los destinatarios”.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ricardo Ramírez y Cristian Cabalin, “Haciendo historia de uno/a mismo/a. Construcción de memorias en los espectadores/as de *Los 80*,” en *Audiencias volátiles. Televisión, ficción y educación*, eds. Lorena Antezana y Cristian Cabalin (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2016).

2 Kathya Araujo y Danilo Martuccelli, *Desafíos Comunes* (Santiago: LOM, 2012) y Lorena Antezana y Cristian Cabalin, “El precio del consenso. La dictadura en la ficción televisiva chilena,” *Chasqui. Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación* 136 (2018).

3 Darwin Franco, *Ciudadanos de ficción: representaciones y discursos ciudadanos en las telenovelas mexicanas* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2012).

4 Patrick Charaudeau, *Les médias et l'information. L'impossible transparence du discours* (Bruselas: Éditions De Boeck Université, 2005).

5 Susana Rodríguez, “Propuesta metodológica para el análisis de ficciones históricas televisivas: el ejemplo de *La Señora*,” *Cuadernos.info* 39 (2016).

6 Jesús Martín-Barbero y Sonia Muñoz, *Televisión y melodrama. Géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia* (Colombia: Tercer mundo editores, 1992), 26.

Con estos elementos, el análisis se articuló en tres grandes áreas: Narratividad/Serialidad, Televisualidad y Síntesis o interpretación hermenéutica. La primera dimensión de este análisis describe y discute las características de la serie en tanto narración seriada de ficción audiovisual. Esta sección discute cómo se teje la intriga<sup>7</sup> y los recursos narrativos utilizados para contar la historia.<sup>8</sup> La segunda aborda las cuestiones acerca de su televisualidad, la temporalidad de la serie y los recursos que utiliza para representar el tiempo.<sup>9</sup> En esta sección discutimos, también, cómo se utiliza el espacio en la narración. La tercera y última sección propone una síntesis o interpretación hermenéutica que busca responder las preguntas acerca de la relación de la serie con su mundo de referencia, cuáles son las operaciones simbólicas (de sentido) que desarrolla la serie y de qué manera se articulan local y globalmente con los contextos discursivos, sociales y políticos a que alude.

Aunque la serie está ambientada en el Chile de la década de los ochenta, es recreada en la del 2000, esto supone que el presente desde el cual la ficción es construida considera el clima de época de la transición o postdictadura, es decir, está propuesta desde ese particular punto de vista.

## La transición pactada y el modelo: la subjetividad neoliberal

Durante la década de 1990, la sociedad chilena vivió el retorno de un régimen democrático determinado por las condiciones de salida pactada de la Dictadura y el pleno desarrollo del modelo de sociedad que aquella había instaurado. Ese es el marco en que, dos décadas después, la TV chilena ofrece la serie *Los 80*, como una forma de leer e interpretar, no solamente un momento histórico específico, sino que los dos procesos antes mencionados.

Prácticamente desde su nacimiento a la vida independiente nuestro país ha visto emerger discursos y procesos políticos que, bajo los distintos nombres de progreso, civilización, desarrollo y ahora modernización, han prometido colocarlo a la par o en sintonía con las tendencias de época dominantes de la sociedad capitalista moderna. Dichas retóricas han constituido marcos de legitimación para sucesivas

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7 María de Lourdes López y María Teresa Nicolás, "El análisis de series de televisión: construcción de un modelo interdisciplinario," *ComHumanitas: Revista Científica de Comunicación* 6, no. 1 (2016).

8 Jürgen Greimas, *Semántica estructural* (Madrid: Gredos, 1987).

9 Gérard Genette, *Figuras III* (España: Editorial Lumen, 1989).



transformaciones profundas de la sociedad chilena. En la versión neoliberal<sup>10</sup> de este cambio de siglo, el bienestar surgiría del crecimiento económico y su “chorreo” hacia todos, de la incorporación a la revolución tecnológica y a la era de la globalización, sobre la base del desarrollo de una identidad y unidad nacional, en tanto “nacionalismo de competitividad”, en palabras de Brunner, y la aparición de un nuevo tipo de ciudadano.<sup>11</sup>

Conocido coloquialmente como el “modelo neoliberal”, impuesto por la Dictadura, dicho modelo de sociedad supone diversas tendencias estructurales, tales como: la conversión del mercado en el eje articulador de toda práctica y relación social, generando lo que se ha llamado la “mercantilización de la vida individual y colectiva”; la conversión del Estado desarrollista del siglo XX en el Estado subsidiario, que disminuye su actividad política, pero hace crecer su capacidad de control sobre la vida; la transformación radical de los procesos de organización y forma del trabajo con el llamado “posfordismo” como tendencia predominante; los procesos de virtualización y mediatización de la vida social, bajo el paradigma de la llamada “sociedad de la información”, que reformula la noción y la vivencia de lo público y lo privado; la crisis de la política y el sistema de partidos; el tipo de cultura cotidiana predominante y la heterogeneización y fragmentación social, entre otras.

Es decir, se consolidó el predominio de una visión de mundo liberal proveniente del modelo instalado por la Dictadura, con diversos matices, desde el neoliberalismo economicista de Chicago a una curiosa amalgama de liberalismo económico y conservadurismo moral y cultural,<sup>12</sup> pasando por un social-liberalismo, más conocido con el rótulo de “socialismo democrático o progresismo”.<sup>13</sup> Se generalizó

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**10** Manuel Délano, Sebastián Alaniz, Karen Trajtemberg y Cristián Cuevas, *Los años que dejamos atrás, 1988–1990. La transición en deuda* (Santiago: Catalonia, 2021) y Ascanio Cavallo, *La historia oculta de la transición. Memoria de una época, 1990–1998* (Santiago: Grijalbo, 1998).

**11** José Joaquín Brunner, *Globalización cultural y posmodernidad* (Santiago: Fondo Cultura Económica, 1998) y *Bienvenidos a la modernidad* (Santiago: Planeta, 1994).

**12** Verónica Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, *Nacionales y gremialistas. El “parto” de la nueva derecha política chilena, 1964–1973* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2016).

**13** Manuel Antonio Garretón, *Neoliberalismo corregido y progresismo limitado. Los gobiernos de la Concertación en Chile, 1990–2010* (Santiago: Arcis-Clacso, 2012). El autor dedica un espacio especial a la conceptualización del llamado progresismo, así como a los matices y diferencias que se observan en su manifestación particular en diferentes contextos, como ocurre al comparar la emergencia en América Latina de movimientos y regímenes nacional-populares, con otros movimientos y posturas que en su camino de renovación fueron a dar dentro del campo del liberalismo hegemónico, como ocurrió en Chile. De igual modo, la sobrevivencia, más o menos renovada de corrientes provenientes del siglo pasado y todo ello, con diferencias importantes de las manifestaciones del fenómeno en otras regiones como Europa.

el mito de la participación, de una creciente igualdad de oportunidades, de una supuesta disminución creciente y radical de la pobreza, para lo que se construyeron los indicadores y técnicas de medición *ad hoc* y el de las responsabilidades individuales que hacen descansar en cada uno/a los triunfos y los fracasos.

Se configuró, además, un sistema político elitista cada vez más distante de la vida social, con la que se relaciona especialmente a través de mecanismos indirectos (encuestas, elecciones necesariamente obligatorias, pantallas audiovisuales o virtuales), creando condiciones para el desarrollo de un sistema político crecientemente impopular y desprestigiado.

Este modelo, al que hemos llamado “democracia de baja intensidad”, descansa en la naturalización de los supuestos y fines del orden social, a partir de consagrar a la economía de mercado y la democracia liberal representativa como los únicos soportes posibles de cualquier ordenamiento social presente o futuro, haciendo ilegítima cualquier problematización que interrogue sobre la globalidad, sacando del debate las preguntas sobre la totalidad social, fenómeno que se impuso en Chile, gracias a la llamada “transición pactada a la democracia”, entre los vencedores del Plebiscito de 1988 y la Dictadura. Como señala Viviana Bravo:

“La transición pactada pidió silencio. Necesitó silencio. La riqueza social de la protesta, la diversidad de sonidos, colores, expectativas y furias quedaron suspendidas en el horizonte de posibilidades que también se estrechaba. La concertación social se redujo a una concertación entre elites”.<sup>14</sup>

En el mismo sentido, Manuel Canales señala que:

“La política, la publicidad, la sociología y la vida cotidiana parecían venir afinadas en un mismo acorde. Lo que publicitaba el vendedor era también lo que quería decir el político y lo que proponía como imagen oficial una sociología *ad hoc*. A los destinatarios, ahora sabidos y tratados como “público objetivo”, “nicho” o “target”, parecía gustarles el encantamiento”.<sup>15</sup>

Esta transición, presentada como un ejemplar modelo de realismo político y capacidad de reflexión y autocrítica sobre los “errores del pasado”, tenía de trasfondo procesos de “conversión” al interior de sectores políticos e intelectuales de la Izquierda. Recordemos, con Gramsci, que la idea de hegemonía pone el acento en la dirección cultural e ideológica de la sociedad. El control hegemónico se caracteriza por la difusión de la concepción de mundo de la clase dominante, devenida en *sentido común*, el que articula la vida cotidiana y la sociedad civil y por la cooptación, *transformismo* en sus palabras, de la capa intelectual de los sectores sociales subordinados.<sup>16</sup>

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16 Antonio Gramsci, *Cuadernos de la Cárcel. Los intelectuales y la organización de la cultura* (México:

En esa dirección, es posible afirmar que, desde los años 1980, en Chile se produjo una cooptación de importantes sectores de la pequeña burguesía intelectual y de la elite política de Izquierda y el Centro, por parte del bloque dominante y, con ello, un copamiento progresivo del campo cultural, por parte de un amplio campo de variantes del pensamiento liberal que, como dijimos antes, fue construyendo una suerte de “espacio de izquierda” en su interior, para la emergencia del llamado “progresismo”.

Progresivamente, estos sectores intelectuales y políticos cooptados por la ideología liberal, en aras del realismo político y el sentido práctico, comenzaron a darle solidez al movimiento de generación de una clase política, cada vez más despegada de la vida social. Se hizo predominante el énfasis en los derechos individuales, que caracteriza al progresismo liberal, expresión de una mirada que solo puede ver lo social a través del prisma de una subjetividad convertida en la explicación de la vida misma.<sup>17</sup>

Es lo que explica que, para esos sectores, la política tenga al centro el “tema de los liderazgos”, es decir, de encontrar individualidades excepcionales como especie de talismanes de la buena suerte. También, en esta mirada los problemas sociales no son eso, problemas, conflictos, cuando no tragedias, ahora son “temas”, es decir, algo sobre lo que no se actúa, sino de lo que se habla. Dicho sea de paso, el uso de eufemismos y de un lenguaje que neutraliza los dramas y las miserias es una de las características de estas posturas, discursivamente conmovidas con todos los problemas de la humanidad y la animalidad, configurando un discurso políticamente correcto de superioridad moral.

El progresismo va mucho más allá de un partido o bloque político. Es la ideología del borde “izquierdo”, que permite la retroalimentación del sistema, en el sentido estricto, es decir, alertar donde puede haber fallas en su funcionamiento y, por ello, puede ser un espacio que admite nuevos “habitantes”, incluso que intentan crear “nuevas izquierdas”, como ha sucedido en lo que va de este siglo en nuestro país. Además, se erige como el guía y orientador de lo que llama “sectores vulnerables” o “personas en riesgo social”, entre otros eufemismos que le permiten escamotear el contenido de dominación clasista y de género, siempre presentes en la estructura económico-social del país.

De este modo, durante los años de la transición se fueron vaciando de contenido palabras como justicia e igualdad, hasta convertirlos en significantes vacíos que se derraman de las franjas televisivas electorales en boca de todos, incluso de aquellos. No es para nada extraño que un sector no menor del progresismo se haya

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Juan Pablos Editor, 1975).

17 Gabriel Salazar, *Los pobres, los intelectuales y el poder, Chile 1989–1995* (Santiago: PAS, 1995).

“rebelado” ante la idea de una Convención Constitucional surgida de la votación popular y constituida en buena medida por personas comunes y corrientes, no pertenecientes a sectores intelectuales o políticos, de los que se autonombraron como los que “habían recuperado la democracia con un lápiz” y que se siguen sintiendo como los llamados a dirigir y salvaguardar el rumbo correcto del progreso y la democracia.

Así, volviendo a los años 1990, se vistió de participación ciudadana lo que no era más que acceso al mercado; de ejercicio democrático lo que se reducía a un mercado de opiniones; de periodismo al marketing informativo autorreferencial;<sup>18</sup> de identidad nacional a un emergente y agresivo nacionalismo de mercado;<sup>19</sup> de política de desarrollo cultural a la acción de un Estado repartidor de fondos subsidiarios y promotor de eventos, entre otros procesos. Esta modernización capitalista descansaba sobre la auto-percibida pre-eminencia indefinida del mercado (nunca suficiente) y la democracia liberal (pero, nunca tanto).<sup>20</sup>

Esta imagen generalizó el mito de una creciente igualdad de oportunidades y de las responsabilidades individuales, que, como dijimos, hacían descansar en cada individuo los triunfos y los fracasos. Ello supuestamente permitía que cada uno y la sociedad se sintieran libres e iguales (aunque a la primera de cambio, se notara que algunos – no muchos – sean más iguales que el resto).<sup>21</sup> Dicho de otra forma, se fue gestando una particular subjetividad neoliberal, a la que antes aludimos, manifestada cada vez más en todas las esferas de la vida cotidiana, con la legitimidad de acontecer ahora “en democracia”.

La “transición pactada” significó que en los años 1990 se viviera la consagración del mercado como factor articulador de todas las prácticas sociales; la disminución de la actividad política del Estado y su aumento en el ámbito del control y la administración, en conjunto con los procesos de concentración y centralización del poder; lo que, a su vez, provocaron que el mercado se hiciera cargo de los

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18 Eduardo Santa Cruz, “Del periodismo ilustrado al marketing informativo,” en *Escrituras del malestar: Chile del Bicentenario*, ed. Carlos Ossa (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2011).

19 Eduardo Santa Cruz, “Fútbol y nacionalismo de mercado en el Chile Actual,” en *Futbologías (Fútbol, identidad y violencia en América Latina)*, comp. Pablo Alabarces (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2003), 199–224.

20 Juan Carlos Gómez Leyton, *Política, democracia y ciudadanía en una sociedad neoliberal, Chile 1990–2010* (Santiago: Arcis-Clacso, 2010).

21 Hugo Fazio, *El programa abandonado: balance económico y social del gobierno de Aylwin* (Santiago: LOM, 1996); Hugo Fazio, *Lagos: el presidente “progresista” de la Concertación* (Santiago: LOM, 2007); Ana María Ezcurra, *¿Qué es el neoliberalismo?: evolución y límites de un modelo excluyente* (Santiago: IDEAS, 1998); María Olivia Monckeberg, *El saqueo de los grupos económicos al Estado chileno* (Santiago: Ediciones B, 2001), como publicaciones críticas contemporáneas a estos procesos.

finés y lenguajes de lo público, lo cual significa su privatización y, a la vez, que se socializaran las demandas del mercado y se universalizaran sus normas, es decir, transmutando lo público y lo privado, el ciudadano y el consumidor,<sup>22</sup> base de legitimidad del modelo político.

Se trata de un cliente que debe ser mimado y halagado. Ni sujeto (ciudadano clásico), ni objeto (masa homogénea e indiferenciada), se desplaza por los distintos mercados (la política, la salud, la educación, el entretenimiento, el deporte, la muerte y la fe) cada vez más concentrado en sí mismo, preocupado de su seguridad, de su salud y buen estado físico, de lo que considera signos de éxito y bienestar, en una especie de zapping social que no lo compromete más allá de un moralismo de nuevo tipo, desmontado de la ética clásica (religiosa o política) que imponía el sacrificio, el deber colectivo, la renuncia individual y la dialéctica premio-castigo, al decir de Lipovetsky.<sup>23</sup>

La dinámica de los mercados y la concentración creciente del poder económico y político comenzaron a diluir la posibilidad de un público racionante y con él del ciudadano político. Por un lado, la esfera de lo privado, de lo familiar e íntimo fue siendo progresivamente invadida y desvirtuada. Por otro, la esfera pública como necesaria contrapartida se desnaturalizaba como lugar de encuentro, de opinión e intereses expresados libremente. Ello redujo lo político y lo público al ámbito de la mera gestión o administración tecnificada en manos de los llamados “operadores políticos”, favoreciendo los procesos de individuación y privatización de la vida social.

Dicho en palabras de Alejandra Castillo, se abandonó la búsqueda de la posibilidad de construir una “democracia sustantiva/participativa”, como en los años antes del golpe de 1973, para sostener una “democracia de procedimientos”, en lo que importa es cumplir con ciertas formalidades.<sup>24</sup> La política como una ritualidad, de allí la condena permanente de manifestaciones o demandas sociales, porque “no es la forma de hacerlo”, en lo que coinciden los consorcios mediáticos y la elite política.

En este marco, se produjo la reducción de toda estrategia comunicacional, incluyendo las de propaganda política, las periodísticas y las de desarrollo social o bien público a estrategias publicitarias de mercado, es decir, que ahora el punto

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22 Néstor García Canclini, *Consumidores y ciudadanos* (México: Grijalbo, 1995).

23 Gilles Lipovetsky, *La era del vacío. Ensayos sobre el individualismo contemporáneo* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1996). Determinar la profundidad que alcanzó la construcción de este tipo de subjetividad política es una de las diligencias necesarias para entender lo sucedido recientemente con la votación alcanzada por el rechazo a la propuesta de la Convención Constitucional, especialmente en ciertos sectores sociales que se “reincorporaron” después de varios años a la participación electoral, al hacerse esta nuevamente obligatoria.

24 Alejandra Castillo, *Tiempo de feminismos. Cuerpos, imágenes y revuelta* (Santiago: Palinodia, 2022), 83.

de partida era la demanda de sectores de consumidores y, con ello, la acomodación de todo contenido a lo que esos consumidores están dispuestos a escuchar, ver o leer y creer. En ese sentido, la vida social se reducía a las demandas y necesidades de cada uno y sólo así es concebible que la política tuviera como objeto central “los problemas concretos de la gente”, frase que instaló un candidato presidencial de la Derecha a fines de la década de 1990 y que pasó a ser un lugar común repetido por toda la elite política.

Las discontinuidades, la fragmentación y los cruces interculturales facilitan, en cierto sentido, la democratización de la cultura, pero también la dispersión extrema favorecía a quienes sí continúan preocupados por manejar las redes de objetos y de sentidos: los empresarios y la clase política. En este contexto, el tipo de cultura cotidiana promovida por el poder no podía ser sino de tipo liviana, fácilmente penetrable por sus discursos constructores y legitimadores de sí mismo. La conclusión es que ni al Estado, ni al mercado le interesaba más que convertir a la sociedad civil en un público consumidor y espectador.

Uno de los resultados de lo anterior fue la presencia de una cultura hegemónica fundamentalmente banal, trivial e insustancial: liviana e intrascendente, volcada hacia el exterior y gatillada por el evento y el espectáculo, ambos efímeros y desechables. En ese marco, una característica medular de lo ocurrido en esos años de administración democrática de la modernización neo-liberal, fue el crecimiento y desarrollo del campo y la industria cultural, su diversificación y profesionalización, teniendo a la oferta audiovisual como eje central, en unas plataformas que combinan géneros y formatos, lenguajes y códigos y que se difunden tanto por señales abiertas o generalistas, como digitales.

Es decir, la televisión operando como escenario de lo público, entendido éste como una suerte de sumatoria de los problemas individuales, privados o particulares y, a la vez, ofreciéndose como instrumento de la gente para difundir y satisfacer las demandas, no de actores o sujetos sociales, sino de diversos segmentos de audiencia. Para ello, la televisión desarrolló una extensa gama de formatos que le permitieron incluso construir metatextualidades al interior de su malla programática y con otros medios como la radio o la prensa: programas de conversación, *reality show*, telenovelas, reportajes especiales, programas matinales, entre otros.

La ficción audiovisual no ha sido de los menos importantes, contribuyendo a sedimentar un sentido común referido a la permanente elaboración de una memoria colectiva, en especial sobre el periodo de la dictadura.<sup>25</sup> Por ello, se puede afirmar que el discurso televisivo no es discernible desde su pura inmanencia,

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25 Lorena Antezana y Eduardo Santa Cruz, “La ficción audiovisual histórica en Chile (1960–2020),” *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades* 27, no. 1 (2023).

sino desde la radical historicidad de toda estrategia comunicacional operando de manera trascendente en, sobre y desde procesos socioculturales profundos: formación de identidades, intercambios y producción simbólica. Contribuyendo a sedimentar visiones y lecturas de la sociedad chilena actual, que incorporan temáticas, interpretaciones y reescrituras de su presente y pasado, en torno a cuestiones especialmente relevantes.

## Análisis de la serie

En este apartado organizamos los resultados obtenidos del análisis realizado en cuatro ámbitos que responden a las estrategias que desarrolla la propuesta ficcional para vincularse con su público (proximidad)<sup>26</sup> y la manera en que se instalan, refuerzan y comparten sentidos comunes que responden al tipo de organización social de la postdictadura.

### 1. Organización de la vida cotidiana

La serie está centrada, sobre todo en las primeras temporadas, en la vida cotidiana de una familia tradicional, de clase media-baja del Santiago de la década de los 80. La vida cotidiana en ese eje espacio-temporal se circunscribe por un lado, a un determinado espacio físico que puede ser más o menos amplio de acuerdo a las posibilidades de utilizarlo que tengan sus habitantes y por otro a la etapa de desarrollo en la que éstos se encuentren, además del género al que pertenezca.<sup>27</sup> Así, en *Los 80*, la pareja adulta es urbana (segunda generación) de origen campesino, no profesional y su organización familiar responde a la división del trabajo tradicional: Juan es el hombre proveedor; Ana es la mujer dedicada a las actividades domésticas y al cuidado de los hijos de ambos. Viven en una casa que están pagando y sus tres hijos que van al Colegio, aunque dos de ellos, Claudia y Martín, pronto terminarán esta etapa.

La vida cotidiana se organiza en torno a una rutina diaria y estacional, de una “ruta que vuelve a hacerse día a día; de un movimiento rotatorio que regresa

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<sup>26</sup> Pierre Fastrez y Stéphanie Meyer, “Télévision locale et proximité,” *Recherches en Communication* 11 (1999).

<sup>27</sup> Lorena Antezana, “Trayectos cotidianos en sectores pobres,” *Documentos de Investigación CECOM* (2005).

siempre a su punto de origen”<sup>28</sup> así, Juan realiza un trayecto cotidiano (itinerario) de lunes a viernes, desde su casa a su trabajo, los hijos parten de ese mismo punto y van a su escuela y Ana tiene un trayecto menor que la lleva a espacios cercanos: la tienda del barrio, casas de sus vecinos/as, la escuela, entre otros asociados al carácter de sus tareas de cuidado.

Lo que rompe esta rutina cotidiana es generalmente algún hecho excepcional o único (generalmente no planificado) o ciertos hitos culturales que marcan inicios y cierres de cierto tipo de actividades acotadas y repetitivas. Es lo mismo que vemos en la estructura de los distintos episodios y temporadas. Cada temporada se organiza sobre los principales acontecimientos, planificados o no, que marcaron el año a nivel colectivo e individual.

En la primera temporada, por ejemplo, que cubre el periodo 1982 y 1983, encontramos algunas marcas que organizan los ciclos productivos y los tiempos de ocio de acuerdo a una lógica estacional. Una pausa de la productividad coincide con el fin del año y el periodo estival. Está marcada por el cierre del año académico y las pruebas de admisión a la Universidad, las celebraciones de fiestas religiosas católicas (como la navidad) y del nuevo año y las vacaciones. En la serie la navidad del 82 (Episodio 6: “El llanero solitario”) estará marcada por un hecho excepcional para Félix, el hijo menor de los Herrera, pues pelea con su mejor amigo Bruno porque éste le dice que el Viejito Pascuero<sup>29</sup> no existe. Para resolver el problema que se genera con esta revelación, decide enviarle un telegrama al Viejito para cambiar su pedido navideño. En enero del siguiente año y como parte del cierre del anterior,<sup>30</sup> acompañamos a Claudia, la hija mayor, que esperaba los resultados de la prueba de admisión a la Universidad (conocida en esa época como Prueba de Aptitud Académica) a la que había aplicado<sup>31</sup> (Episodio 7: “Mi casa”). El final del verano y las vacaciones marca el inicio de un nuevo ciclo productivo en marzo. En la serie se inicia el año escolar, en marzo de 1983 (Episodio 9: “Hijos chicos, problemas chicos”), y vemos los preparativos de la familia para que Félix vuelva a la escuela.

Un ejemplo de un hecho excepcional, esta vez a nivel colectivo y estructural es el comienzo de la crisis económica que afectará al país ese año (junio de 1982) y cuya consecuencia enfrenta Juan al quedar cesante (Episodio 2: “La mejor sopa

28 Humberto Giannini, *La “reflexión” cotidiana* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1995), 22.

29 El viejito pascuero es el nombre que en Chile recibe la persona que deja los regalos a los niños la noche de navidad y que en otras tradiciones lleva por nombre Santa Claus, San Nicolás o Papá Noel. En el país la navidad es denominada pascua.

30 Porque en Chile generalmente el ciclo productivo es de marzo a enero.

31 Esta prueba se rinde generalmente a finales de año. Los resultados están disponibles en enero del siguiente y de acuerdo con estos, los que quedan admitidos pueden ingresar a la Universidad, que también empieza en marzo.



del mundo”). Si bien el título del episodio se debe a una frase que le dijo Juan a Ana cuando le confiesa que quedó sin trabajo mientras tomaba una sopa, este tipo de preparación culinaria casera es un plato tradicional en Chile y está asociada a la solidaridad y a la pobreza materializada en la expresión “echarle más agua a la sopa”.

La representación ficcional de la vida cotidiana en la serie también está relacionada con el melodrama que es parte importante de los relatos característicos de América Latina y cuyo principal exponente será la telenovela. Si bien las series en la actualidad van adaptándose a las lógicas de producción de la industria global impuesta por las plataformas de *streaming*, el melodrama tradicional latinoamericano<sup>32</sup> con amores interclases e imposibles, hijos/as perdidos o que desconocen sus orígenes, hermanos separados al nacer, búsqueda de venganzas por hechos del pasado, entre otros, aún sigue vigente en nuestras producciones.

En dos de los capítulos de esta temporada podemos apreciar el melodrama en tanto “drama del reconocimiento”.<sup>33</sup> Primero con el regreso del papá de Juan en diciembre (Episodio 6: “El llanero solitario”) que produce conmoción en la familia, sobre todo para Félix que no entiende porque Juan lo trata tan mal y segundo, con la confesión de Exequiel (Episodio 5: “Padres ausentes”), colega de Juan, que le cuenta que él fue criado por su madre sola, ya que su padre no estuvo con ellos.

Juan y Exequiel encarnan el ideal de paternidad presente, y por tanto de la estructura nuclear de la familia instalada en dictadura, que intenta dejar atrás el pasado, a los padres ausentes, y a una concepción del cuidado infantil más colectiva.

## 2. Memorias mediáticas

Los medios de comunicación suelen organizar la información – cuando no es coyuntural –, siguiendo una pauta más o menos estandarizada, de acuerdo con ciertos hitos relevantes que pueden ser cíclicos y cotidianos o históricos.<sup>34</sup> En la década de los ochenta, una de las características de la vida cotidiana fue la omnipresencia de la televisión. El año 1962, la emisión del Mundial de fútbol realizado en Chile sumado a la presión de las audiencias por poder ver los partidos y la disponibilidad de apar-

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32 Nora Maziotti, *El espectáculo de la pasión. Las telenovelas latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1993); Lorena Antezana y Alejandro Bruna, “Estrategias narrativas de la industria chilena para llegar al *streaming*: el caso de *Verdades Ocultas*,” *Comunicação Pública* 18, no. 34 (2023).

33 Jesús Martín-Barbero, “La telenovela en Colombia: Televisión, melodrama y vida cotidiana,” *Diálogos de la Comunicación* 17 (1987).

34 Francisca Palma, *Periodización de la vida cotidiana en la sociedad mediatizada: un problema político normativo en el caso de Chile* (Tesis de Magíster, Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2014).

tos de televisión en el mercado,<sup>35</sup> impacta en la televisión que empieza a funcionar de manera continua y es en los años ochenta que con el incremento de las importaciones y el acceso al crédito en las casas comerciales esta se masifica en el país.

No es un aspecto menor que el primer episodio de la serie aluda a la televisión y al fútbol, específicamente con lo que se considera un hito mediático de la época: el penal que el jugador de fútbol Carlos Caszely pierde en un partido ante la selección de Austria durante el Mundial de 1982 (Episodio 1: “Un penal a colores”). Aunque la televisión en colores llegó al país de manera extendida en 1979,<sup>36</sup> a partir de la emisión del Festival de Viña del Mar en febrero de 1978, la realización de ese Mundial incentivaría la adquisición de los nuevos aparatos.

De allí en adelante, las tramas narrativas de los demás episodios de la serie se desarrollarán siguiendo este patrón, por lo que distintos hitos mediáticos inspirarán los episodios y estos, al menos hasta la tercera temporada, serán los disponibles en los archivos del Canal 13.<sup>37</sup>

Los programas de entretenimiento son el grueso de la parrilla de la televisión de la época,<sup>38</sup> esto por la censura general que se ejercía contra los medios de comunicación y en la televisión en específico por la intervención directa (control editorial) ejercida por los rectores delegados de la Universidad (que eran propietarias de los canales) y por la necesidad de autofinanciarse (modelo comercial). Esta situación no variaría hasta 1988 con la campaña para el plebiscito que decidiría la continuidad (o no) de Pinochet en el poder.

Dada la gran presencia de los programas de entretenimiento en la televisión de la década, estos son los más recordados por las audiencias y están presentes en distintos episodios de la serie. Es el caso del animé japonés *Marco*<sup>39</sup> que en la serie aparece en el cuarto episodio: “No te vayas mamá”, y está construido tomando como referencia octubre de 1982, momento en que el programa se emite en Chile con gran éxito.

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35 María de la Luz Hurtado, *Historia de la TV en Chile (1958–1973)* (Santiago: Ediciones Documentas, 1989).

36 Patricia Reyes, *Producción audiovisual independiente para televisión. Los altibajos de la industria chilena* (Memoria de título, Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2017).

37 Sergio Durán, entrevistado por Paulina Jerez y Crystal Sarmiento en el marco de la investigación histórica para la serie *Los 80* a partir de la tercera temporada, septiembre 1 de 2022, Santiago de Chile.

38 Sergio Durán, *Ríe cuando todos estén tristes. El entretenimiento televisivo bajo la dictadura de Pinochet* (Santiago: LOM ediciones, 2012).

39 Aunque la versión occidentalizada del animé japonés se empieza a difundir en los años 70, en Chile será en la siguiente década que estos productos tendrán mayor difusión. Luis Perillán, *Otakus en Chile* (Memoria de Título. Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2009). Además de *Marco*, una adaptación del relato de los Apeninos a los Alpes presente en el libro *Corazón* de Edmundo de Amicis, se emiten en este periodo *Candy*, *Heidy* y *Maginzer Z*, entre otros.

La trama central de *Marco* establece un paralelo entre lo que vive Félix con su mamá y la madre de Marco que, al igual que Ana, también se va a Argentina por trabajo.

Para quienes vivieron la década “La dictadura era el tiempo muerto. La dictadura era TVN. La dictadura era el *Jappening con ja*. La dictadura era un infierno hecho de repeticiones. La dictadura era la marca IRT”.<sup>40</sup> Este programa que es parte de la memoria mediática de toda una generación debutó en TVN en abril de 1978 y representaba de manera cómica a “personajes y situaciones característicos del país”.<sup>41</sup> En la serie, es parte de los contenidos desarrollados en el Episodio 3: “18 sin aguinaldo” que se ambienta en septiembre de 1982. En este capítulo los padres de Ana visitan la casa de los Herrera para celebrar en conjunto las Fiestas Patrias sin saber de la cesantía de Juan. Félix por su parte tuvo que bailar cueca en el acto dieciochero de su colegio con «la Gertrudis», una compañera de curso que se parecía al personaje de Gloria Benavides en el *Jappening con Ja*. Dado que el programa televisivo no era transmitido por Canal 13, no contaban con las imágenes de archivo (y los permisos correspondientes) para mostrarlo en la serie por lo cual solo aluden a él en las conversaciones de los personajes.

La campaña de La Teletón<sup>42</sup> es parte de la primera temporada. Aparece en el Episodio 5: “Vista perfecta”, ambientado a principios de diciembre de 1982 y la emisión de la película *E.T.* (Episodio 7: “Mi casa”) de enero de 1983 que será un fenómeno que capta el interés de los niños, sobre todo en Félix y Bruno, que la van a ver al cine con Martín.

### 3. La “chilenidad”

Otra estrategia de proximidad desarrollada por la serie, con bastante éxito, es el apelar a la “chilenidad”, es decir a algunos aspectos y características que se han ido fijando en el tiempo, y en el sentido común, que darían cuenta de una identidad colectiva y compartida.

Los distintos dispositivos tecnológicos (desde la llegada al país de la fotografía en 1843 al cine documental que se empieza a desarrollar en 1900) han permitido, en el tiempo, ir fijando y difundiendo aspectos que dibujan los contornos de un terri-

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<sup>40</sup> Álvaro Bizama, “Fotos,” en *Volver a los 17. Recuerdos de una generación en dictadura*, ed. Oscar Contardo (Santiago: Editorial Planeta, 2013), 40.

<sup>41</sup> Sergio Durán, *Ríe cuando todos estén tristes. El entretenimiento televisivo bajo la dictadura de Pinochet* (Santiago: LOM ediciones, 2012), 13.

<sup>42</sup> Evento benéfico que se desarrolla en el país desde 1978 y que, hasta hoy (2023) es liderado por “Don Francisco” (Mario Kreutzberger Blumenfel).

torio común (espacial) en un tiempo productivo (temporal), aspectos que enmarcan el reconocimiento de un “nosotros” (nación). Estos deben ser compartidos y deseados por el conjunto social para facilitar la construcción de un orden, donde la seducción debe ir acompañada por los límites y reglas (castigos).

Los modelos ejemplares son difundidos por los medios de comunicación y en una época como la actual, en que se registra un giro visual y afectivo, las producciones audiovisuales de ficción son las que mejor permiten cumplir esta función. En la pantalla desfilan propuestas, modelos, ejemplos y recomendaciones de lo que somos, de lo que debemos desear, de aquello por lo que vale la pena luchar y de lo que no podemos aceptar. En su conjunto estas nos permiten ser parte de una comunidad imaginaria<sup>43</sup> que resuelve simbólicamente una necesidad de pertenencia y de diferenciación. Una identidad compartida que se basa en ciertos referentes provenientes del mundo popular, pero blanqueados, como la celebración de las fiestas patrias, la representación del huaso y los símbolos tradicionales.

Las fiestas patrias son parte del Episodio 3 de la serie. Martín y Félix se van a la escuela donde Félix baila la cueca como parte del acto escolar que reproduce las tradiciones locales institucionalizadas que refuerzan la “chilenidad”. Música, bailes, comidas, juegos populares, banderas y trajes son parte de los elementos rituales que año a año se reiteran y forman parte de la organización de un tiempo excepcional asociado al mito de la independencia del país.

Además de estos aspectos que permitirían que quienes son parte de este territorio se reconozcan como parte de una nación, en la actualidad, cuando no existen muchos relatos comunes integradores que permitan encontrar los mínimos comunes el mercado con la colaboración de los medios de comunicación, proponen alternativas, algunas muy exitosas de construir espacios comunes y compartidos. Una de ellas es la mencionada campaña de La Teletón, en el que las diferencias y rivalidades de toda índole se posponen para enfrentar en conjunto un desafío, en este caso solidario. Otra es la participación de la selección chilena de fútbol en competencias internacionales, en que se vista la camiseta roja, la “roja” de todos.

#### 4. Los “valores” del nuevo modelo económico

El discurso “del empate” construido durante el periodo transicional debía responder al:

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43 Benedict Anderson, *Comunidades imaginadas. Reflexiones sobre el origen y la difusión del nacionalismo* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993).

“ánimo de falsa ecuanimidad que dominó la transición democrática, aquel que establecía que si se hablaba de crímenes y represión debía mencionarse el éxito económico y el orden establecido por el régimen como el impulso a una prosperidad con daños colaterales de menor cuantía [...]: escriban sobre el crecimiento económico, agreguen tablas de índice de riqueza material, incluyan la otra cara, la de los que votaron por el Sí en el plebiscito del 88. Nos decían sin decirlo que el empate era necesario para vivir en paz”.<sup>44</sup>

Este “equilibrio”, no tan explícito como en la cita anterior, fue uno de los sentidos comunes que operó como pilar de la transición y *Los 80* lo sigue, al menos hasta la tercera temporada en que la serie adquiere un tono “más político” y menos neutral. La primera temporada contrasta la fragilidad económica de “los Herrera” con las ventajas que el nuevo sistema ofrece al masificar el acceso al consumo. Hasta la fecha, la familia llegaba a fin de mes recurriendo al sistema de fiado que ofrecía la tienda del barrio de Don Genaro, él registraba en un cuaderno las compras del mes que luego se pagaban al final del mismo, sin intereses. El nuevo sistema de crédito que otorgaban Bancos y casas comerciales lo podemos observar ya en el primer Episodio, en que vemos que el televisor en blanco y negro de “los Herrera” comienza a fallar y las zapatillas de Félix ya están muy viejas y no pueden seguir arreglándose. Juan entonces compra un televisor en colores y unas zapatillas para Félix en cuotas que cree puede pagar. Sin embargo, la fábrica en la que trabaja cierra y queda cesante.

Este no será un hecho aislado en la serie, recordemos que estamos en 1982, año en que se vivió una gran crisis económica en el país. Exequiel, compadre y amigo de Juan también es despedido y de ahí en adelante se dedica a desarrollar distintos oficios semi informales como la venta de dólares o la conducción de un taxi. Esto también lo podemos apreciar en el episodio cuatro en que Ana y su amiga Nancy deciden ir a comprar mercadería a Argentina para poder venderla en Chile. Ana de esta forma rompe con el orden de género establecido hasta la fecha y decide, contra la voluntad de Juan, colaborar con la economía del hogar.

Ana se va con Nancy, en la casa queda Claudia a cargo, y además deben cuidar a Bruno, hijo de Nancy. Claudia, empieza a tener síntomas de resfrío, pero su familia no se da cuenta. Claudia se enferma y Juan debe hacerse cargo de la casa. Prepara “tallarines pegotados a la Juan Herrera”, lava ropa de manera poco usual y los platos, sin botar la comida, por lo que echa a perder el lavaplatos, que luego debe arreglar.

Las ventajas del nuevo modelo van de la mano con la “modernidad” que se empieza a construir. Llegan productos nuevos al mercado que son publicitados a

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<sup>44</sup> Oscar Contardo, “Me acuerdo,” en *Volver a los 17. Recuerdos de una generación en dictadura*, ed. Oscar Contardo (Santiago: Editorial Planeta, 2013), 20.

través de las pantallas de televisión, lo mismo que películas y música fundamentalmente provenientes de la industria estadounidense.

## Reflexiones finales

En un sentido amplio, la serie en estudio se instala al interior de un discurso sobre la identidad nacional, de carácter masivo, construido y difundido por el campo y la industria cultural a lo largo del siglo pasado.<sup>45</sup> Uno de los elementos centrales de aquel surge del convencimiento de vivir en un país marcado por el signo de las crisis y las catástrofes, sean estas de carácter natural (terremotos, erupciones volcánicas, tsunamis, inundaciones) o convulsiones políticas, económicas y/o sociales.

De ello, se desprende, por una parte, un supuesto carácter solidario que emerge en esas situaciones de manera natural, como una cierta conciencia de la inseguridad de una vida cotidiana siempre amenazada de ver destruidas sus bases y estabilidad. En ese tipo de contextos históricos, dicho discurso que marca el desarrollo de la serie de principio a fin y que explica el desenlace, pone al núcleo familiar como el colectivo más importante e, incluso, a veces excluyente en que se pueden refugiar los/as individuo/as, para encontrar apoyo y seguridad.

La familia nuclear como órgano central de la sociedad y como el colectivo fundamental en que pueden participar los seres humanos (por sobre partidos políticos, organizaciones sociales o deportivas, agrupaciones gremiales u otras), sería la que sufre el embate y las consecuencias de un entorno o contexto marcado por el conflicto social o político y, a la vez, es el mejor refugio frente a ello. En ese sentido, la serie muestra los riesgos de la participación social y política (con ello, se valida la forma de la transición y la despolitización y fragmentación social).

La Dictadura y la década de años 1980, con la emergencia además de un sector de oposición a ella que planteaba y desarrollaba una rebelión armada contra el régimen, son presentados como un marco existencial en que la familia no solamente sufre las agresiones y golpes provenientes de ambas direcciones, sino que sus propias bases son cuestionadas. En ese sentido, el discurso sobre la “Familia Herrera” es coincidente con el discurso que justificó políticamente la “transición pactada” con la Dictadura, alternativa opositora finalmente exitosa. Lo ocurrido en “los 80” (Dictadura) es algo que no puede volver a pasar y, para ello, tampoco se

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45 Jorge Larraín, *La identidad chilena* (Santiago, LOM Ediciones, 1999).

deben repetir las condiciones y procesos que la habrían hecho posible (la llamada “sobreideologización” del periodo de la Unidad Popular).

Por otra parte, el discurso que difunde la serie incorpora otras dimensiones que ponen en riesgo y en jaque las formas de existencia del núcleo familiar chileno durante la segunda mitad del siglo pasado y que dice relación con los roles de género. El contenido patriarcal se plantea tensionado, Por un lado, Juan tratando, casi patéticamente, de mantener la rigidez de los roles masculino/femenino en el hogar y “sus” mujeres (madre e hija) reivindicando derechos al trabajo, a tomar sus propias decisiones, etc. Sin embargo, ello no traspasa la reivindicación de derechos individuales de ambas.

El discurso patriarcal presente en todos los personajes se presenta como algo decadente, extemporáneo y más bien encarnado en estereotipos gruesos, en un contexto en que el proyecto modernizador neoliberal comienza a desplegarse en el país, generando nuevas formas de subjetividad y en que el consumo progresivamente adquiere cuotas crecientes de masividad. En ese marco, la incorporación de las mujeres al trabajo y a la toma de decisiones en un plano de relativa igualdad es algo que se va imponiendo por la simple fuerza de los hechos y se conecta con procesos similares que vienen desde las primeras décadas del siglo XX, en distintos sectores sociales.

Escrita veinte años después de ocurridos los hechos en que se ambienta, la serie construye discursivamente ciertos estereotipos funcionando en un pasado cercano para intervenir en un ambiente cultural como el cercano al 2010, en que se ha instalado un contexto discursivo donde el discurso patriarcal rígido no es ni siquiera “políticamente correcto de desarrollar en público”, al margen de que seguramente muchos lo siguen sosteniendo en privado. Además, consolida la visión de los procesos de transición pactada a la democracia que, no solamente es presentada como la única salida posible a la crisis, sino que habría asegurado las bases para el desarrollo y la paz social, evitando el conflicto social y político y la disputa por el poder como posibilidad histórica. Lo importante es que eso está planteado en las claves de la entretención y de una serie ficcional que alcanza hasta hoy importantes cuotas de atracción masiva.

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Holle Meding

## Framing the Dictatorship

Uncovering Correlations of Archetypes in Chilean TV Series Using Digital History

**Abstract:** Historical television series are stories about the past. Like any narrative, they follow recognizable patterns. Rags to riches, the coming-of-age story, the hero's journey: inevitably we come across familiar figures, such as the hero, the faithful servant, the villain, the rebel, and the outlaw. For the sake of entertainment, these productions often abandon historicity, framing historical figures in line with these established narrative templates, drawing upon their emotional resonance.

In Latin America, since the 1970s there has been a significant increase in the production of historical TV series. In the case of Chilean productions, one narrative pattern, in particular, has gained prominence. It relates to the military dictatorship. These TV-productions employ their own set of character types: the *political dissident*, the *relative of the one, who disappeared*, the *guerrillero*, the *ignorant upper-class person* and the *merciless intelligence agent*.

This article presents a categorization of archetypes present in TV series depicting the Chilean military dictatorship and examine the interrelations among them. The identification of archetypes in the respective series entails the interpretation of the characters based on twelve criteria along an iterative and interserial comparison. To this end, I have employed statistics and digital history, conducting a correlation analysis in order to discern any recurring patterns of visual and narrative representation.

The analysis identified 19 archetypes, some of which exhibited a strong linear correlation and manifested collectively as pairs or groups. Overall, there has been a trend over the past 15 years to simplify the portrayal of those, who support the dictatorship as one-dimensional villains, while giving more depth to the archetypes of political and armed resistance. By exploring these dynamics, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how archetypes in TV series about the

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**Note:** This article has been written within the framework of the research project "Geschichtsvermittlung durch Unterhaltungsmedien in Lateinamerika. Labor für Erinnerungsforschung und digitale Methoden – GUMELAB" (History Transfer Through Entertainment Media in Latin America. Laboratory for Memory and Digital Media Research) at Freie Universität Berlin, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).

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Chilean military dictatorship contribute to shaping narratives and reflecting socio-historical perspectives of this period.

**Keywords:** archetypes; Chile; dictatorship; digital methods; framing; transmission of history; TV series.

**Resumen:** Las series históricas principalmente son relatos sobre el pasado. Como cualquier otra narración, estas siguen los principios de la narración. Ya sea con el viaje del héroe, el paso de la pobreza a la riqueza o con la historia de la madurez, nos encontramos inevitablemente con las mismas figuras: el héroe, el sirviente fiel, el villano, el rebelde o el forajido. Estos personajes se han multiplicado con el paso de los años, creando universos específicos para cada género y región. Las producciones de entretenimiento dramatizan y enmarcan a estos personajes, abandonando así la historicidad en beneficio de plantillas y modelos de narrativas establecidas.

Volviendo a las producciones latinoamericanas, se puede observar que desde la década de 1970 se ha producido un aumento significativo en la producción de series históricas, con un género particular siendo especialmente prominente en el caso chileno: las series centradas en la dictadura. Estas producciones televisivas también introducen nuevos tipos de personajes. Algunos ejemplos son el *disidente político*, el *familiar del desaparecido*, el *guerrillero*, el *cuico ignorante* y el *despiadado agente de inteligencia*.

Este trabajo presenta una categorización de los arquetipos en los medios de entretenimiento con temas históricos, centrándose en las series de televisión sobre la dictadura militar chilena. La identificación de los arquetipos en las respectivas series conlleva la interpretación de los personajes a partir de doce criterios a lo largo de una comparación iterativa e interserial. Para ello, se utilizaron métodos estadísticos e historia digital y se realizó un análisis de correlación para identificar patrones recurrentes de representación visual y narrativa.

El análisis mostró que, de los 19 arquetipos identificados, algunos de ellos presentan una fuerte correlación lineal y aparecen juntos como pares o grupos. En general, se muestra una tendencia en los últimos 15 años a simplificar el retrato de los simpatizantes de la dictadura como villanos unidimensionales, mientras que se ha dado más profundidad a los arquetipos de la resistencia política y armada. Al explorar estas dinámicas, este artículo tiene como objetivo proporcionar una comprensión integral de cómo los arquetipos en las series de televisión sobre la dictadura militar chilena contribuyen a dar forma a las narrativas y reflejan perspectivas sociohistóricas sobre este período.

**Palabras claves:** arquetipos; Chile; dictadura; framing; métodos digitales; transmisión de la historia; series de televisión.

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been an unmistakable renaissance of historical television series. *Narcos* (2015–2017), *Chernobyl* (2019) and *The Crown* (2016–2023) are prominent examples of this phenomenon. These series take the audience to different historical eras and regions, sparking new interest in the past through a combination of dramatic storytelling, strategies of authentication, and contemporary relevance. The popularity of such programs is evidenced by their extensive discussion on social media, with the creation of memes and the emergence of new hashtags on a daily basis. From the perspective of memory culture, these series serve a valuable purpose in circulating images of the past on a large scale. However, there is a risk that their content will be adopted uncritically by the audience and accepted as fact. In historical TV series, there is often a simplification and standardization of the past. This approach, which I refer to as historical framing, serves to create narrative structures that are both emotionally appealing and effectively communicate moral concepts and historical interpretations to a broad audience. In the Netflix-Series *Bridgerton* (2020–2024), for example historical framing is evident through its stylized portrayal of the Regency era, emphasizing romanticized narratives and societal conflicts that resonate with contemporary audiences. By selectively presenting aspects of history and adapting them to modern sensibilities, the series constructs a compelling narrative that blends familiar tropes of costume dramas while simultaneously reshaping viewers' understanding of societal norms of early 19th-century Britain.

Moreover, this approach to historical framing extends beyond entertainment platforms like Netflix to encompass characters in state-funded and publicly broadcast series, in which the protagonists usually act according to contemporary moral codes, while the antagonists transgress them. In this way, political and moral values, recommendations for action, and also certain interpretations of the past are communicated to the audience, sometimes at the expense of historical accuracy.

In these TV series, certain narratives and character types appear recurrently: these I will call archetypes.<sup>1</sup> Here, the term does not follow the Jungian psychoanalytical

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<sup>1</sup> There is a variance of the archetype concept in relation to film and series studies. For different definitions and uses of the archetype concept, see: Umberto Eco, “‘Casablanca’: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage,” *SubStance* 14, no. 2 (1985): 3–12. Michael A. Faber and John D. Mayer, “Resonance to Archetypes in Media: There’s some accounting for taste,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 43, no. 3 (2009): 307–22. James F. Iaccino, *Jungian Reflections within the Cinema: A Psychological Analysis of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Archetypes* (Westport/Connecticut/London: Praeger Publishers, 1998). Jesús Martín-Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones: Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía* (México: Gili, 1987), 36, 153, 161, 185.

definition, but rather, refers to characteristics and to recurring and established narrative situations and characters.<sup>2</sup> Through the re-mediation of these archetypes, framed conceptions of the past are created, which contribute to an implicit collective memory, i.e. a common but unconscious imaginary world.<sup>3</sup>

This article will focus on the portrayal of Latin American dictatorships and autocracies in television series and analyze the manner in which character archetypes are framed in these series. In order to uncover patterns and trends in the transmission of history, I turn to digital history. Digital history employs computational tools and techniques to study and interpret historical events by analyzing data from sources such as newspaper archives, scanned books, and databases. This interdisciplinary field enables historians to efficiently manage and explore datasets, revealing patterns and trends that are otherwise difficult or impossible to access through traditional manual methods.<sup>4</sup>

This article examines the portrayal of character archetypes in historical TV series through the lens of digital public history. To this end, a digital database of characters was created, encompassing the main characters and a multitude of supporting characters across over 16 series and more than 160 hours of audiovisual material. Based on this database, a correlation analysis was conducted to identify and quantify the relationships between archetypes, revealing how narrative elements are structured and interconnected. By identifying variables such as production year and relationships between these portrayals, historians can uncover trends and shifts in the representation of historical narratives in media. This approach

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2 In the context of Jungian psychoanalysis, the term "archetype" is used to describe universal, innate symbols or motifs that reside in the collective unconscious of humanity. These primordial images represent fundamental human experiences and function as templates that shape our perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. They offer symbolic representations of fundamental human motifs, such as the mother, the shadow, and the wise old man. Carl Gustav Jung, *Zur Psychologie und Pathologie sogenannter occulter Phänomene. Eine psychiatrische Studie*, Diss. Univ. Zürich Medizinische Fakultät, (Leipzig: Mutze Verlag, 1902).

3 Astrid Erll, "The Hidden Power of Implicit Collective Memory," *Memory, Mind & Media* 1 (2022): 1–17.

4 Jonathan Blaney et al., *Doing digital history: a beginner's guide to working with text as data*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 1. Ching-man Au Yeung and Adam Jatowt, "Studying how the past is remembered. Towards computational history through large scale text mining," *Proceedings of the 20th ACM international conference on Information and knowledge management*: 1231–1240. For an example of using correlation analysis in digital humanities, see the study on the "Digital Dunhuang" platform, which measures correlations between eye-tracking features and user experience metrics, providing insights for enhancing digital humanities platforms. Dan Wu and Shuang Xu, "How users gaze and experience on digital humanities platform? A model of usability evaluation." *Information in Contemporary Society: 14th International Conference, iConference 2019, Proceedings 14*, 547–553 (Springer International Publishing, 2019).

not only provides empirical evidence for the structure of audiovisual narratives surrounding dictatorships but also highlights the evolving interpretations and enduring themes presented by the creators, writers, and producers of historical TV series.

In the following, the significance of historical TV series in Latin America in general and the dictatorship- and autocracy-centered series in particular will be discussed first. Subsequently, Chile is taken as a case study. The correlation analysis was based on 16 series about the Chilean military dictatorship (1973–1990), and concluded in a final examination of the research results. The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, to examine the continuities and disruptions in the media portrayal of the military dictatorship; and secondly, to conduct a methodological experiment to explore the potential and applicability of statistical and digital tools in the fields of historical and media research.

## Television in Latin America and the rise of the oppression-centered TV series

In Latin America, the production of historical series has increased significantly since the 1970s. In particular, productions about the recent past have become the focus of attention. Between 1968 and 2024 more than 160 series set in the 20th century were created.<sup>5</sup> This trend of historical series experienced its peak in 2017–2019 with 33 productions.<sup>6</sup> An examination of the content in Latin American historical series reveals that productions about national trauma predominate. While in Colombia the series type of *narcotelenovela* – a telenovela that focuses on drug trafficking and its consequences – has prevailed since the mid-2000s, the establishment of another genre can be observed across the whole of Latin America, and to a particularly strong extent in the Cono Sur: the oppression-centered series. Almost forty percent of historical series deal with Latin American dictatorships and autocracies; starting with the Mexican telenovela *La Constitución* (1970), set in the Porfiriato era

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5 This data was collected in collaboration with the GUMELAB team. GUMELAB focuses on the construction, mediation, and trans/national reception of TV series and telenovelas about national trauma, with a focus on recent Latin American history (1950–2000). For this article, the dataset was expanded to include historical series set in the 20th century, and also those that did not relate to national trauma but to historical events in general.

6 After that, the industry experienced a downturn due to the Covid-19 pandemic; some productions were cancelled, some released in the following years.

(1877–1911), to the TV series *Se busca* (2024) depicting the Argentinian military dictatorship (1976–1983).

Central themes of these series are political, social and economic oppression, police and military violence, and protest and resistance against the regime in power, which can range from political activism to armed rebellion. The various series assume different perspectives when depicting the dictatorship, ranging from a gentle introduction to the subject, for example with a nostalgic look back at contemporary popular culture (*Cuéntame cómo pasó – Argentina*, 2017), to an explicit depiction of torture of opposition members by the secret service (*Estefanía*, Venezuela, 1979–1980).<sup>7</sup>

In a Latin American comparison, Chile is among the leaders in the production of historical television fiction. With the expansion and internationalization of Chile's film and television industry, a shift in television formats also emerged, and in 2006, for the first time, more series and television movies were broadcast than telenovelas.<sup>8</sup> In this heyday, series creators turned towards national history and numerous productions were based on historical events and personalities. In particular, the celebration of the bicentennial of the first government junta spurred a series of productions dealing with Chilean history.<sup>9</sup> In this context, for the first time, a production team ventured to stage a series set during the military dictatorship, staging the life of a middle-class family in the 1980s: *Los 80*. Labelled by the channel as an expected audience flop, the series surprised with its astonishing viewer numbers.<sup>10</sup> It was extended to seven seasons and established itself as one of the most successful Chilean series.

The popularity of *Los 80* showed that series about the dictatorship did find an audience, and it was not long before other production studios and TV channels followed suit.<sup>11</sup> In the 2010s, dictatorship series boomed with more than twenty-one

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7 Laura Pousa. "Creación de imaginarios históricos extranjeros en la serie televisiva *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. El ejemplo de Argentina y Portugal." *imagofagia* 12 (2015): 1–20. Mónica Contreras Saiz, "Telenovelas, series y formación política en Latinoamérica," in *Educación política. Debates de una historia por construir*, edited by Marcela Pardo and Stefan Peters (Bogotá: Cinep, Instituto CAPAZ, 2023), 201–16.

8 Valerio Fuenzalida et al., "Obitel Chile 2007-II: Crecimiento y diversificación de la audiencia," *Cuadernos de Información* 22 (2008): 76–97.

9 Antezana and Santa Cruz, "Ficción audiovisual," 234–35.

10 Alberto Gesswein, interviewed by the author, January 31, 2022, Berlin – Santiago de Chile.

11 Javier Mateos-Pérez and Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor, "El estudio de las historias de la ficción televisiva chilena: Aproximación metodológica para un análisis integral," *Análise da ficção televisiva: metodologias e práticas*, edited by Simone Maria Rocha and Rogério Ferraraz (Florianópolis: Editora Insular, 2019), 205–21.



produced. Consequently, the dictatorship series now represents the dominant genre of historical series in Chile; two-thirds of the historical series dedicate themselves to this theme, which corresponds to a total of about 14 % of all productions.<sup>12</sup>

Chile is currently in the midst of a political upheaval in which the negotiation of the recent past is the focus of discussion, and the evaluation of the military dictatorship continues to polarize the population. While in schools the military dictatorship is usually covered in comparatively few lessons or even left out altogether, it was and is the entertainment industry that brings these topics into the spotlight and ignites tensions and public discourse alike.

Most recently, in 2023, the 50th anniversary of the military coup in Chile spurred further productions commemorating the victims of the military dictatorship. The public channel *Televisión Nacional de Chile* launched the project *Chile 50 – Nuestras Series (Chile 50 – Our Series)*. The National Television Council, also promoted a series of audiovisual productions dealing with the Chilean dictatorship. These included *Los mil días de Allende* (2023), about Salvador Allende's reign (1970–1973), and *La sangre del camaleón* (2023), about the double life of a successful businessman who maintains close ties to the right wing while also being an active militant in the Communist Party. Both series came under criticism and were accused of glorifying and idealizing Allende and the armed resistance against the military dictatorship.

## Comparative analysis of TV series via archetypes

In order to understand the significance of the simplification and schematization of the Chilean military dictatorship in the context of memory culture, I pursued a mixed method approach and used both qualitative and quantitative methods.<sup>13</sup> The identification of archetypes was based on the (inductive) epistemological

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<sup>12</sup> Antezana and Santa Cruz also state that the dictatorship series constitute the largest part of all productions. Lorena Antezana and Eduardo Santa Cruz, “La ficción audiovisual histórica en Chile (1960–2020),” *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades* 27, no. 1 (2023): 209–41. In their research, they examined the thematic focus of 104 series produced between 2006–2020 and concluded that about a quarter of all fiction series deal with the dictatorship. In their study, they used a more limited concept of dictatorship series than in this article and classified biopics such as *Isabel* (2021) or series about music groups such as *Sudamerican Rockers* (2014) and *Los Prisioneros* (2021) under a separate category. Since in this article the genre is less important than the thematic focus and these series are set during the military dictatorship and deal with themes such as political persecution, police violence, censorship, and exile, they are categorized as dictatorship series.

<sup>13</sup> Fernando Seliprandy, “Perpetradores no cinema sobre as ditaduras do Cone Sul: do arquétipo ao círculo íntimo,” *Antíteses* 12, no. 23 (2019): 674–97.

methodology of the Grounded Theory developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. This method seeks the elaboration of a conceptual focus in the course of the analysis, allowing the theory to grow out of the data, and is “grounded” in this sense.<sup>14</sup>

First, I identified the set of series dealing with the Chilean military dictatorship, resulting in a total of 20 dictatorship series, of which the following sixteen were analyzed for this article.<sup>15</sup>

- *Los 80* (2008–2014) was the first TV series about the Chilean military dictatorship. It draws an in-depth portrait of the middle-class family Herrera in the midst of the dictatorship in the 1980s, responding to social, economic and cultural changes.
- *Los archivos del Cardenal* (2011; 2014) focuses on the Catholic human rights organization *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* and recreates its emblematic cases.
- *12 días que estremecieron a Chile* (2011; 2017) addresses significant events in recent Chilean history, such as the military coup, the attempted assassination of Pinochet, and the 1988 plebiscite. For this analysis, the seven episodes that refer to the military dictatorship in the first season were included.
- *Amar y morir en Chile* (2012) depicts the confrontations between the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* (FPMR), a left-wing urban guerrilla group, and the *Central Nacional de Informaciones* (CNI), the national intelligence agency and secret police of the military dictatorship.
- *Ecos del desierto* (2013) is a biopic on the life of human rights lawyer Carmen Hertz, focusing on her contribution to exposing human rights violations by the notorious *Caravana de la Muerte* (eng. Caravan of Death), a Chilean Army death squad appointed by Pinochet targeting leftist opposition.
- *No, la serie* (2014) is an extended version of the movie *No* (2012) and tells the story behind the television advertising campaign, which was decisive for the triumph of the No-option in the 1988 plebiscite and the return to democracy.

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<sup>14</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss., *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968). Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Los Angeles; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 2014). Alessandro Fergnani and Zhaoli Song, “The Six Scenario Archetypes Framework: A systematic Investigation of Science Fiction Films set in the Future,” *Futures* 124 (2020): 1–21.

<sup>15</sup> The availability of some series turned out to be problematic, as not all series are available via streaming portals and there are no collective archives for audiovisual productions in Chile. Therefore, they could not be included in this analysis. In addition, series that take place in the present were excluded because they contain a set of other archetypes, as well as series that contain barely any information about the military dictatorship and depict, for instance, a fantastic and paranormal past.

- *Sudamerican Rockers* (2014) tells the founding story of the Chilean rock band *Los Prisioneros* and the censorship they suffered during the military dictatorship.
- *Una historia necesaria* (2017) narrates in 5 minutes per episode the arrest of people who subsequently disappeared, from the point of view of a friend or relative.
- *Mary & Mike* (2018) is a miniseries about the agents of the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (DINA) Mariana Callejas and her husband, ex-CIA agent Michael Townley. Among other events, the series recreates the assassinations of Carlos Prats and Orlando Letelier.
- *Invisible Heroes* (2019) focuses on the work of Finnish diplomats Tapani and Lysa Brotherus and Ilkka Jaamala, who hid political refugees after the military coup and ultimately acquired visas for them to leave Chile.
- *Dignity* (2019) dramatizes the criminal proceedings against Paul Schäfer, cult leader of the Colonia Dignidad, in the 1990s, and focuses on the sect's collaboration with the military dictatorship and, in particular, the torture and murder of opponents of the regime on its premises.
- *Berko el arte de callar* (2019) tells the story of the murder of British journalist Jonathan Moyle in 1990 in Chile and the investigation of journalist Boris Berkowitz, who uncovers a criminal network concealing illegal shipments of weapons from Chile to the Middle East during the dictatorship.
- *Isabel* (2021) follows the life of writer Isabel Allende from childhood, her work for the magazine *Paula*, her involvement in transporting political refugees to Argentina, and finally her exile in Venezuela.
- *Los Prisioneros* (2022) is once again dedicated to the Chilean rock group *Los Prisioneros*. This time the story is set in the 1980s when the band had already formed, and focuses on the politicization of their songs, the censorship they experienced, and the group's internal conflicts. Unlike *Sudamerican Rockers* (2014), the production studio acquired the rights to film the band's story and the use of their songs.
- *La sangre del camaleón* (2023) narrates the double life of wealthy businessman Mariano Jara; owner of a nightclub, friend of most prominent members of the Chilean right wing and at the same time active militant in the military apparatus of the Communist Party, smuggling and hiding weapons in Chile under the guise of his business.
- *Los mil días de Allende* (2023) tells the story of former president Salvador Allende from his presidential campaign to the military coup.

The focus of the archetype analysis is not solely on the main characters but to some extent includes recurring secondary characters that represent significant archetypes

for the dictatorship-centered TV series.<sup>16</sup> The transcription process involved viewing the series and recording the portrayal of the character types in writing according to twelve categories that were of interest to the research objective:

- depicted time period
- character hierarchy (protagonists, antagonists, main and secondary characters)
- social class
- occupation and status (e.g., student, lawyer)
- gender
- physical characteristics and costume design
- power relations (power and no power)
- moral stance (values)
- political stance
- character change (constant character, changing character)
- triggering factors (events, people)
- historical events (in which the archetypes are involved)

Furthermore, dialogues relevant to the identification of the archetype were transcribed: For example, when one of the characters is described as an “upeliento,” (supporter of the Unidad Popular), “momio” (a negatively connoted term for a Pinochet supporter), or “cuico” (a negatively connoted term for an upper-class person).

Over the course of the series, characters may portray the same archetype or undergo a transformation and change their role and personality, which also contributes to the literary content of a series. Either these characters subsequently become representatives of a different archetypes or they undergo a process of individualization and fall out of the schematic grid. For example, the change from an apolitical individual to a political dissident is typical for the genre of dictatorship series.

The identification of archetypes in the respective series entails the interpretation of the characters based on the twelve criteria along an iterative, interserial comparison in order to find recurring patterns of visual and narrative representation. Following the guidelines of Grounded Theory, I did not work with melodramatic archetype models or Jung’s psychosocial archetype theory – seeking to apply them to the dictatorship series – but rather allowed the archetypes to emerge from the series. Characters exhibiting at least six common characteristics and appearing in at least 25 % of the series were classified as archetypes.

Within the realm of archetypes, individual variances naturally exist; each *political dissident* possesses unique attributes reflective of their personal backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. However, despite these individual nuances, they share

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<sup>16</sup> For the proposal of a methodological analysis of series, see Mátéos-Perez and Ochoa, *Estudio*.

fundamental characteristics and roles within the narrative framework. These shared attributes serve to define the archetype's role, providing a recognizable pattern for viewers to interpret.

In order to further prepare the data for the correlation analysis, it was necessary to characterize distinct archetypes and to subdivide exceptionally common character types into mutually exclusive subcategories. This is based on the fact that an archetype that occurs in almost every series does not provide information about the correlation to other archetypes, since it thus appears as a parameter which is mathematically independent of other archetypes. For example, the archetype *Soldiers and Carabineros* could not be correlated in this respect, since the corresponding characters occur in all series due to their historical role and contextual relevance.

Given the specific Chilean context from which the archetypes originated, their names were drawn from Chilean Spanish. This decision was made in order to maintain cultural authenticity in the context of the analyzed television series. The use of Chilean terminology allows to retain linguistic nuances and a direct connection to the socio-political context of Chilean history, thus facilitating deeper insights into the complexities of the depicted archetypes within their cultural milieu.<sup>17</sup> Although the gender presentation also provides important background information about the archetypes, for the sake of simplicity and consistency, male gender pronouns are predominantly used in the following overview. However, a comprehensive examination of the archetypes with regard to gender will be undertaken in the section: Archetypes through the Ages.

For the pre-processing of the data, a distinction was made between occurrences (1) and non-occurrences (0) of the archetype (Table 1). This analysis revealed 19 recurring archetypes, which were named as follows:

- **Agente del servicio secreto:** *The intelligence agent* works for the dictatorship's secret police and intelligence organization: For example, in the series about the 1970s working on behalf of the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (National Intelligence Directorate) and after its renaming in 1977, for the *Central Nacional de Informaciones* (eng. National Information Center). A special case is the US agent who works for the CIA. The *agentes del servicio secreto* are predominantly portrayed by men.

Due to the frequent occurrence of CNI, DINA and CIA agents in the dictatorship series, this archetype was divided into four subcategories.

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<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the archetype characterization was discussed with literary scholar Dr. Karen Genschow and communications expert Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda, both of whom are specialists in historical series about the Chilean military dictatorship.

- **Agente genérico:** *The generic agent* is exclusively a secondary character who represents the system of repression and violence of the dictatorship, without emphasis on an individual character. Consequently, by using this archetype, the question of responsibility is deferred to the system of repression as such.
- **Agente despiadado:** *The merciless agent* is characterized by an excessive use of violence. He does not shy away from torture and murder. He acts without empathy and takes pleasure in the suffering of his victims. He corresponds to the overarching archetype of the villain.
- **Agente con conciencia:** *The agent with conscience* questions his actions or motivations from time to time and is less violent by nature. Sometimes the regret for his work for the secret service makes him undergo a change of character and compels him to try to make amends.
- **Agente de la CIA:** *The CIA agent* is involved in US destabilization efforts during the Allende government, collecting information on and at times torturing Chilean opposition figures.
- **Apolítico:** *The apolitical* does not take a political stance and also cautions his friends and family to do so as well. He is found in both the middle class and the privileged upper class.
- **Clérigo protector:** *The protective clergyman* grants refuge to the politically persecuted, assists in getting them out of the country, or works for the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, a Catholic human rights organization aimed to provide assistance to the victims of the Pinochet dictatorship and their families.
- **Comunista:** *The communist* is a multifaceted archetype and encompasses a broad spectrum of currents, including Allendism, Marxism, Maoism, Stalinism, and Fidelism. Unlike the *guerrillero*, the *comunista* does not become violent or change archetype if he uses armed force. Unlike the *disidente político*, his ideological alignment is definitive.
- **Disidente político:** *The political dissident* strongly disagrees with the dictatorship and speaks out against it. He thereby resists the dictatorship through the use of legal means, by putting political or public pressure on the government or protesting against it. In the TV series, these archetypes are represented by both women and men and take different forms. They may be depicted as student activists, lawyers who expose human rights crimes, or foreign diplomats who hide politically persecuted people.
- **Politizado:** *The newly politicized* is confronted with the repression of the military dictatorship through one or several specific situations and begins to take a political stand. Unlike the *disidente político*, he does not stand at the center of the story and his opposition to the dictatorship is often expressed less succinctly, for example, by voting against Augusto Pinochet retaining his office as head of state in the plebiscite of 1988.

- **Exiliado:** *The exiled one* represents individuals who have been compelled to leave their native country due to political persecution or the threat of violence under a dictatorship. The characters in question represent a diverse range of backgrounds, yet they share a common experience: that of displacement and the challenges associated with adapting to life in exile.
- **Familiar del desaparecido:** *The relatives of the one, who disappeared* are on a desperate search for their missing relatives and at times compelled to protest against the dictatorship. They are often secondary characters but through their search they generate awareness for the people who have been victims of enforced disappearance by the dictatorship. The *familiares del desaparecido* are predominantly represented by women, often grieving the loss of their sons, husbands or lovers and protesting in public places against their enforced disappearances.
- **Guerrillero:** The *armed guerrilla fighter*, contrary to the political dissident, chooses not the path of political protest but that of violence. In the series about the 1970s, he belongs to the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) a political-military organization (*Los mil días de Allende*, 2023), and in the series about the 1980s he is a member of the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* (FPMR), a leftist urban guerrilla group that conducted a number of attacks, such as the assassination attempt on Pinochet in September 1986 (*Amar y morir en Chile*, *La sangre del camaleón*, *Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Los 80*). In the initial portrayals of the character, there is a preponderance of male actors. However, over time, there has been a gradual increase in the number of female actors playing these roles, which has led to a more balanced representation of the archetype.
- **Persona de clase media:** *The middle-class person* represents an individual situated within the socio-economic stratum characterized by moderate income, education, and professional attainment. Typically portrayed as grappling with moral ambiguity and political ambivalence, this archetype embodies the tensions inherent in navigating personal aspirations amidst the oppressive political climate of the dictatorship. Often depicted as torn between self-preservation and moral obligation, the middle-class person serves as a lens through which broader societal complexities and ethical dilemmas are explored within the narrative framework of the series.
- **Dictador remediado:** *The remediated dictator* functions as an antagonist who remains in the periphery of the main characters. Augusto Pinochet is continuously present in the dictatorship series, but not as a character interpreted by an actor, but only metadiegetically in the form of remediation in television, radio or newspaper reports or through characters talking about him. These contributions are often original visual material taken from newspaper and broadcast

archives and migrated into the fictional series plot, continuing to function as a signal of authenticity.<sup>18</sup>

- **Cuico ignorante:** *The ignorant upper-class person* represents a clueless and privileged individual. The derogatory chilénism *cuico* is intentionally used, as these archetypes are framed as spoiled and narrow-minded characters, who turn a blind eye to the dictatorship.
- **Pinochetista:** *The pinochetist supporter* represents an advocate of Pinochet who approves his policies and is sympathetic to enthusiastic statements about him.
- **Prisionero:** *The Prisoner* embodies the grim reality of those who fell victim to the dictatorship's repression. Often depicted as a symbol of resilience, suffering, and defiance, the *prisionero* endures the torment of incarceration due to their opposition to the regime.
- **Soldados y carabineros:** *The Soldiers and Police Officers* have been clustered into one archetype in this article because they often take on a similar narrative function in the series. The majority of these characters appear in the form of nameless secondary and male characters who represent the state authority and frequently display excessive violence.

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**18** Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014). Karen Genschow, "Archivos en serie(s): Efectos y afectos del archivo (audiovisual) en Los 80 (Chile) y Cuéntame cómo pasó (Argentina)," in *Archivar, desarchivar, anar-chivar: Memoria y estrategia*, edited by Leo Cherri and Daniel Link (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2023), 195–210.



**Table 1.** Occurrences of the archetypes in Chilean dictatorship TV series. An occurrence is denoted as 1, while a non-occurrence is denoted as 0.

Release	TV-Series	Agente del servicio secreto	Agente generico	Agente despiado	Agente con conciencia	Agente de la CIA
2008–2014	Los 80	1	1	1	1	0
2011, 2014	Los archivos del Cardenal	1	1	1	1	1
2011, 2017	12 días que estremecieron Chile	1	1	1	0	0
2012	Amar y morir en Chile	1	1	1	0	0
2013	Ecos del desierto	1	1	0	0	0
2014	Sudamerican Rockers	0	0	0	0	0
2014	No, la serie	1	1	0	0	0
2017	Una historia necesaria	1	1	1	1	0
2018	Mary & Mike	1	1	1	1	1
2019	Héroes invisibles	1	1	0	0	0
2019	Berko, el arte de callar	0	0	0	0	0
2019	Dignity	1	1	0	0	0
2021	Isabel	1	1	0	0	0
2022	Los Prisioneros	1	1	0	0	0
2023	La sangre del camaleón	1	1	1	0	0
2013	Los mil días de Allende	0	0	0	0	1

Release	TV-Series	Apolítico	Clérigo protector	Comunista	Disidente político	Politizado
2008–2014	Los 80	1	0	1	1	1
2011, 2014	Los archivos del Cardenal	1	1	1	1	1
2011, 2017	12 días que estremecieron Chile	1	0	1	1	1
2012	Amar y morir en Chile	0	0	1	0	0
2013	Ecos del desierto	1	0	1	1	0
2014	Sudamerican Rockers	1	0	1	1	1
2014	No, la serie	0	0	1	1	1
2017	Una historia necesaria	0	1	1	1	0
2018	Mary & Mike	0	1	0	1	0
2019	Héroes invisibles	0	1	1	1	0
2019	Berko, el arte de callar	0	0	1	1	0
2019	Dignity	0	0	0	1	0
2021	Isabel	1	1	1	1	0
2022	Los Prisioneros	1	0	1	1	1
2023	La sangre del camaleón	0	0	1	0	0
2013	Los mil días de Allende	0	1	1	0	0

Release	TV-Series	Exiliado	Familiares del desparecido	Guerrillero	Persona de clase media	Dictador remediado
2008–2014	Los 80	1	1	1	1	1
2011, 2014	Los archivos del Cardenal	1	1	1	1	1
2011, 2017	12 días que estremecieron Chile	0	1	1	1	1
2012	Amar y morir en Chile	0	0	1	1	1
2013	Ecos del desierto	1	1	0	1	0
2014	Sudamerican Rockers	0	1	0	1	1
2014	No, la serie	1	1	0	1	1
2017	Una historia necesaria	0	1	1	1	1
2018	Mary & Mike	1	0	0	1	1
2019	Héroes invisibles	1	1	1	1	1
2019	Berko, el arte de callar	0	1	0	1	1
2019	Dignity	1	0	0	0	1
2021	Isabel	1	0	0	1	1
2022	Los Prisioneros	0	1	0	1	1
2023	La sangre del camaleón	0	0	1	1	1
2013	Los mil días de Allende	0	0	1	1	0

Release	TV-Series	Cuico ignorante	Pinochetista	Prisionero	Soldados y carabineros
2008–2014	Los 80	1	1	1	1
2011, 2014	Los archivos del Cardenal	1	1	1	1
2011, 2017	12 días que estremecieron Chile	1	1	1	1
2012	Amar y morir en Chile	0	0	1	1
2013	Ecos del desierto	0	0	1	1
2014	Sudamerican Rockers	1	1	0	1
2014	No, la serie	1	1	0	1
2017	Una historia necesaria	1	0	1	1
2018	Mary & Mike	1	0	1	1
2019	Héroes invisibles	0	0	1	1
2019	Berko, el arte de callar	0	0	0	1
2019	Dignity	0	0	1	1
2021	Isabel	0	0	0	1
2022	Los Prisioneros	1	0	0	1
2023	La sangre del camaleón	0	0	1	1
2013	Los mil días de Allende	0	0	0	1

## Archetypes through the ages: continuities and ruptures

An analysis of the evolution of archetypes in television fiction reveals several continuities and disruptions in the representation of the Chilean military dictatorship. These representations not only reflect contemporary perspectives on the past but also influence them in return. Fictional narratives can create new perceptions of reality and interpretations of the past that often dominate the discourse of memory.<sup>19</sup>

In the first series, *Los 80* (2008–2014), the production team offered a subtle portrayal of the Chilean military dictatorship, introducing a range of archetypes to Chilean television that continue to be used in contemporary dictatorship fiction. The series' central focus is on the family as a constellation of characters, a narrative structure that has proven successful. This approach offers viewers several access points and allows them to connect through any of the individual characters. This places *Los 80* in a tradition of historical series, with predecessors such as *Holocaust* (1978/1979) and *The Wonder Years* (1988–1993), and successors such as *Cuéntame cómo pasó – Argentina* (2017) and *The Crown* (2016–2023). This approach not only reaches a broad audience, but by providing the viewer with a depoliticized environment as an entry point, the focus is shifted from the military dictatorship's broader context to the personal stories, relationships, and pop culture the characters experience. By imbuing the depiction of predominantly political and social conflicts with a personal dimension, the impact of the military dictatorship on individual lives is made easily accessible and relatable for the viewer.

The series chronicles the experiences of Claudia, the family's daughter and medical student, as she navigates the tumultuous political and social upheavals of 1980s Chile. These include the economic crisis of 1982, the national protests (*Jornadas de Protesta Nacional*, 1983–1986), and the *caso degollados*, which involved the arrest and murder of three militants of the Communist Party of Chile (1985). Claudia becomes involved in the political opposition, vividly highlighting the tensions and dangers of the time. Through her experiences, themes such as human rights violations, political repression, and resistance against the regime are explored. Claudia's personal development reflects the politicization of many young people of the era. Eventually, she becomes the archetype of the political dissident who protests against the military dictatorship without engaging in the use of violence herself.

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<sup>19</sup> Harald Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis. Eine Theorie der Erinnerung*. München: Beck, 2002, 40.

As an oppositional character to Claudia, Gabriel Díaz functions as a member of the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* (FPMR), a left-wing guerrilla organization that fought against the military dictatorship and attempted the failed assassination of Pinochet in 1986. Gabriel's introduction as a character was groundbreaking, as it was the first time an FPMR member was depicted on television. This led to significant discussions and controversies. Some viewers perceived the episodes as a step toward recognizing the resistance against the dictatorship, while others viewed it as glorifying violence and terrorism. In response, the producers emphasized Gabriel's melodramatic role by making him Claudia's love interest, thereby allowing for a romantic interpretation of their relationship.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the series provides an ambivalent representation of Don Genero, the local grocer and Pinochet supporter. Although he fervently espouses his support for "his General", he also interacts with his neighbors in a loving and caring manner. The character of Don Genero serves to illustrate the complexity of civilian support for the military dictatorship, offering a nuanced portrayal that avoids a reduction to a simple good-versus-evil dichotomy. Instead, he introduces a comedic element to the series, fulfilling the melodramatic role of the "bobo" (fool).<sup>20</sup> His contrasting position continuously triggers minor but harmless conflicts with the other characters.

Moreover, in *Los 80*, the archetype of the *agente con conciencia* is introduced. Here, the character is depicted as a CNI agent who infiltrates the family and assumes the identity of Pedro Herrera, the supposed long-lost brother of the family patriarch, in order to monitor the activities of Claudia and Gabriel. Nevertheless, upon capturing Claudia, he releases her and erases her file, as he has developed a fondness for the family, particularly his presumed sibling, Juan Herrera. Ultimately, he attempts to leave the CNI.

In this regard, the television series *Los 80* promotes a more conciliatory atmosphere with a subtly balanced perspective on conflicts, *disidentes políticos*, *guerrilleros* and supporters of the military dictatorship. The series attempts to bridge the still-present gap between critics of the dictatorship and those who continue to support the military coup and the "gobierno militar."

In contrast, *Los archivos del Cardenal* focuses on elucidating human rights violations perpetrated during the military dictatorship. The series directly confronts the political and military apparatus, emphasizing resistance and the struggle for justice. The series places significant emphasis on dramatizing real events of human rights abuses, thereby contributing to the development of a culture of memory that

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20 Jesús Martín-Barbero and Sonia Muñoz, *Televisión y melodrama: Géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Ed., 1992), 48-49.

highlights the atrocities committed during the dictatorship. This approach is designed to foster a culture of human rights in Chile by illuminating the contributions of organizations such as the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, which played a pivotal role in documenting and denouncing human rights violations.

By portraying these archetypal characters as part of an overarching category of evil, the series' producers unambiguously condemn their actions and behaviors, emphasizing their brutality and lack of conscience. Nevertheless, two archetypes are employed whose personal backgrounds and motivations for supporting the dictatorship are treated in a differentiated manner. The first of these is the *cuico ignorante*, represented by the affluent parents of Ramón Sarmiento, a *disidente político* and employee of the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. Initially, they reject his work. However, when their son is kidnapped due to his activities for the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, they themselves become victims of the repression of the military dictatorship and reconsider their stance. Furthermore, the series employs the archetype of the *agente con conciencia*, exemplified by the character of Mauro Pastene. Pastene, a former intelligence agent, regrets his actions and confirms the identities of prisoners who were killed during the military dictatorship. With the assistance of the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, he ultimately manages to flee the country. The character of Mauro Pastene is based on that of Andrés Antonio Valanzuela Morales, a former agent of the *Comando Conjunto*, an intelligence organization that persecuted and executed regime opponents from 1975 to 1976. In 1984, he confessed to involvement in human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and torture.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the use of these two archetypes, which also attribute a certain humanity to supporters of the military dictatorship, *Los archivos del Cardenal* ultimately delineates a clear distinction between the “good” and the “bad” during the dictatorship. A reception study comprising over 70,000 comments from Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook users indicates the formation of political echo chambers, i.e., sub-networks characterized by homogeneous opinions, where users reinforce each other's shared political beliefs and perspectives, while dissenting viewpoints are marginalized. Those who self-identify as “left-wing” or “against the right” in their profile descriptions and who are predominantly academics are more likely to watch *Los archivos del Cardenal*, whereas conservative or right-wing users are less likely to engage with the series. In contrast, viewers who self-identified as “conservative,” “center,” or “right” watched and commented on the series *Los 80*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Javier Mateos-Pérez and Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor, *Chile en las series de televisión. Los 80, Los archivos del Cardenal y El Reemplazante*, (Santiago: Ril editores, 2018), 90–95.

<sup>22</sup> Holle Meding and Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda, “Ecos políticos. La ficción histórica en torno a la dictadura chilena en la era digital,” *Revista de Historia Comparada*, (forthcoming).

With the exception of *Una historia necesaria* (2017) and *Mary & Mike* (2018), which focus on individual agents and also depict certain moral conflicts, in the subsequent series, all humanity is stripped from the intelligence agents. They are portrayed as either merciless agents who fulfill the role of the “villain” or *agente genérico*. In the case of the latter, there is a discernible process of deindividualization, which results in a stronger typification, or uniformity. The agents are primarily depicted as violent men, often represented on an iconographic level by their suits, sunglasses, dark hair, and typically darker skin tones. The *agentes genéricos* are most often depicted as part of an institution, thereby shifting the blame onto the military dictatorship as a whole and, personified, onto dictator General Augusto Pinochet. This portrayal contributes to the historical framing of the Chilean military dictatorship by emphasizing the systematic nature of repression and disseminating it on a mass scale. By deindividualizing the agents, the focus is shifted from the individual “evil” actors to the structure and mechanisms of the regime. This underscores the institutional responsibility and the far-reaching effects of state violence on society. The *agente del servicio secreto* forcefully intrudes into the private sphere of *political dissidents* and *guerilleros*, kidnaps children (*Isabel*, 2021), engages in arms trafficking with Colonia Dignidad (*Dignity*, 2019), and exerts pressure on political dissidents through surveillance and phone calls (*Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Los Prisioneros*, *Ecos del desierto*, *Isabel*).

The most recent series, *La sangre del camaleón* (2023), presents perhaps the least compromising portrait of the *agente despiadado* with Álvaro Valenzuela, an unrelenting pursuer of communism who forces women into prostitution to obtain information about his enemies and kills the protagonist’s daughter, a rebellious and idealistic young woman participating in student protests and advocating for the MIR’s path of armed violence. The character is inspired by Álvaro Julio Federico Corbalán Castilla, a military officer with the rank of Major belonging to the CNI, who was arrested after the end of the dictatorship in 1991 and sentenced to more than a hundred years in prison for the murder of union leader Tucapel Jiménez and MIR activist Paulina Aguirre Tobar, among other crimes.

Beginning with *Los archivos del Cardenal*, there has been a tendency to increasingly portray the *agentes del servicio secreto* in a less ambivalent manner, either as individualistic and merciless actors or as obedient enforcers of the repressive system. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the portrayal of civilian supporters of the dictatorship. These individuals are predominantly upper-class members and are either depicted as advocates of capitalism (as in *No, la serie*, 2014) or as *cuicos ignorantes* who ignore human rights violations during the military dictatorship. While these portrayals do not necessarily characterize them as inhumane, they are predominantly illustrated as being out of touch with the broader societal issues and the suffering of the less privileged. In contrast to the antagonists, the

resistance is portrayed by a variety of *disidentes políticos* who do not engage in violence, comunistas who make passionate speeches about social visions, or *guerrilleros* who promote armed resistance. This provides viewers with a wide range of potential points of identification with the political conflict.

These archetypes and their processes of politicization or radicalization are explored in depth. For example, in *Ecos del desierto*, journalist Carmen Hertz (*disidente político*) becomes an active member of human rights organizations after her husband is murdered by the so-called Caravan of Death. A similar development occurs in *Los Prisioneros* with Jorge González. Confronted with the human rights violations of the military dictatorship through the protests of the *familiares del desaparecido* (E 3), he begins composing political protest songs. On the other hand, in *Invisible Heroes*, the character Oscar undergoes a radicalization process. Disillusioned with the path of political protest, he infiltrates a government building and shoots several military personnel and officers (E 5).

Furthermore, the portrayal of women in the series is becoming increasingly prominent. In 2012, the television series *Amar y morir en Chile* prominently featured Cecilia Magna, better known as Comandante Tamara, a member of the FPMR who led the assassination attempt on Augusto Pinochet in 1986 alongside Comandante José Miguel. One year later, the life of journalist and human rights activist Carmen Hertz was adapted in *Ecos del desierto* (2013), and finally, *Isabel* (2021) gave space to the political exile of Chile's most famous writer. This also reflects the tendency to narrate the military dictatorship through personal stories and as a biopic. With the exception of *Mary & Mike* (2018), however, women are depicted as passionate *guerrilleras* or as political dissidents in the majority of TV series. Examples of the former include *Amar y morir en Chile* (2012), *La sangre del camaleón* (2023) and *Los mil días de Allende* (2023), while the latter can be seen in series such as *Los 80*, *Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Ecos del desierto*, *Invisible Heroes*, *Dignity*, and *Isabel*. Moreover, there is a tendency to portray women as victims of the dictatorship, exemplified by the archetype of the familiar del desaparecido (e.g., *Los 80*, *Los archivos del Cardenal*, *Los Prisioneros*).

In contrast, women are rarely depicted in the role of supporters of the military dictatorship, and when they do appear, they are portrayed as *cuicas ignorantes*. Although there were significantly fewer female DINA and CNI agents, *carabineras*, or military personnel compared to their male counterparts, this framing of female characters serves to reinforce specific gender stereotypes, wherein women's lack of awareness is linked to their societal position rather than choosing to depict a character with the ability to grasp and reflect both politics as well as their own interests. It suggests a simplified dichotomy between the privileged, who are portrayed as detached and ignorant, and the oppressed, who are more attuned to the political realities. This portrayal not only marginalizes the complexity of women's

roles and experiences during the dictatorship but also perpetuates a narrative that aligns social privilege with moral and intellectual deficiency. Such representations risk trivializing the diverse and multifaceted ways in which individuals, regardless of gender, navigated and responded to the oppressive political climate of the era. In the sole series where two women are depicted as agents of the DINA, the persona of Mónica Lagos is also eroticized, portrayed as a *femme fatale*.<sup>23</sup>

Among the series released in 2023, also a glorification of Salvador Allende's government and armed resistance against the military dictatorship takes place. Examples of such series include *Los mil días de Allende* (2023), which focuses on Salvador Allende's presidency from 1970 to 1973, and *La sangre del camaleón* (2023), which sheds light on the double life of a successful businessman who maintains close ties to the political right while simultaneously being an active member of the Communist Party and supporting armed resistance.

These series, promoted by the National Television Council as part of the 50th anniversary of the military coup, reflect contemporary political debates and contribute to the polarization of discourse on memory. The series portray supporters of the military dictatorship as monolithically evil and heartless, while presenting the political left and armed resistance in a positive light. Although the series do not unquestioningly glorify violence and do occasionally present it in a critical light, they do at least attempt to explain the reasons behind the characters' radicalization to the audience.

An exemplary case in point is the portrayal of Miguel Enríquez Espinosa, the co-founder and general secretary of the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR). In the 2023 series *Los mil días de Allende*, this character advocates for an armed uprising, claiming that legal means have been exhausted. This stance contrasts with that of Salvador Allende, who attempts to resolve the conflict through democratic means and calls for moderation.

The series portrays Allende in a largely uncritical manner. He is presented as a charismatic leader in a tumultuous era, with whom the audience is meant to empathize. The only instance depicted as a misstep is a kiss with his former spouse, which preserves his political integrity. This representation contributes to a dualistic understanding of history, reducing the complexity of historical events and categorizing characters exclusively as either good or evil. Both series contribute

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<sup>23</sup> Karen Genschow, "La fascinación del mal y la 'incorrección política' de los afectos en la serie *Mary and Mike* (Chile, 2018)" in: *Extremas. Figuras de la furia y la felicidad en la producción cultural ibérica y latinoamericana del siglo XXI*, edited by Aránzazu Calderón Puerta, Katarzyna Moszczynska-Dürst, Roland Spiller (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2019), 195–210.



to the appropriation of history by current political discourse, yet it also makes a differentiated examination of the past more challenging.

The characterization of archetypes and the overall tone of the series become increasingly polemical as a result. While the producers of the series *Los 80* initially decided to set the series in the 1980s instead of the late 1960s and 1970s, thus shifting the focus away from the Unidad Popular, the producers of *Los mil días de Allende* directly tackle that period. Additionally, the series introduces the character of General Augusto Pinochet and although he is presented as a foil, he is not necessarily portrayed as entirely evil. However, the audience is not provided with reasons why he ultimately orchestrates the coup. Instead, he assumes the role of a traitor who knowingly deceives Salvador Allende, who trusts Pinochet.

Such a portrayal of historical events leads to a homogenization of memory, emphasizing the structural and systemic aspects of repression while neglecting individual responsibility and the diverse motivations of those involved. Furthermore, this simplification of historical events influences the perception and understanding of historical reality. By disregarding the intricate historical contexts and individual destinies in favor of a simplistic moral narrative, a significant portion of history is overlooked. The nuances necessary to comprehend the intricacies of the dictatorship and its consequences are supplanted by simplified archetypes. This can result in future generations receiving an inaccurate and incomplete representation of the past, which may hinder their capacity to engage in critical reflection.

## Correlation analysis

The analysis of the archetypes not only provides insights into their individual characteristics but also into the various narrative functions they fulfill within the stories. It is hypothesized that certain archetypes may tend to appear together or operate in groups to illuminate political conflicts from different perspectives. By depicting contrasting positions or forming alliances, producers can portray the complex facets of the political landscape during the dictatorship era. These archetypes may unite for a common purpose, yet they exhibit varying degrees of radicalization. They frequently assume different roles in order to convey the moral and political values that producers wish to convey to the audience.

Consequently, it is vital to persist in the analysis of the multifaceted narrative functions of the archetypes and to comprehend how they interact collectively or against each other to illustrate the dynamics of resistance and support for the military dictatorship depicted in the series. The dependency between two archetypes

is examined by means of a correlation analysis.<sup>24</sup> This type of analysis offers a compact overview of the interdependencies between every pairing of archetypes. While theoretical considerations may allow for likely hypotheses regarding the association of archetypes, by using a correlation analysis I was able to determine the type and degree of the association with mathematical certainty.

To measure or quantify the relationship of events, i.e., the occurrence of archetypes in TV series, I turn to statistics. One commonly used tool for this exact purpose is the correlation. In most cases the correlation provides a single value for the relationship of two variables that allows for fast and easy computation on small to large datasets. Furthermore, this mathematical tool lends itself to researchers of different disciplines alike as an easy to execute methodology with results that are both quantitatively comparable as well as qualitatively interpretable. In particular, with regard to Public History or Digital History, one can not only review and compare analyzes of different papers but also build upon and include previous work seamlessly.

I seek to measure the association of two naturally dichotomous variables, in this case the cooccurrence of two archetypes. Even though there are various correlation coefficients for different cases, a number of appropriate options produce the same outcome when applied to my dataset, i.e., the phi coefficient, the identically defined Matthew's correlation coefficient (MCC), Cramér's V and the Pearson correlation coefficient (PCC). Given that the PCC is applicable to more cases and is the most widely known of the four, I will refer to the PCC when using the term "correlation" in this article.

The Pearson correlation coefficient  $r$  is defined as:

$$r_{X,Y} = \text{Corr}(X, Y) = \frac{\text{Cov}(X, Y)}{\sqrt{\text{Var}(X) \cdot \text{Var}(Y)}}, \quad \text{Corr}(X, y) \in [-1, 1]$$

A correlation between two variables, designated as X and Y, indicates an optimal positive linear dependency for a value of  $r_{X,Y} = +1$ . Conversely, a correlation of  $r_{X,Y} = -1$  signifies a negative linear dependency, while a correlation of  $r_{X,Y} = 0$  indicates the absence of linear dependency.

For instance, the *politizado* and the *pinochetista* exhibit a correlation coefficient of  $r = +0.870$  (Tab. 2). This high positive correlation suggests that these archetypes

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<sup>24</sup> For this article the data analysis software XLSTAT was used. Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Correlation and Regression Analysis: A Historian's Guide* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). Roderick Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973).

occur together proportionally as often as the other. In this case, it is probable that they will appear together in the television series surrounding the Chilean dictatorship, or not at all. Conversely, the *guerrillero* and the *disidente político* have a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.480$ . This negative correlation indicates that these archetypes are somewhat mutually exclusive. When one appears, the other is less likely to appear. Lastly, the *prisionero* and the *cuico ignorante* archetype have a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0$ . This implies that the presence of one archetype does not significantly influence the presence or absence of the other in the analyzed TV series.

Any value  $-1 < r < +1$  in between can be loosely interpreted as a probability for two archetypes to occur together or being mutually exclusive, respectively. It should be noted that the value of  $r$  is not necessarily equal to the exact value of the probability of this event. The  $X, Y$  correlation function is commutative, meaning the order of the archetypes is irrelevant for the calculation and thus  $Corr(X, Y) = Corr(Y, X)$  is applicable.

In terms of archetypes, this means that the correlation coefficient between any two archetypes remains the same regardless of the order in which they are considered. For instance, if the correlation coefficient  $r_{Politizado, Y Pinochetista} = 0.870$ , then  $r_{Pinochetista, Politizado}$  will also be 0.870. This reflects the symmetrical nature of their occurrence patterns, indicating that these archetypes tend to appear together with a high frequency, regardless of the order in which they are analyzed. Similarly, the correlation between *guerrillero* and *disidente político* would be the same if the order were reversed, ensuring consistency and reliability in the correlation analysis.

**Table 2.** Note: A moderately positive  $r \geq 0.5$  or strongly positive  $r \geq 0.8$  linear correlation between two archetypes X and Y indicates that when archetype X appears in a series, archetype Y is also very likely to appear. For example, the correlation of  $r_{X=PC,Y=CO} = 0.68$  between the *persona de clase media* and the *comunista* shows that when a character belonging to one of either archetype appears in a series, a character belonging to the respective other archetype has a high probability of making an appearance as well. This indicates a notable association between the two archetypes within the narrative framework of the series.

Variables	Exiliado	Persona de clase media	Comunista	Clérigo protector	Dictador remediado	Agente genérico
Exiliado	1	-0,258	-0,378	0,258	0,000	0,480
Persona de clase media	-0,258	1	0,683	0,200	-0,098	-0,124
Comunista	-0,378	0,683	1	-0,098	-0,143	-0,182
Clérigo protector	0,258	0,200	-0,098	1	-0,098	0,041
Dictador remediado	0,000	-0,098	-0,143	-0,098	1	0,303
Agente genérico	0,480	-0,124	-0,182	0,041	0,303	1
Disidente político	0,480	-0,124	-0,182	0,041	0,303	0,179
Agente de la CIA	0,160	0,124	-0,303	0,620	-0,303	-0,179
Guerrillero	-0,250	0,258	0,378	0,258	0,000	0,160
Agente despiado	-0,126	0,228	-0,048	0,098	0,333	0,424
Agente con conciencia	0,289	0,149	-0,218	0,447	0,218	0,277
Prisionero	0,258	-0,200	-0,293	0,067	0,098	0,620
Familiar del desaparecido	0,000	0,333	0,488	-0,200	0,098	-0,041
Cuico ignorante	0,000	0,258	0,000	0,000	0,378	0,160
Pinochetista	0,135	0,174	0,255	-0,244	0,255	-0,022
Politizado	0,000	0,200	0,293	-0,333	0,293	0,041
Apolítico	0,126	0,228	0,333	-0,163	-0,048	0,101

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Disidente político</b>	<b>Agente de la CIA</b>	<b>Guerrillero</b>	<b>Agente despiado</b>	<b>Agente con conciencia</b>	<b>Prisionero</b>
Exiliado	0,480	0,160	-0,250	-0,126	0,289	0,258
Persona de clase media	-0,124	0,124	0,258	0,228	0,149	-0,200
Comunista	-0,182	-0,303	0,378	-0,048	-0,218	-0,293
Clérigo protector	0,041	0,620	0,258	0,098	0,447	0,067
Dictador remediado	0,303	-0,303	0,000	0,333	0,218	0,098
Agente genérico	0,179	-0,179	0,160	0,424	0,277	0,620
Disidente político	1	-0,179	-0,480	-0,222	0,277	-0,041
Agente de la CIA	-0,179	1	0,160	0,222	0,462	0,041
Guerrillero	-0,480	0,160	1	0,630	0,289	0,516
Agente despiado	-0,222	0,222	0,630	1	0,655	0,683
Agente con conciencia	0,277	0,462	0,289	0,655	1	0,447
Prisionero	-0,041	0,041	0,516	0,683	0,447	1
Familiar del desaparecido	0,620	-0,289	0,000	-0,098	0,149	-0,067
Cuico ignorante	0,480	0,160	0,000	0,378	0,577	0,000
Pinochetista	0,324	0,022	0,135	0,221	0,234	-0,035
Politizado	0,372	-0,041	0,000	0,098	0,149	-0,200
Apolítico	0,424	-0,101	-0,126	-0,016	0,073	-0,098

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Familiar del desaparecido</b>	<b>Cuico ignorante</b>	<b>Pinochetista</b>	<b>Politizado</b>	<b>Apolítico</b>
Exiliado	0,000	0,000	0,135	0,000	0,126
Persona de clase media	0,333	0,258	0,174	0,200	0,228
Comunista	0,488	0,000	0,255	0,293	0,333
Clérigo protector	-0,200	0,000	-0,244	-0,333	-0,163
Dictador remediado	0,098	0,378	0,255	0,293	-0,048
Agente genérico	-0,041	0,160	-0,022	0,041	0,101
Disidente político	0,620	0,480	0,324	0,372	0,424
Agente de la CIA	-0,289	0,160	0,022	-0,041	-0,101
Guerrillero	0,000	0,000	0,135	0,000	-0,126
Agente despiado	-0,098	0,378	0,221	0,098	-0,016
Agente con conciencia	0,149	0,577	0,234	0,149	0,073
Prisionero	-0,067	0,000	-0,035	-0,200	-0,098
Familiar del desaparecido	1	0,516	0,522	0,600	0,423
Cuico ignorante	0,516	1	0,674	0,775	0,378
Pinochetista	0,522	0,674	1	0,870	0,493
Politizado	0,600	0,775	0,870	1	0,618
Apolítico	0,423	0,378	0,493	0,618	1

Correlations are always undirected, that is, they contain no information about which variable determines another. Consequently, both variables, in this case archetypes, are of equal importance. This also means that one cannot infer causality from correlation. Correlations can give indications of causal relationships but are not yet proof of them. In the context of the present data analysis, a correlation between the *agente de la CIA* and the *clérigo protector* does not imply that the presence of one directly causes the appearance of the other. Rather, this indicates that these archetypes often appear together within the same narrative. Consequently, correlation analyses are more effective in identifying underlying patterns that merit further exploration than in providing conclusive explanations for these patterns. This implies that while correlations can highlight associations, they do not inherently elucidate the reasons behind their existence.<sup>25</sup>

The strong correlation between the *apolítico* and the *politizado*,  $r_{\text{Apolítico, Y N Politizado}} = 0.618$  however, can be attributed to a straightforward causal relationship: for a character to become newly politicized, they must have initially exhibited a clear lack of political interest before undergoing a change in perspective. This transformation from apathy to political engagement highlights the character's developmental arc and underscores the narrative device of depicting personal awakening and growth within the context of the dictatorship. An example is the character of Juan Herrera, the head of the family Herrera in the TV series *Los 80*, who repeatedly preaches to his children not to get involved in politics. With his famous line: "In this house, there are neither communists nor *pinochetists*, there are people," he is embedded in Chilean cultural memory and is frequently quoted by viewers. However, throughout the series and many hardships, he begins to engage more with politics and eventually votes in the national plebiscite to shorten Augusto Pinochet's term and return to democracy.

One can usually verify a potential causal dependence/independence by reviewing footage of the series in question. While a direct causal relation is possible, a strong correlation between two archetypes might very well instead originate from a common denominator, a common figure, setting or the like that is associated with either of the two, or might even be caused by external factors.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, further analysis is required, which will be conducted in the following sections using specific examples.

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<sup>25</sup> Archdeacon, *Correlation*, 107.

<sup>26</sup> When evaluating the correlation matrix, it is important to note that work was conducted with a limited amount of data. This may affect the validity of the results, especially if some archetypes occur rarely, as the correlation coefficients can be significantly influenced by outliers. Nevertheless, a correlation analysis helps to gain preliminary insights and to identify potential relationships between archetypes.

## Archetypes in the dictatorship TV series and their networks

The results of the correlation analysis support the assumption that for a given context some archetypes show stronger interconnectedness than others. The correlation matrix indicates two groups of recurring archetype constellations in TV series about dictatorships that share common motifs. On the one hand, a constellation of civilian archetypes has emerged which represents life and suffering in the civic space (“constellation of the civilians”). In this constellation, *familiares del desaparecido*, the *pinochetista*, the *cuico ignorante* and the *politizado* often appear together.

On the other hand, the *constellation of armed resistance* emerged, reflecting the joint appearance of *guerrilleros* together with the *agente despiadado* and the *agente con conciencia*. Either the series creators focused on the confrontations between the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* and the CNI (*Amar y morir en Chile, La sangre del camaleón*), or these are subplots that, nonetheless, encompass important moments in the series for the most part; for example, in *Los 80* the Carrizal mission (S 4, E 4) or the shooting of Gabriel, member of the FPMR, at the hands of a CNI officer (S 4, E 11).

Independent of the two constellations, it can be observed that some archetypes are strongly associated with each other as pairs, like the *disidente político* and the *familiar del desaparecido*, the *agente despiadado* and the *guerrillero*. In the following, some of these archetype pairs will be discussed in more detail.

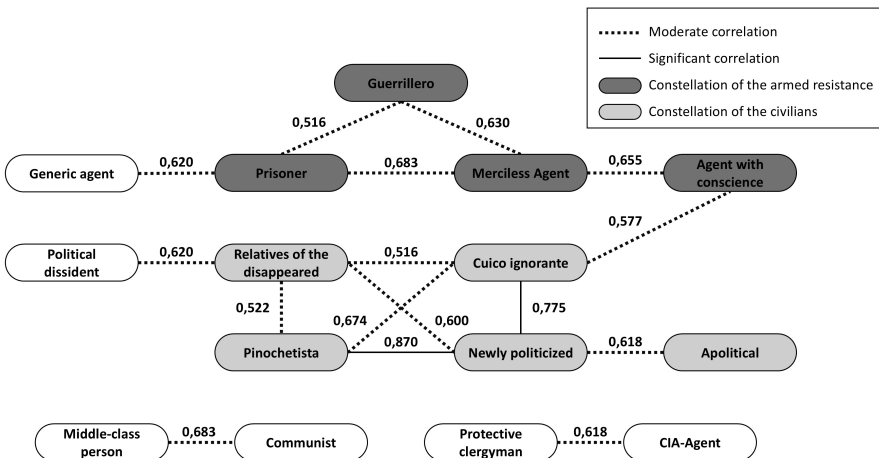


Figure 1: Archetypes in the Chilean dictatorship series and their networks.

## Disidente político & the familiar del desaparecido:

$$r_{DP,FD} = 0.620$$

The *familiar del desaparecido* (FD) represents a supporting character around 80 % of the time. Occasionally, the character lacks a name, but appears in crucial scenes of the series. With their desperate search and their protest marches, the *familiar del desaparecido* repeatedly confronts the *disidente político* (DP) with the oppressive reality of the dictatorship and the enforced disappearance of members of the opposition (*Los 80*, S1, E10; *Los archivos del Cardenal*, S1, E1; *Invisible Heroes*, E6). They often appear in conjunction with the superior force of the *soldados y carabineros*, who violently crush their protests (e.g., *Los Prisioneros* E3; *Ecos del desierto*, E2). The *familiares del desaparecido* contribute to the character change of the *disidente político* or reinforce his moral stance and motive to oppose the dictatorship. In individual cases, the *familiares del desaparecido* even become *disidentes políticos* themselves, such as in the biopic *Ecos del desierto*, which follows the life of journalist Carmen Hertz, whose husband Carlos Berger Guralnik was executed in Chile during the first year of the military dictatorship in 1973.<sup>27</sup> *Ecos del desierto* offers an example of the archetypal change of a character. While in the first episode Carmen Hertz predominantly assumes the role of the *familiar del desaparecido*, from episode two to four she fits the *disidente político* archetype and the series portrays her contribution as a lawyer in exposing human rights crimes. In the course of the series, a variety of supporting characters represent the *familiares del desaparecido*, since their search constitutes the central theme of *Ecos del desierto*.

## Persona de clase media & the comunista:

$$r_{PM,CO} = 0.683$$

Similar to the *familiar del desaparecido*, the *comunista* (CO) confronts the *persona de clase media* (PM) with the adversities surrounding the military dictatorship. The portrayals of the communist in the dictatorship series are multifaceted and encompass a broad spectrum of currents, including Allendism, Marxism, Maoism and Stalinism. Moreover, a variance in the radicalism of this archetype is evident: a character's beliefs can be portrayed in an ideologically exaggerated manner, but

<sup>27</sup> Lisa Renee DiGiovanni, "Visual archives of loss and longing in Chile: Mi vida con Carlos by Germán Berger Hertz," *Journal of Romance Studies* 13, no. 3 (2013): 62–74.



also in terms of a social vision (*No, la serie*, 2014; *Los mil días de Allende*, 2023). The *persona de clase media* and the *comunista* appear in almost every series, making them characteristic archetypes of the dictatorship series, but their strong correlation is in turn less significant, due to being primarily driven by their popularity in the historical setting rather than the causal interaction of the two.

## Guerrillero & the disidente político:

$$r_{GU,DP} = -0.480$$

The *guerrillero* (GU) and the *disidente político* (DP) are moderately negatively correlated with each other. If the *guerrillero* appears, the *disidente político* is moderately likely not to appear. This is due to the fact that the *guerrillero* and the *political dissident* are often the protagonists in the series on which the narrative focuses. In series about armed resistance, the dissident often does not appear, as he tends to be set in the civilian sphere. The scope of action of the *disidente político* is limited because he serves as a role model and must act within moral norms. His norms do not necessarily correspond to the norms of the time in which the series is set, but to the modern moral code of the series creators and the viewers for whom the series was conceived. The *disidente político* can stretch the law or even transgress laws that seem outmoded from today's perspective, but he cannot become violent, or break promises without justification. In some ways, the *disidente político* remains one-dimensional and there are fewer opportunities for his character development without breaking out of his archetype. Here it is necessary to draw the line between him and the *guerrillero*, who becomes violent and, in some cases, kills people. The violence is tolerated by the *guerrillero* as means to an end in a utilitarian sense where violent resistance shall prevent long-term suffering of the population.

The negative correlation between the *guerrillero* and the *disidente político* demonstrates how series creators transform the Chilean military dictatorship into a television series format, contextualizing it within the context of a political conflict. The conflict is either played out within the civilian sphere or follows the journey of the *guerrilleros* as central figures. In some series, such as *Los 80*, both archetypes are present simultaneously. However, in the majority of series, these archetypes are mutually exclusive. In this sense, the negative correlation reveals the thematic boundaries within the narrative on a quantitative level, highlighting a clear difference in the representation of different forms of resistance in Chilean TV series.

## Cuico ignorante & the agente con conciencia:

$$r_{CU,AC} = 0.577$$

The correlation coefficient of 0.577 between the *cuico ignorante* (CU) and the *agente con conciencia* (AC) suggests that these archetypes have a moderate positive relationship. However, their joint occurrence in 25 % of cases is less significant than their joint non-occurrence in 50 % of cases. The *cuico ignorante* represents the upper-class person who ignores the reality of the dictatorship and retreats into his privileged life. Emblematic of this archetype are the parents of Ramón Sarmiento (*Los archivos del Cardenal*), especially the mother, who repeatedly preaches apoliticism.<sup>28</sup> The *agente con conciencia* is, in turn, a person in service of the government authorities who questions his actions from time to time and is less violent by nature. Sometimes he undergoes a change of character and tries to make amends (*Agente Tapia, Los 80, S4, E11– S5, E1; Mauro Pastene, Los archivos del Cardenal, S1, E8–E12*).

Both of these archetypes stand for a more complex and differentiated understanding of the military dictatorship, in which there are multi-layered gradations between hero and villain (e.g., *Los 80, Los archivos del Cardenal, Mary & Mike*). In them, on the one hand, the passive support of the *cuicos ignorantes* who turns a blind eye to the dictatorship is thematized, and on the other hand, individual perpetrators are also granted a semblance of humanity and given the possibility to attain redemption.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, series such as *Amar y morir en Chile* (2012), *Los mil días de Allende* (2023) and *La sangre del camaleón* (2023), adhere to dichotomies of good and evil. Although there are schematic gradations within “the good guys,” some of whom are presented as *guerrilleros* who display an excessive willingness to use violence, such as the character of *El Nochero* (*La sangre del camaleón, 2023*), their actions are justified as being necessary. Besides, there are fewer gradations among the antagonists, who are predominantly presented as *agentes despiados* (Álvaro Valenzuela, *La sangre del camaleón; Agente CNI, Amar y morir en Chile*) who delight in the suffering of their victims, especially in their torture.

<sup>28</sup> The parents of Ramón Sarmiento experience a change of character after their son is abducted and tortured. As a result, they reconsider their political stance and leave the archetype.

<sup>29</sup> Daniela Jara, “Rompiendo el pacto de silencio: representaciones culturales intergeneracionales en torno a perpetradores en la postdictadura chilena,” in *El infierno de los perpetradores: Imágenes, relatos y conceptos*, ed. Anacleto Ferrer Mas and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra (2019), 177–88.

## Agente de la CIA & clérigo protector:

$$r_{CI,CC} = 0.620$$

Some series address the involvement of foreign powers in Chile, sometimes depicting destabilization efforts by the U.S. at the time of the Unidad Popular (*Los mil días de Allende*, 2023), West German arms shipments through the Colonia Dignidad under the guise of the German Embassy (*Dignity*, 2019, E2), or activities by agents or ex-agents of the CIA (Nora and Jack, *Los mil días de Allende*; Michael Townley, Mary & Mike). On the margins, U.S. support for the military dictatorship is also addressed in series such as *Invisible Heroes* (2019) through the exchange of intelligence information between the CIA and the Chilean politicians on the whereabouts of Carlos Altamirano, General Secretary of the Chilean Socialist Party (E6). This contrasts with the introduction of the figure of the diplomat, who supports the Unidad Popular (*Los mil días de Allende*, 2023), hides political refugees after the military coup (*Invisible Heroes*, 2019) or exposes the smuggling of weapons through the Colonia Dignidad (*Dignity*, 2019).

The unexpected correlation between the *agente de la CIA* and the *clérigo protector*, who highlights the human rights efforts of the Catholic Church, is particularly noteworthy. This is because, in the majority of cases, these two archetypes do not interact directly within the series. The *clérigo protector* grants refuge to political persecutes in Church (*Invisible Heroes* E3, *Los archivos del Cardenal* E4) or works for the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, a catholic human rights organization aimed to provide assistance to the victims of the Pinochet dictatorship and their families (Cristián Precht, *Los archivos del Cardenal*).

In some instances, the *clérigo protector* is a foreigner (*Invisible Heroes* E3, Mary & Mike E1, *Los archivos del Cardenal* E4), which provides insight into his correlation with the *agente de la CIA*. This pair of archetypes is present in series that focus on the influence and involvement of foreign powers, sometimes placing the impact of the Chilean military dictatorship, especially the military coup, in the context of the Cold War. These series depict both the destabilizing actions of the CIA (Nora and Jack, *Los mil días de Allende*) and West German Diplomats (Hartmut Sattelberger, *Dignity*, 2019) and the support of West German Pastor (Helmut Frenz, *Invisible Heroes*) and Finnish and Danish diplomats (Tapani Brotherus, Harald Edelstam, *Invisible Heroes*).

Over time, the portrayal of international actors has gained prominence, fueled by the rise of international co-productions such as *Dignity* and *Invisible Heroes*. This trend is driven by the expanding global television market, which encourages collaboration between Chilean and international filmmakers. Consequently, the increasing presence of international co-productions not only broadens the geographical scope of narratives, but also embeds Chilean history in a global context.

From an overarching perspective, the archetypes and their correlations reveal more about contemporary debates than about the past per se. As windows into the past, they are an essential part of the discourse of memory and illuminate the extent and form in which the military dictatorship is remembered by Chilean society.

In particular, the two superordinate groups, *The Constellation of Civilians* and *The Constellation of Armed Resistance*, offer insight into how series creators approached the dictatorship and adapted it for television:

1. In the sense of a social drama that focuses on characters of various sectors of society. In many cases they are embedded in family structures, a successful formula for TV series, as it offers viewers of different age groups potential for identification.<sup>30</sup>
2. In the format of an action series, depicting the confrontations between the FPMR and the CNI. The depiction of armed conflict and intelligence operations in these series underscores the violent repression and resistance against the authoritarian regime. Often, these narratives closely follow historical events, such as the attempted assassination of Augusto Pinochet in the Carrizal mission and the assassination of the three militants of the Communist Party of Chile (*caso degollados*), rather than focusing on the everyday adversities of the military dictatorship. This approach extracts a moral imperative from these historical conflicts and conveys it to the audience, as the series call upon spectators to confront the authoritarian and violent power that oppresses individuals.

The statistical approach allows a concise overview of the archetypes and their correlations. Thereby these are made quantifiable and thus comprehensible. At the same time, the correlation analysis is still in need of refinement. For example, it might be useful to create several correlation matrices according to the criteria of character hierarchy (protagonists, deuteragonists, trigonists), the number of times an archetype is represented, and its historical basis, i.e. whether the character is based on a real person. Additionally, it is important to capture the degree of archetypal representation, as some characters are more rigid in their archetypes while others evolve more significantly. This observation suggests the need for an additional category beyond archetypes to accurately reflect character development and transformation. The latter could be an especially interesting approach to analyze the inception and evolution of historical characters in the culture of remembrance and transmission of history.

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<sup>30</sup> In numerous historical series, the family is chosen as the narrative center, e.g., *Holocaust* (1978/1979) and *The Wonder Years* (1988–1993), *Cuéntame, como pasó* (2001–2023) and *The Crown* (2016–2023).

## Conclusion

Historical television series condense intricate facts and simplify complex conflicts to present historical events in a more accessible and engaging manner. As a consequence, they intentionally or inadvertently create a plethora of recurring archetypal characters. Through the repetition of distinctive visual and narrative traits, these characters become embedded in the audience's historical consciousness, encompassing causal connections, problem interpretations, moral judgments, and historical perspectives.

In analyzing these recurring elements, statistical and digital methods proved to be invaluable tools, allowing for the systematic collection and evaluation of quantitative data regarding the characters and their interactions. This made it possible to accurately identify recurring patterns in the characterization and narrative structure of the series.

The fictional series surrounding the Chilean military dictatorship, ranging from *Los 80* (2008–2014) to *Los mil días de Allende* (2023), have undergone significant advancements in artistic style and cinematography. However, the evolution of character development within these series reveals enduring continuities alongside narrative shifts.

The most consistent archetypes are those of the *soldados y carabineros*, the *persona de clase media*, the *comunista*, the *dictador remediado*, and the *disidente político*. These characters serve as cornerstones of the narrative structure and remain a constant presence in the memory culture presented and reinforced by the media.

They embody state repression in form of the *soldados y carabineros*, yet remain primarily in the role of generic supporting characters. In the case of the *dictador remediado*, archival footage is employed metadiegetically to represent Augusto Pinochet. While his actions are commented upon by other figures, viewers do not witness his decision-making processes firsthand; instead, they are confronted with his finalized decisions, as if they were part of the narrative themselves. This externalization of the dictator archetype leads to a de-emotionalization of his presence, as the series creators attempt to mitigate the inherent potential for polarization when portraying him. Consequently, he functions as an antagonist who remains in the periphery of the main characters.

In contrast, the impact of the dictatorship is primarily depicted through characters from a predominantly politically active middle class, with occasional references to characters of the upper class. Structural poverty, the homeless, or indigenous people are notably not addressed in the series. At the same time, the focus on Santiago as a setting is prominent: more than 80% of the series about the Chilean military dictatorship are set in the capital. While this emphasis underscores

Santiago's political and cultural significance during the dictatorship, it neglects the perspectives and experiences of other regions of the country.

By identifying and quantifying the fundamental narratives, it is possible to uncover these patterns and their impact on societal memory and historical understanding. For example, the significant positive correlation between the *politizado* and the *pinochetista*, signifying that these two characters frequently appear together, suggests a deliberate narrative strategy to juxtapose newly awakened political consciousness with staunch authoritarian support. Furthermore, the coexistence of mutually exclusive archetypes, such as the *guerrillero* and the *disidente político*, underscores the thematic boundaries within the narratives, suggesting a clear distinction in the portrayal of different forms of resistance.

What is striking is that, instead of an increase in the complexity of the archetypes, there is a growing tendency towards a simpler, one-dimensional characterization of the sympathizers of the military dictatorship. In early productions, such as *Los 80* and *Los archivos del Cardenal*, individual intelligence agents are presented at least as two-layered personalities whose personal backgrounds and motivations for supporting the dictatorship are treated in a differentiated manner, thus giving them the opportunity for (partial) redemption. Later series, on the other hand, tend to condemn these characters to the role of monolithically evil or generally repressive archetypes. Similarly, the archetype of the *pinochetista*, which gave visibility to the civilian supporters of the dictatorship, disappears over time. Instead, sympathizers are increasingly portrayed solely in terms of the executive branch, as obedient henchmen of the dictatorship or as merciless agents who adhere to the character logic of the villain.

In contrast, there are the victims and resisters of the dictatorship, whose archetypes are more multifaceted and range from the *familiar del desaparecido* to the *politizado* to the *guerrillero*. These characters show more complexity and illustrate a variety of reasons for opposing the military dictatorship. They embody courage, justice, and moral integrity, thereby conveying to the audience the significance of resistance and activism within society.

Furthermore, a tendency can be observed to portray women in roles of moral rectitude; as victims, such as *familiares del desaparecido*, or as active participants in resistance, primarily as *disidentes políticas* but increasingly as *guerrilleras* as well. Women are rarely depicted as antagonists, with the exception of *Mary & Mike* (2018), where a certain degree of eroticization of their persona is also evident.

A comparison of the two groups of civilians and armed resistance and the time dedicated to them in the series reveals that *disidentes políticos* and *guerrilleros* are frequently the main characters driving the narrative. In contrast, collaborators of the military dictatorship are typically portrayed as secondary characters, situated at a considerable distance from the community of "good citizens." In summary,

there is a historical framing that portrays resistance, whether political or armed, in a heroic light and demonizes supporters of the dictatorship with no context provided as to their intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. When civilian collaborators or supporters are depicted, they are typically portrayed as tertiary characters, often situated in a distant otherness (such as intelligence agents) and thus marginalized to the periphery of social memory. Furthermore, they are frequently ascribed characteristics such as naïveté and entitlement, as exemplified by the *cuicos ignorantes*. This leads to a narrowing of the discourse, neglecting the myriad of reasons for supporting the dictatorship – ranging from fear or ideological conviction to opportunism and the desire for security in unstable times.

The results of the correlation analysis support this thesis. It can be observed that series creators depict the military dictatorship in two main ways: as an armed conflict between *guerrilleros*, *agentes despiadados*, *agentes con conciencia*, and *prisioneros*; or as a political conflict involving *familiares del desaparecido*, *cuicos ignorantes*, *pinochetistas*, and *politizados*. Notably absent are characters such as individualized lower-ranking carabineros, military personnel, businessmen, and middle-class persons who support the dictatorship. This omission is significant, as it fails to acknowledge the ambiguous space between resistance and collaboration, which the majority of Chilean society inhabited. Furthermore, a considerable number of these individuals continue to reside in and are an integral part of contemporary Chilean society, bearing the multifaceted legacies of that era. Ignoring their experiences and perspectives contributes to a skewed and incomplete historical narrative that overlooks the nuances of public sentiment and societal behavior during the dictatorship, and further fuels the ongoing struggle over the interpretation of recent history that continues to divide Chilean society.

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## Audiencia cotidiana y violencia

Análisis de las funciones sociales del televisor en *Los 80, más que una moda*

**Resumen:** El artículo analiza cuál es el rol del televisor en la serie *Los 80, más que una moda* a lo largo de la primera temporada, y cómo se relaciona con la violencia del contexto. Para ello se realizó un visionado de toda la primera temporada y se registraron en un diario de recepción todas las escenas en donde estuviera presente algún televisor. El análisis se hizo a partir de la teoría de las funciones sociales (construir historias, función barda, construir mitos y construir modelos) desarrollada por los autores Casetti y Di Chio, de los conceptos de imagen centrípeta e imagen centrífuga de André Bazin y la noción de violencia de Johan Galtung. *Los 80* ha sido una ficción bastante estudiada en los últimos años, pero no se ha estudiado el rol que tiene el televisor (aparato) con las experiencias cotidianas de las personas, así como su relación con la violencia contextual de la dictadura de Pinochet. Se concluye que las cuatro funciones sociales establecen un vínculo claro con la idea de la imagen centrípeta, demostrando que una de las cosas que logra el televisor es llevar todo el interés de la audiencia hacia dentro de la propia pantalla, sin cuestionar la realidad a la cual se hace referencia. Se establece el concepto de violencia pública como resultado del cruce de la noción desarrollada por Galtung y las cuatro funciones sociales analizadas. Finalmente, es difícil separar cada una de las funciones en un acto particular del televisor, pues por lo general es más de una función la que está operando en relación con los personajes.

**Palabras claves:** televisión; violencia; ficción; audiovisual.

**Abstract:** This article analyses the role of the television set (television) in the first season of the tv series *Los 80, más que una moda* and how it relates to the violence of the context. For this purpose, the entire first season was watched, and all the scenes in which the television set was present were recorded in a reception diary. The analysis was made based on the theory of social functions (building stories, barda function, building myths, and building models) developed by the authors Casetti and Di Chio, the concepts of centripetal image and centrifugal image of André Bazin, and the notion of violence of Johan Galtung. The fiction *Los 80's* has

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been studied extensively in recent years, but the role of the television (device) in people's daily experience has not been studied, nor has its relationship with the contextual violence of the Pinochet dictatorship. It is concluded that the four social functions establish a clear link with the idea of the centripetal image, demonstrating that one of the things that television achieves is to bring all the audience's interest into the screen without questioning the reality to which it refers. The concept of public violence is established by crossing the notion developed by Galtung and the four social functions analysed. Finally, it is not easy to separate each function in a given television act, since usually there is more than one function at work in relation to the characters.

**Keywords:** television; violence; fiction; audiovisual.

## Introducción

La ficción *Los 80, más que una moda* fue una serie de televisión chilena que estuvo financiada por el Consejo Nacional de televisión (CNTV) y fue emitida por Canal 13, entre 2008 y 2014. Esta producción se centró, en sus más de 70 episodios (divididos en siete temporadas), en la historia de la familia Herrera y sus experiencias cotidianas (problemas económicos, deseos, frustraciones, discusiones políticas, etc.) durante la dictadura militar de Augusto Pinochet.

En su mayoría, la revisión de la literatura se ha centrado en estudios de audiencia que buscan indagar sobre el rol de las ficciones seriadas en el proceso de construcción de memoria de distintas generaciones,<sup>1</sup> sobre el vínculo que se establece entre las ficciones exhibidas y la participación de la audiencia en redes sociales,<sup>2</sup> sobre

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1 Lorena Antezana y Cristian Cabalin, "Memorias en conflicto en la esfera pública chilena: ficción televisiva y dictadura," *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura* 58 (2018): 105–19. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3128>; Lorena Antezana, Juan Pablo Sánchez y Rocío Silva, "Imágenes para recordar. Memorias generacionales sobre el pasado reciente en Chile," *IC – Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación* 17 (2020): 247–71.

2 Miguel Chamorro, "La extensión del relato audiovisual en las redes sociales: el caso de las series de ficción *Cuéntame cómo pasó* de España y *Los 80* de Chile," *Razón y Palabra* 89 (2015): 1–19; Miguel Chamorro, "Tratamiento del recuerdo en las plataformas digitales como efecto del visionado de series de ficción histórica. El caso de España y Chile en la pantalla visual y digital," en *La pantalla insomne*, coords. Concha Mateos y Javier Herrero (Tenerife: Sociedad Latina de Comunicación Social – La Laguna, 2016), 3035–57. Miguel Chamorro, "Las series de ficción histórica en Chile. Impacto de la memoria en las redes de Internet," *Revista DÍGITOS* 3 (2017): 221–46. Miguel Chamorro, "Semiótica del discurso de la memoria histórica en internet. Las huellas del recuerdo

personajes que operan como antagonistas políticos desde la lectura que se hace de la teoría de Ernesto Laclau y Chantal Mouffe,<sup>3</sup> sobre la representación de género<sup>4</sup> o de la paternidad<sup>5</sup>, así como la manera en que se muestra el pasado<sup>6</sup> y el alcance que tiene el melodrama en la enseñanza de la historia reciente de Chile, y la importancia de la televisión en la pedagogía pública.<sup>7</sup>

Un aspecto que llamó la atención de la revisión de la literatura es el análisis sobre la pantalla al interior de la serie, donde destacan dos trabajos. En un primer estudio titulado *La transformación del relato cinematográfico y televisivo en la representación del pasado*<sup>8</sup> el autor nos dice que el televisor es un rasgo característico de las ficciones que están ambientando el pasado, demostrando así que existe un marcado interés por recrear la vida cotidiana de los personajes en relación con objetos característicos de la época. La importancia de enfocarse en este aparato, continúa el autor, radica en que parece como si el televisor fuera el único medio que permite ingresar la historia en la vida de las personas, ya que les muestra momentos icónicos mediatizados por los recursos de la época y la censura de la dictadura.

En un segundo estudio, *Análisis narrativo y creación de series dramáticas: la primera temporada de la serie Los 80* de Unda & Crisóstomo (2020), se busca “estudiar en detalle el piloto de una serie que termina demostrando un fuerte vínculo con la audiencia tanto en su época de emisión como con posterioridad, sustentando así un modelo para analizar y crear series de ficción ‘atemporales’”.<sup>9</sup> Como resultado, el estudio recalca el rol que tiene el televisor en el primer modo de impulsor del

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en las series de ficción de Chile y España y su convergencia con las redes sociales,” *Perspectivas de la Comunicación* 11, no. 2 (2018): 213–30.

3 Javiera del Valle, “La representación en la ficción televisiva del antagonista político en la dictadura chilena,” *Comunicación y Medios* 38 (2018): 66–80.

4 Javier Mateos-Pérez & Gloria Ochoa, “Contenido y representación de género en tres series de televisión chilenas de ficción (2008–2014),” *Cuadernos.info* 39 (2016): 55–66.

5 Javier Mateos-Pérez y Gloria Ochoa, “La representación de la paternidad en series de televisión chilenas del siglo XXI,” *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios en Diseño y Comunicación* 22, no. 95 (2021): 51–64.

6 Mónica Contreras, “Telenovelas y memoria histórica: representaciones y percepciones de la historia reciente en Chile y Colombia,” en *Transiciones de la dictadura a la democracia*, coords. Tibor Berta, Zsuzsanna Csikós, Katalin Jancsó, Eszter Katona, András Lénárt y Veronika Praefort (s.l.: Szege, 2016), 573–86; Angela Cortés, “Memorias de una década en Chile a partir de la recepción de la serie de televisión chilena Los 80,” Tesis de grado, Universidad de Chile, 2015.

7 Cristian Cabalín y Lorena Antezana, “Melodrama y pedagogía pública: La construcción de memoria desde la ficción televisiva,” *Comunicación y Sociedad*, e7362, (2020): 1–19.

8 Christian Miranda, “La transformación del relato cinematográfico y televisivo en la representación del pasado,” *Analecta Revista de Humanidades* 4 (2010): 1–22.

9 Pablo Unda y Paz Crisóstomo, “Análisis narrativo y creación de series dramáticas: la primera temporada de la serie *Los 80*,” *Comunicación y Medios* 41 (2020): 96.

relato en el mismo. Además, indica que el maltrato (los golpes que le dan para que se arregle la señal) puede ser una metáfora de lo golpeado que se encuentra el país en ese momento, agregando que este aparato cultural utiliza distintos fenómenos masivos, como por ejemplo el fútbol, para cubrir los problemas sociales que enfrenta el país, al mismo tiempo que entrega información sobre el contexto económico que afecta al país, en general, y a la familia Herrera, en particular.

En ambos trabajos se puede observar que el televisor tiene un vínculo con el contexto dictatorial que viven los personajes, ya sea porque las noticias son entregadas con un claro sesgo por parte de los canales de televisión, o porque el televisor opera como una metáfora de aquella época. De esta manera, la razón para estudiar la violencia en esta serie radica, en primer lugar, en que a través de la cotidianidad de los personajes, podemos ingresar a una época que estuvo marcada por la represión por parte de un régimen que mantenía el orden social a través del terror, anulando y evitando todo tipo de movilización contraria o de resistencia.<sup>10</sup> En segundo lugar, porque parece relevante extender el trabajo realizado por Unda y Crisóstomo (2020) más allá del episodio piloto, considerando el desarrollo que este dispositivo puede tener con el pasar del resto de la temporada. En tercer lugar, la revisión de la literatura nos muestra que el análisis sobre la violencia y sus tipologías en la ficción se sitúa como un factor contextual de la narración, y no como un elemento central en el análisis de su representación audiovisual, o en relación con los arcos narrativos de los personajes a lo largo de los episodios.

A partir de lo recientemente descrito, es que este trabajo se preguntó: ¿Cuál es el rol del televisor en la serie a lo largo de la primera temporada, y cómo se relaciona con la violencia del contexto?

## Marco metodológico y conceptual

Para abordar esta interrogante se utilizó una metodología cualitativa, empleando un análisis temático, el cual consiste, en primer lugar, en una “desmembración del texto en unidades de análisis y una posterior clasificación y agrupación de estas en categorías”,<sup>11</sup> para luego aplicar una teoría a toda la información que ha sido recopilada y categorizada previamente.

<sup>10</sup> Tomás Moulian, *Chile actual. Anatomía de un mito* (s.l.: LOM Ediciones, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> José Luis Piñuel y Juan Antonio Gaitán, *Metodología general. Conocimiento científico e investigación en la comunicación social* (Madrid: Síntesis, 1995), 544.

Para llevar esto a cabo se realizó la desmembración del texto a partir de un visionado de todos los episodios de la primera temporada, a través del cual se identificaron las distintas escenas y momentos donde el televisor formó parte de la interacción de los personajes, ya sea por participación directa (se muestra el dispositivo) o porque aludieron a ella (se refieren a algún programa o noticia que apreció en él, por ejemplo).

En segundo lugar, se utilizó un diario de recepción<sup>12</sup> para registrar todo lo que ocurría en las escenas identificadas previamente. Acá se encontraron, por ejemplo, escenas donde la familia está cenando mientras observan los noticieros, o cuando se informan sobre los problemas económicos. En ellas se identificó el rol que juega el televisor en el desarrollo de las tramas (principales y secundarias), cómo interactúan los personajes con él y la importancia que tiene a lo largo de los episodios. Finalmente, se utilizó la idea de las funciones sociales que cumple el televisor, propuesta por Casetti & Di Chio,<sup>13</sup> como teoría de base y que sirvió para clasificar la información recopilada:

1. **La función de construir historias:** el televisor cuenta historias y propone discursos que reflejan la búsqueda de emociones de las personas, estimulando su imaginación, satisfaciendo sus necesidades de evadir sus problemas o su contexto inmediato, y encarnando los sueños, deseos y fantasías, a partir de la relación que establece entre todo acontecimiento e historia con la vida cotidiana de la audiencia.
2. **La función barda:** esta función se caracteriza por registrar la construcción, los eventos y las preocupaciones de una comunidad, y ponerlos a disposición de todas las personas que la componen. En esta función, el televisor es mediador de lenguajes, se sitúa en el centro de la cultura, remite situaciones de la vida social a valores y símbolos compartidos por las personas de una misma comunidad. Tal como lo indican los autores: “en sus programas se percibe la voluntad de ilustrar acontecimientos que, de algún modo, pertenecen a cada uno de nosotros, de convertirlos en algo accesible para todos y, de ese modo, explicar y reforzar el patrimonio común”.<sup>14</sup>
3. **la función de construir ritos:** se encarga de definir dinámicas y acontecimientos de la vida cotidiana, así como de cargar consigo distintos aspectos culturales de la sociedad en la que está inserta. Hay un proceso simbiótico

<sup>12</sup> Humberto Franco, *Ciudadanos de ficción: representaciones y discursos ciudadanos en las telenovelas mexicanas* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Casetti y Federico Di Chio, *Análisis de la televisión: instrumentos, métodos y prácticas de investigación* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 310.

entre el televisor y la sociedad, pues el televisor organiza o le da forma a “su propio flujo discursivo a partir de la vida cotidiana y, paralelamente, los ritmos que marca el desarrollo de las rutinas en la vida cotidiana tienden a modularse a partir de ritmos y cadencias impuestas por la programación televisiva”.<sup>15</sup> De esta forma, el televisor se convierte en un “puente entre la dimensión privada y la pública”,<sup>16</sup> entre lo doméstico y lo social.

4. **la función de construir modelos:** se lleva a cabo a partir de la construcción de representaciones simplificadas (valores, rituales, símbolos, formas de interacción, lugares y tiempos), que se convierten en modelos a seguir para la sociedad. A partir de esta función, el televisor se concibe como “un canon de cómo “es” el mundo y de cómo hay que “estar” en el mundo”<sup>17</sup>, alimentando el imaginario colectivo y transformándose en una referencia de lo social.

Sumado a las funciones sociales que trabajan Casetti & Di Chio, utilizamos los conceptos de imagen centrípeta e imagen centrífuga de André Bazin, por un lado, y de violencia desarrollado por Johan Galtung, por otro. Ambos permitieron repensar el rol y el impacto del aparato televisivo en la familia Herrera, tanto a nivel ideológico como de prácticas cotidianas relacionadas con el contexto de violencia que se vivía en esa época.

André Bazin en su ensayo *Pintura y cine*, incluido en su obra *¿Qué es el cine?*, nos habla sobre el marco pictórico y la pantalla de cine. Nos indica que su diferencia radica en que los bordes o contornos del primero pueden operar como límites infranqueables, o bien, para el caso del segundo, como barreras a ser saltadas por el vínculo que se establece entre la narración (lo puesto en escena), la audiencia (la o las personas que se dejan cautivar por la propuesta audiovisual) y la realidad. En palabras del propio autor: “el marco polariza el espacio hacia dentro; todo lo que la pantalla nos muestra hay que considerarlo, por el contrario, como indefinidamente prolongado en el universo. El marco es centrípeta, la pantalla centrífuga”.<sup>18</sup>

Entonces, mientras que el marco de la pintura se encarga de dividir entre el microcosmos de lo creado y presentado pictóricamente, en donde todo lo que importa está al interior del cuadro, y el macrocosmos de la realidad, de donde proviene la naturaleza y las experiencias humanas que sirvieron de inspiración para la obra; la pantalla (del cine) no opera como un marco o límite fijo, más bien como

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<sup>15</sup> Casetti y Di Chio, *Análisis de la televisión*, 310–1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 311.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 312.

<sup>18</sup> André Bazin, *¿Qué es el cine?* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 2008), 212.



“una mirilla que sólo deja al descubierto una parte de la realidad”.<sup>19</sup> Es decir, nos lleva o invita a mirar aquello que está más allá de la pantalla, lo que está por fuera de ella.

Por su parte, la violencia, la otra noción clave para este trabajo, es un concepto problemático, e incluso inútil para algunas personas<sup>20</sup> debido a su amplia gama de aspectos a los que puede llegar a hacer alusión,<sup>21</sup> así como a las distintas formas, intensidades y finalidades que puede adquirir.<sup>22</sup> Considerando la diversidad de disciplinas que confluyen en su análisis,<sup>23</sup> hemos decidido trabajar con la definición del sociólogo Johan Galtung. Él señala que la violencia debe ser entendida como el aumento de la brecha que existe entre lo que puede llegar a ser una persona (su potencial) y lo que es (su actualidad).<sup>24</sup>

A continuación, y partir de la información recolectada en nuestro diario de recepción y de la creación de una matriz conformada por las cuatro categorías propuestas por Casetti & Di Chio (construir historias, función barda, construir ritos y construir modelos), revisaremos los principales hallazgos por cada una de las funciones sociales.

## Hallazgos: Construir historias

En cuanto a la primera de las funciones, observamos que la relevancia que tiene el televisor es, por una parte, la de satisfacer ciertas necesidades afectivas,<sup>25</sup> así como los deseos y fantasías (en ambos casos se relaciona con la felicidad y el bienestar, principalmente) a nivel personal y familiar. Por ejemplo, cuando Juan y Exequiel están en el taller donde trabajan, este último está revisando el anuncio de un nuevo televisor. Juan se muestra emocionado y le dice que le habría encantado poder reg-

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19 Ibidem, 212.

20 Santiago Álvarez, “¿A qué llamamos violencia en las ciencias sociales?,” *Hallazgos* 10, no. 20 (2013): 61–71. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15332/s1794-3841.2013.0020.04>.

21 Elsa Blair, “Aproximación teórica al concepto de violencia: avatares de una definición,” *Política y Cultura* 32 (2009): 9–33; Edisson Cuervo, “Exploración del concepto de violencia y sus implicaciones en educación,” *Política y Cultura* 46 (2016): 77–97.

22 Xavier Crettiez, *Las formas de la violencia* (Buenos Aires: Waldhuter Editores, 2009).

23 Julio Aróstegui, “Violencia, sociedad y política: la definición de la violencia,” *Ayer* 13 (1994): 17–56.

24 Johan Galtung, “Violence, peace and peace research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91.

25 Para efectos de esta investigación no se hará distinción entre “emociones”, “sentimientos”, “sensibilidades”, etc., pues excede los objetivos de este trabajo. Cada una de estas nociones quedará contenida al interior del concepto paraguas que hemos escogido: “afectos”.

alarle algo así a Ana para que pudiera ver sus telenovelas. Escenas más adelante, Juan entra al local de Don Genaro para comprar un cigarro y queda admirado por el televisor que tienen en el local. Don Genaro le dice que lo compró porque también se tiene que hacer sus regalitos. Es decir, es una forma que tiene Don Genaro de validar el esfuerzo y el sacrificio que hace en el día a día, y es algo que podría hacer Juan para escamotear el sufrimiento y las penurias de su vida cotidiana.

Por otra parte, el televisor viene a ser una especie de movilizador social, pues establece el estatus de una persona en la sociedad, y cómo esta puede ascender si es que está al día con los avances tecnológicos. Por más que Juan quiera regalarle un televisor a Ana, sabe que su valor equivale a un mes de su sueldo, lo cual no puede permitírsele por los otros gastos de los que debe hacerse cargo. Sin embargo, esta sería una buena inversión, a nivel afectivo y (como vimos más arriba) y social. Ante lo dubitativo que se muestra Juan por este gasto o inversión (según cómo se mire), Exequiel le dice que la tecnología siempre ha sido costosa, por lo que sumado al esfuerzo que realiza a diario, ahora debe hacer uno monetario para poder “equilibrar” su situación: ante un gran gasto de energía y esfuerzo, mayor debe ser el gasto/inversión para establecer una suerte de balance afectivo-material, podríamos aseverar.

El nivel afectivo no sólo se vincula con la satisfacción por contar con el objeto en sí mismo (comprar un nuevo televisor), sino que también se relaciona con los programas que consume la familia Herrera al ser parte de la audiencia. Esto lo podemos observar con dos ejemplos: el fútbol y las inundaciones por las lluvias torrenciales. En el caso del fútbol, vemos que Martín y un compañero están en el colegio cargando un televisor para poder ver el partido de Chile en el mundial. Están emocionados y con ganas de que empiece el partido. Lo mismo ocurre con el curso de Félix, pues sus compañeros y su profesor están sentados frente al televisor gritando y vitoreando por la selección, mientras esperan extasiados el inicio del partido.

Con respecto a las lluvias, observamos que Félix llama a Ana para que los acompañe a ver lo que está mostrando el televisor. Está informando sobre las fuertes lluvias que han azotado a Santiago, agregando que todos los años ocurre lo mismo, pero nunca con tanta fuerza como ahora. Muestran como el río Mapocho se está saliendo de su cauce y está arrasando con todo lo que encuentra a su paso. Ana, Claudia, Félix y Martín están en shock por lo que están viendo, y no pueden creer lo que muestran las imágenes. Posteriormente, en el noticiero se muestra a personas que se han visto afectadas por las inundaciones en sus casas y se menciona que en la comuna de Las Condes se inició el traslado de personas a los albergues que han sido habilitados. Ana y Claudia están consternadas, se nota que están empatizando con las personas que muestran en el televisor, compartiendo su pena, dolor y angustia.

Con estas dos situaciones (una feliz y una triste) vemos que el televisor moviliza emociones y sentimientos a partir de las historias que pone en pantalla. A través de su dimensión afectiva es capaz de vincular algunos hechos que los canales marcan como relevantes a nivel país con la experiencia personal de los personajes que están observando la pantalla. En resumen, a través del televisor se busca sensibilizar a la audiencia, utilizando reportajes y mostrando el sufrimiento de las personas.

Otro aspecto afectivo que llamó la atención fue cuando Juan y el resto de la familia le muestran a Ana el televisor nuevo que él trajo como regalo por su aniversario de matrimonio. Ana empieza a llorar de alegría, lo agradece y la familia completa se sienta en el sillón, quedando sorprendidos y sorprendidas ante las barras de color que se ven en la señal en vivo para comprobar el estado de la transmisión. No hay imagen en movimiento, no hay personas hablando, corriendo, conversando, nada. Sólo hay barras de colores que nos indican que el dispositivo está funcionando y que han dado ese salto de calidad fruto del trabajo de Juan: el regalo tiene repercusiones afectivas en la totalidad del núcleo familiar.

A pesar de no haber imagen en movimiento, el televisor logra captar la atención de la familia, abstrayéndose de la realidad para poder ingresar en la señal en vivo de la transmisión de los canales. Es como si la familia entrara en la pantalla para poder vivir la nueva realidad: ver a color y con una mejor calidad de imagen. La familia se enfrenta a un nuevo funcionamiento, a nuevas características de un aparato tecnológico que les es familiar, al mismo tiempo que ajeno y novedoso. Este proceso de abstracción también se observa cuando Claudia, Martín y Félix deciden encender el televisor a escondidas. Se sumergen al interior de la programación, independiente de los gustos y las edades de estos personajes. En ese momento no importa lo que están transmitiendo, mientras transmitan algo. En otras palabras, se reduce el placer del contenido, al goce de la experiencia.

Con todos estos casos vemos que el televisor permite paradójicamente acercar a la audiencia a la realidad del país, al mismo tiempo que la aleja, pues opera por medio de la *suspensión*, es decir, tal como ocurre en un vehículo (suspensión neumática), existe una estructura (el televisor) que permite una experiencia afectiva (o un movimiento controlado, para seguir con la metáfora del vehículo) que se ve influenciada por la realidad y el enfoque o encuadre que le da el canal a la información que está siendo entregada, permitiendo empatizar y vincularse con lo que se observa, pero desde un espacio cómodo y seguro. Se siente el movimiento, pero sabemos que no hay riesgo de sufrir un accidente.

## Hallazgos: Función barda

Por medio de la función barda podemos observar que se conecta a la audiencia con el aspecto simbólico de una nación (su identidad, decisiones y preocupaciones), así como con los acontecimientos y sus rastros políticos que forman parte de su construcción. Por ejemplo, en el primer episodio muestran una cadena nacional en donde indican que el peso chileno se ha devaluado en un dieciocho por ciento, por lo que ha sido necesario adoptar una escala diaria de devaluación para los siguientes meses. Esta cadena nacional explica lo que está ocurriendo en el país, los problemas económicos y las consecuencias sociales que estos pueden traer, y los personajes lo vuelven a ver cuando ven una noticia sobre la economía del país y la crisis que está comenzando. Desde el televisor se informa que una de las empresas más afectadas es “Textiles Nacionales”, donde trabaja Juan. La familia se queda en silencio, sorprendida y preocupada a la vez, por lo que Ana pide que no apaguen el televisor porque quiere saber lo que está pasando, pero al mismo tiempo le indica a Juan que haber comprado el televisor puede haber sido un problema, ya que ante una crisis económica como la que se viene, la plata podría haber sido utilizada para otras cosas.

Ante esta función, Claudia se muestra como el único personaje de la familia que cuestiona aquello que está siendo mostrado en el televisor. Por ejemplo, cuando se informaba sobre el cierre de la empresa “Textiles Nacionales”, ella, en vez de asumir que todo corresponde a la grave crisis económica y que nada se puede hacer al respecto, empieza a culpar a los militares y la gestión que han estado realizando. Su papá le dice que en esa mesa no se habla de política, sin embargo, Claudia continúa y dice que hablar de estos temas no es política y que se viene una gran crisis social. Con esto podemos entender que para Claudia cuestionar lo que aparece en el televisor no es parte de un aspecto militante, sino que es simplemente un acto de pensar y reflexionar más allá de lo que les están mostrando. Ella no busca negar la existencia de una crisis económica, sólo que quiere que se informen las cosas como son, y en donde se asuman las responsabilidades correspondientes. Dicho de otro modo, Claudia no cuestiona el tema, sino el enfoque y la manera en que se da a conocer.

Otro aspecto interesante por relevar a partir de esta función es el tema de cómo afectan las temáticas a los personajes, más allá de si el televisor permanece o no encendido. A esto lo denominamos como la *prolongación* de la función barda. Es decir, a pesar de que el televisor se haya apagado porque Juan no quiere que su familia escuche la noticia sobre la empresa en la que trabaja, el contenido y las huellas afectivas que este contenido deja en la audiencia genera una discusión entre ellos que hace que dichas temáticas exhibidas en pantalla se mantengan posterior a su visionado. Así, la noticia en sí misma se prolonga en el tiempo y el

espacio, se desliga de la mera recepción en la pantalla, y se traslada más allá de su propio marco para situarse en el espacio físico de los personajes.

Es interesante hacer notar que en varias ocasiones a lo largo de la temporada vemos que cuando el televisor está entregando una noticia sobre fútbol, pasan de forma inmediata a una noticia sobre guerra, política o economía, todo lo que tenga directa relación con el desempeño del régimen en distintas materias y ámbitos. A veces ocurre al revés, hablan de política economía, y luego hablan del torneo nacional de fútbol. De esta forma, podemos interpretar que dentro de las preocupaciones que pareciera tener la sociedad, se encuentran el fútbol y las medidas impartidas por el régimen. A su vez, podemos pensar que el uso del fútbol sirve como un dispositivo paliativo dentro de las noticias que aparecen. Hablar de una crisis económica parece no ser tan terrible si antes vimos la entrevista a un futbolista, o si vimos a gente feliz celebrando la participación de Chile en el mundial.

Otra temática que también es recurrente y que permite que la audiencia esté informada tiene que ver con las lluvias e inundaciones. El segundo episodio de esta primera temporada comienza mostrando al televisor mientras entrega información sobre los problemas que están teniendo las casas cubiertas por el agua, debido a las lluvias y la salida del río Mapocho. Dicen que helicópteros de la Fuerza Aérea y de Carabineros están ayudando a evacuar a las personas. Escenas más adelante, se muestran imágenes sobre albergues y la periodista está diciendo que el ministro del Interior hizo un llamado al país para ayudar a las personas damnificadas por los temporales que afectaron al país, agregando que el tren de la solidaridad recorrerá desde Puerto Montt a Santiago, juntando materiales y víveres.

Episodios más adelante vemos que la función barda ahora se empieza a abordar ya no sólo desde la temática del fútbol o la economía, sino que ahora tiene que ver con problemáticas de movilizaciones sociales, exilio y seguridad. Como ejemplo de la primera temática tenemos cuando en un noticiero muestran a un grupo de personas tirando panfletos y pidiendo libertad. Uno de los manifestantes dice que la situación del país no es sostenible debido a que los niveles de cesantía no son normales, y agrega que la gente debe poder salir a la calle a manifestarse sin que se les persiga (episodio 3); con respecto a la segunda temática, tenemos que en el local de Don Genaro aparece el televisor en un primer plano y en él vemos a Pinochet dando un discurso, indicando que ha dado la orden de que se revise el sistema de autorización para el regreso de personas exiliadas (episodio 6); la temática de conflictos internacionales se da cuando Martín está sentado en el sillón y desde el noticiero se informa que es necesario defender la soberanía chilena de la infiltración del marxismo-leninismo en el país (episodio 9), así como la persecución a toda persona que busque la desestabilización y la agitación interna del país (episodio 10).

En resumen, a través de la función barda en esta serie se identifica que el televisor habla sobre las preocupaciones que tiene en ese momento la ciudadanía, o,

al menos, las que el canal propone como más relevantes. De esta forma, la agenda pública, es decir, las temáticas que para la sociedad son importantes y prioritarias (sus preocupaciones), son las lluvias, la crisis económica, pero, en ningún momento, la violencia o el contexto dictatorial.

## Hallazgos: Construir ritos

A través de la “función de construir ritos” hemos podido observar que el televisor ha sido el encargado de reunir a la familia en un momento particular y en un lugar específico: en una esquina de la casa, cercana a la puerta de entrada, en dirección a los sillones ahí dispuestos y en diagonal a la mesa del comedor. Así, vemos que los personajes la pueden observar estando de pie cerca de la puerta de la cocina, estando sentados en el comedor, o en cualquiera de los sillones que están alrededor. Todo esto ocurre de forma independiente al momento del día que se trate, ya sea a la hora de almuerzo, de la merienda, o bien, en la cena. El espacio que ocupa dentro de la casa está pensando estratégicamente, tal como si fuera un cuadro que queremos resaltar y que queremos poder apreciar independiente de donde nos encontremos.

Sumado a su disposición, es decir, el lugar que usa en el espacio de la casa, esta función se identifica por medio de la construcción de momentos de reunión familiar, en donde vemos que los personajes, en distintos momentos del día y en relación con distintos tipos de noticias (de economía, fútbol, solidaridad, desastres ambientales, etc.), se juntan a ver y comentar lo que ven en el televisor, al mismo tiempo que comentan cosas que les ocurren en su vida cotidiana. El televisor ingresa al espacio vital de los personajes, se acomoda en un lugar y comienza a hacer compañía con su transmisión y exhibición de noticias y programas. También observamos que el televisor participa de la rutina diaria no solo porque insta a la reunión, sino que también porque logra influir en el tipo de consumo que se realiza, ya que la gente es capaz de interrumpir lo que está haciendo, o lo que debería hacer, para poder quedarse algunos minutos frente a la pantalla. Las rutinas diarias se ven afectadas porque los televisores pueden ser llevados a las salas de clases, o bien, porque hay un grupo de televisores en el escaparate de una tienda desde donde los y las caminantes pueden apostarse para seguir la programación.

La construcción de ritos y la definición de dinámicas y acontecimientos de la vida cotidiana que vincula los ámbitos privados y públicos se ve exaltada por lo que aquí llamamos una *simulación* (por consecuencia de la construcción de ritos). Esta simulación se entiende como el acto que experimenta el televisor al momento de adquirir un rol (aparentar, imitar o falsificar) y ser más allá de lo que es (un aparato

tecnológico). Bajo esta premisa, el televisor de la familia Herrera adquiere una significación distinta debido a: 1) cómo se implementa este aparato en la vida cotidiana; 2) el simbolismo que cobra en las experiencias de los personajes; 3) el *juego de sombras* que entabla con el contexto en el que se encuentran los personajes.

Con respecto al primer punto podemos entregar dos ejemplos: la simulación del televisor como un programador diario, por una parte, y como un mueble, por otra. En el primer episodio se observa que la familia Herrera cena en familia entorno al televisor, pero cuando se termina el programa y la señal de los canales anuncia el final de la programación, los personajes se van a acostar. El día se acaba cuando los contenidos televisivos se terminan, por lo que el orden temporal del día a día se encuentra construido por el flujo programático entregado por los canales emisores de la señal televisiva. El segundo ejemplo lo podemos tomar de diferentes momentos de la primera temporada, a saber: cuando vemos que Ana, que está ordenando y limpiando, se queda pegada viendo el televisor y su acción de barrer el piso y sacudir los sillones se ve interrumpida porque se acerca al televisor y lo empieza a limpiar con una cara que denota mucha felicidad; o cuando nos damos cuenta de que en varias ocasiones los personajes mantienen el televisor encendido sin tomarlo en cuenta: 1) cuando Juan y Martín conversan mientras de fondo aparece Julio Martínez hablando de fútbol chileno (episodio 3); 2) cuando Claudia conversa con Ana para convencerla de que sea socia con Nancy, mientras de fondo se escucha que en el televisor están mostrando la entrevista que le hicieron a una mujer que viajó a Argentina (episodio 4); 3) cuando Félix está viendo por la ventana cómo se va su mamá en un taxi (viajará a Argentina), y de fondo se escucha la serie “Marco”, pero nadie le presta atención; 4) cuando Claudia está sola en el living de la casa y se nota preocupada por lo que ha ocurrido en las movilizaciones y por el riesgo que corre su pareja de que la atrapen. De fondo suena algo similar a una telenovela, sin embargo, ella no está pendiente (episodio 9).

En ambos casos (el televisor como programador diario y como mueble), ninguno de los personajes está viendo el televisor, el cual simplemente está ahí haciendo ruido. El televisor es un aparato necesario para que esté encendido, que emite algún tipo de sonido que acompaña el quehacer diario (sonido ambiente en las labores cotidianas al interior de la casa, por ejemplo) para que las personas no se sientan solas.

Es así como nos damos cuenta de que aquel nuevo aparato es algo importante y relevante para el funcionamiento de la familia, pues no sólo entrega una estructura del inicio y el fin del día, sino que también participa de la construcción de ritos al insertarse en la familia Herrera como si fuera un mueble más de la casa y, por consiguiente, se incluye dentro de las labores domésticas (limpiarlo y cuidarlo).

El segundo punto lo podemos ejemplificar con el siguiente caso. Martín le pregunta a su padre si se ha ganado algún premio, ya que compró un televisor y un

par de zapatillas nuevas para Félix, a lo que Juan responde que no, que todo eso es producto de su esfuerzo. El aspecto “ritual” de la vida de Juan, en dónde todo acontece de la misma forma día tras día, a punta de esfuerzo y sacrificio (tal como lo comentamos en la función “construir historias”) se conecta con la simulación que hace el televisor de la vida cotidiana de los personajes. Por eso, tal como lo dijo Unda y Crisóstomo (2020) en su texto, los golpes que se le dan al televisor al inicio del primer episodio puede ser una metáfora del país y la vida de cada uno de los personajes. Son los golpes que reciben en este contexto de dictadura como las crisis económicas, el miedo a salir a la calle, el miedo a la persecución política, el miedo a pensar y opinar de forma disidente al régimen, etc..

Antes dijimos que la simulación se debía a que genera una rutina diaria artificial sobre la cual se mueven los personajes. Además, configura al televisor como un aparato de compañía, al mismo tiempo que como una metáfora de los problemas que enfrentan los personajes. Sin embargo, y en relación con el tercer punto, ahora la simulación obedece a una perspectiva de cambio artificial en la vida de Juan y de las características tecnológicas del mismo televisor: Juan piensa que su vida va a cambiar ahora que será jefe y tendrá un mejor sueldo, por lo que espera que la vida sea menos compleja de lo que le ha tocado vivir hasta el momento y, por consiguiente, considera que comprar un televisor es una buena forma para celebrar su nuevo estatus. Pasar de un televisor antiguo que tiene una imagen en blanco y negro, que por momentos pierde su señal y que su nitidez no es la ideal, a uno al que no tienen que estar dándole golpes para que funcione, y en donde la imagen tiene un color vivo que le transmite a los personajes estar viendo las cosas ahí mismo, es un cambio que obedece a un ritual de corte artificial, o dicho de otro modo, a un simulacro devenido ritual.

Lo que encontramos en ambos casos es que ni el nuevo rol de jefe (el cual nunca ocurrió) ni la nueva calidad de la imagen (a color y más nítida) han tenido un cambio en el contexto social del país. Son cambios menores al interior de un sistema que no ha sufrido cambios y que, distinto a lo que piensa Juan, nada está bien y no se espera un ápice de mejora en el corto plazo. Es decir, el televisor encarna la simulación de un mundo mejor, de un momento en donde el progreso económico ha permitido salir del oscurantismo de la violencia de Estado y se ha transformado en la solución inequívoca al caos generado por la Unidad Popular. Sin embargo, esta simulación, la de un avance tecnológico y de un mejor estatus social, no viene más que a omitir e ignorar el contexto en el que están inmersos los personajes.



## Hallazgos: Construir modelos

La última función nos muestra que el televisor de la familia Herrera se comporta como un catalizador de formas-de-ser en el mundo. Entrega maneras que cada uno de los miembros de la familia, junto con otros personajes de la serie, pueden identificar para luego utilizarlo o emplearlo en su vida cotidiana. Se refuerza lo que ocurre en las funciones anteriores con respecto a la entrega de emociones que permiten experimentar lo visionado (*suspensión*), a la construcción de una identidad proveniente del refuerzo que hacen los medios en los espacios privados (*prolongación*) y a la estructuración de un orden cotidiano (*simulación*).

En esta función vemos que se utilizan frases, ropa, productos que son vistos en el televisor, y que después son empleadas en la vida cotidiana. Este aparato entrega pautas de cómo hablar, cómo pensar y cómo interactuar. Como ejemplo de esto podemos nombrar cuando enfocan al televisor en un primer plano y se puede ver a Don Francisco hablando de que, en función de la Teletón, se han olvidado los canales de televisión, los ratings y que todas las personas están empujando para llegar a la meta (episodio 5). También se puede citar la escena del segundo episodio en donde vemos a Ana ordenando la ropa y siguiendo las noticias sobre “El tren de la solidaridad” que irá en ayuda de las familias damnificadas. Un tercer ejemplo lo encontramos en el primer episodio, cuando vemos que le hacen una falta a Félix y cobran penal. En ese momento escuchamos que el profesor grita “justicia divina”, frase que pronunció el periodista deportivo Julio Martínez para el mundial de 1962 que se realizó en Chile.

Con estos ejemplos nos podemos dar cuenta de que el televisor y su programación reproducen estereotipos y conductas a seguir que, en el caso de la familia Herrera, son adoptadas sin mayores problemas. Salvo en el caso de Claudia, Exequiel y Nancy (ella en menor medida), no hay mucho cuestionamiento a lo que se observa en televisión, pues parece ser que los encuadres empleados van en la misma línea que los de Ana, Juan y Martín. Mientras Félix está viendo la publicidad de un producto que está ayudando a la Teletón, él le dice a Claudia que Bruno no cree que se cumpla la meta por la recesión, lo cual sería malo porque los niñitos se quedarían sin plata y no aprenderían a caminar. A lo que Claudia le responde que los niños no aprenden a caminar por la plata, sino que por el esfuerzo que hacen.

Todos estos estereotipos e ideas reproducidas por los canales de televisión operan bajo la lógica de la *simplificación*. Esta lógica se vincula con la función de contar historias y con la función barda. Se refiere al enfoque utilizado en las noticias que trae por consecuencia la reducción de la complejidad de los problemas o las situaciones, y que luego son expuestos en patrones fáciles de reconocer e internalizar. Podemos decir que la simplificación busca que el mensaje en sí mismo, y todos los aspectos simbólicos conectados a él, sean percibidos y asumidos

sin mayores problemas. El problema que encontramos en esto es que se asume que un buen mensaje es suficiente para que la sociedad obedezca y crea sin oponer resistencia, además de considerar que el mismo mensaje puede ser percibido de la misma forma por distintas personas. Esto se contradice tajantemente con el caso de Claudia que aun siendo parte de la familia Herrera, su manera de pensar dista mucho de lo que opina su hermano o su mamá, por ejemplo.

Lo interesante de la simplificación es que no sólo aplica para aspectos que parecieran estar alejados del mundo político (como la caridad disfrazada de solidaridad, o el uso del fútbol para tapar las violaciones de los derechos humanos), sino que también se puede utilizar para pensar las composiciones morales de los grupos sociales, así como los aspectos políticos de los mismos. Ejemplo de lo primero es la construcción que se hace de la familia, la cual siempre debe estar feliz y unida, pese a cualquier tipo de diferencia que pudiera existir. La familia es el nuevo centro de la política, pero, a diferencia de lo que haría un sindicato o un partido, asume el rol de mantener todo tranquilo, sin sobresaltos ni con gente participando de algún acto de resistencia o de oposición al régimen. De esta forma, la simplificación que se reconoce en el televisor repercute en la participación política.

El rol de la familia viene a reforzar la simplificación de los aspectos políticos de los grupos sociales. Por ejemplo, mientras Ana está en el local de Don Genaro hablando por teléfono, se escucha a Pinochet hablando de subversivos, de las manifestaciones sociales que están ocurriendo y de Moscú. Estas palabras funcionan por el significado que compone su unión. Cualquier persona que esté en contra del régimen se le tacha de subversiva y que apoya a la Unión Soviética, lo cual es una simplificación del espectro político bastante radical (episodio 9). Una simplificación similar ocurre en el capítulo 6, cuando se habla de los exiliados y Don Genaro asume que todas las personas que quieren volver a Chile son lobos con piel de oveja y que no tienen familia. Por más que Juan lo intenta convencer de que no dejarán entrar a cualquier persona, sino que habrá un estudio de cada caso, Don Genaro se rehúsa a creer algo así. Un último ejemplo se da cuando Martín critica a los militares argentinos por querer ir a la guerra con Inglaterra. Agrega (para responder una pregunta de Félix) que el soldado chileno está mucho mejor preparado y que de entrar a la guerra, ganaría sin mayores complicaciones (episodio 1).

Estos tres ejemplos aluden a que el conflicto se da entre los buenos y los malos, entre quienes quieren el caos y la destrucción del orden social, y quienes quieren defender el país. Los malos son aquellas personas que estén en contra del régimen o que lo cuestionan. De hecho, podemos decir que la composición del espectro político de la época se compone de quienes apoyan el régimen, por un lado, y los terroristas, los opositores y los exiliados por otro. Estos últimos tres conceptos son una forma caricaturesca de mostrar cómo se conforma la izquierda chilena.

Ahora daremos paso al cruce entre las funciones sociales y la violencia contextual.

## **Análisis: las funciones sociales y el rol centrípeto entremedio de la violencia de la dictadura**

Con respecto a la función “construir historias”, resulta interesante pensar que el premio al esfuerzo y el sacrificio tenga que ser “otorgado” por uno mismo. No es que alguien dentro del espacio laboral de Juan, como su jefe, por ejemplo, lo valide y lo reconozca por el buen desempeño que ha hecho hasta ese entonces, sino que es un premio que debe ser costeado por el propio Juan. Es un gasto que se realiza, a pesar de lo caro que puede ser, para poder auto validarse, para poder reafirmarse ante sí mismo que lo que ha hecho ha estado bien y ha valido la pena. Por lo tanto, lo sacrificial es entendido desde una lógica netamente de consumo: es necesario comprar algo para poder sentir que estoy haciendo bien las cosas y que mi vida vale algo más que el cansancio y las penurias a las que me he visto expuesto.

De esta forma, la violencia se manifiesta porque existe una reducción del potencial de la persona con respecto a lo que puede llegar a ser a nivel laboral y a nivel personal. Sólo es lo que se le permite en función de su desempeño laboral. Así, toda recompensa afectiva cumple un doble propósito: primero, ejercer un control sobre el quehacer cotidiano de la persona, en este caso Juan; segundo, reforzar el individualismo y propiciar la idea de que el bienestar depende de uno y no de una labor colectiva con respecto al trabajo. El trabajo es la mera auto explotación mientras se piensa que se es libre, y el televisor es una forma de validar dicha explotación, pues ante un gran gasto de energía y esfuerzo (el trabajo), mayor debe ser el gasto/inversión para establecer un balance afectivo-material (la compra del televisor). Si siempre se está deseando más, el gasto siempre deberá ser mayor.

Por otra parte, los contenidos programáticos exhibidos por la televisión buscan establecer un vínculo con la audiencia a partir de lo afectivo (la caridad que realiza la sociedad para aportar en la Teletón, o para ayudar a las familias que se han visto afectadas por las lluvias e inundaciones, por ejemplo). A nivel social esto refuerza la idea de que cada persona o cada grupo familiar se cuida a sí mismo, no hay un aspecto social ni estatal que se preocupe de fijar ciertos lineamientos y bases universales para la sociedad. Aquí la violencia opera a nivel social, pues toda posibilidad de que existan vínculos interpersonales, o que se desarrolle una comunidad queda reducida a la capacidad económica que cada persona tiene para ayudar a que otra persona no siga sufriendo. La ayuda, entonces, no se basa en crear vínculos estables y duraderos, sino en mantener la individualidad, pero aportar económicamente para que el presente de una o varias personas se puede sobrellevar de mejor forma.

Dentro de la “función barda” vemos que el rol del televisor es siempre llevar a la audiencia al interior de este. Es decir, entregar información para que sepan lo

que está pasando en el país, pero no para que cuestionen dicha situación. Contrario a esto, Claudia se encarga de salir del marco del televisor, intenta desbordarse hacia su contexto cotidiano y lo que a ella le toca ver y vivir. No es que ella tome partido por un sector político en particular, sino que ella intenta, como bien se observa a lo largo de la temporada, no asumir como cierto todo lo que ahí aparezca, dado que existe una línea editorial influenciada por el sector hegemónico que gobierna el país.

La violencia aquí opera a través de la prolongación temporal de los contenidos, desde la reducción de las posibilidades de pensamiento crítico y reflexiones propias, algo así como el uso público de la razón versus el uso privado de la razón que propone Kant<sup>26</sup> en su reflexión sobre la Ilustración. El hecho de que los contenidos perduran más allá de que el televisor esté encendido, hace que el enfoque noticioso entregado se considere como “exitoso”, pues la brecha entre el pensamiento y la obediencia queda reducida a su más mínima expresión.

Lo que vemos en esta función barda, es que el televisor tiende a llevar a la audiencia hacia su interior. Le dice a la audiencia, la familia Herrera, que esto que están viendo es la realidad. Siguiendo las reflexiones de Bazin, nada escapa del marco de la pantalla. Pero, al mismo tiempo, está haciendo que aquello que se presenta como la realidad al interior de ese marco, se mantenga en la conversación cotidiana y en el pensamiento de los personajes. Podríamos decir que no sólo se están diciendo sobre qué pensar, sino que también durante cuánto tiempo hacerlo.

Lo que ocurre en la función “construir ritos” es que el potencial de las personas se acorta, sin embargo, los personajes parecen no darse cuenta. Cuando describimos el caso de Juan que compraba un nuevo televisor, esto operaba como una forma de simular el desarrollo económico del país, aun cuando en las noticias hablan a lo largo de la temporada de la crisis del peso, la crisis económica y la falta de empleos. Juan pensaba que su presente y futuro estaban cambiando. Pensaba que ese instante en el que se encontraba era el momento exacto en que el mito de la dictadura se había cumplido y una nueva forma de vida podía ser experimentada.

El problema de esto es que se la violencia acá opera tanto desde lo afectivo como desde lo material. Desde lo afectivo porque juega con una simulación de la potencialidad de la persona, se le muestra a Juan que puede llegar a ser más de lo que se es hoy en día, sin embargo, la realidad es que Juan está siendo imbuido por un modelo en el que cada vez queda más reducido a un mero engranaje desechable, por lo que su potencialidad es ficticia. Desde lo material, porque aparatos como el televisor vienen a crear la sensación de que la potencialidad de la persona se está logrando, cuando en verdad lo que está ocurriendo es que el televisor está

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26 Immanuel Kant, “¿Qué es la Ilustración?,” *Foro de Educación* 11 (2009): 249–54.

simulando el avance y el progreso económico sin siquiera demostrar dichos cambios, pues toda situación al interior de este contexto se encuentra con la incertidumbre de la crisis económica.

En cada uno de estos casos el televisor desarrolla un rol más complejo que la simple exposición y transmisión de imágenes en movimiento. Ingresa en la vida cotidiana y se relaciona con los personajes en su quehacer diario, con sus emociones, sus deseos y sus miedos asociados al contexto.

Ya sea si los personajes ven el televisor desde el comedor de su casa, desde su lugar de trabajo (el taller donde trabaja Juan y Exequiel), desde la calle frente a una tienda de aparatos electrónicos, desde una sala de clases, o desde el local del barrio, la experiencia privada de consumo comienza a ser compartida por otras personas, independientes del lugar que se trate. Sin embargo, esta experiencia compartida de visionado no debe ser pensada como un lugar desde el cual se puede construir algo común, pues los lazos que se comparten y que podrían llegar a establecer son meramente contextuales, pues obedecen a un vínculo construido por una felicidad pasajera, por ejemplo, atribuida a un logro deportivo que ensombrece el contexto político del país.

En resumen, el televisor no es sólo un avance tecnológico capaz de entregar imágenes en movimiento, sino que es un aparato que acompaña a la familia en sus distintos momentos, haciendo que se enfoquen en lo que están observando en la pantalla y omitiendo lo que ocurre por fuera de ella (incluyendo lazos sociales). Su flujo televisivo se vincula con la vida cotidiana de los personajes, entregándoles un orden y herramientas para que se desenvuelvan en el día a día, pero, tal como lo hemos dicho, sin mirar más allá de sí mismos.

Observamos en la última función (“construir modelos”) que la sociedad queda reducida a bandos y grupos opositores, al mismo tiempo que se reduce la complejidad de grupos sociales que puedan aportar en el proceso de socialización y de construcción de identidad de las personas, pues el único grupo que importa es la familia. Todo lo que se relaciona con la familia (el ámbito privado) es lo que vale, el resto queda excluido y se le impone una carga ideológica opuesta. Se le asocia a la izquierda, utilizando apelativos como subversivos, terroristas, lobos, entre otros.

Esta función intenta situar ciertas temáticas a partir de algunos enfoques que tienden a simplificar la realidad. La realidad queda reducida a entidades opuestas que justifican la existencia de un conflicto, y por lo tanto es necesario que la mano dura del régimen siga operando, reforzando así la idea de que los modelos transmitidos refuerzan la violencia estructural, cultural y psicológica que se puede observar en la serie. El problema de esto es que, por ejemplo, las campañas del “Tren de la solidaridad” apelan a la solidaridad por las desgracias de las inundaciones y la salida del río, sin embargo, cuando se deja de hablar de estos problemas, los personajes olvidan que hay gente que sigue teniendo dificultades. Son problemáticas

sociales que aparecen por consecuencia de la agenda mediática, no porque los personajes de verdad estén preocupados por ayudar en estas situaciones.

Algunas de estas ideas que se transmiten funcionan como una varilla con la cual los personajes pueden evaluar constantemente las cosas que les ocurren o que observan, ya sea a nivel político (lo público-social) o personal (aspectos de su mundo privado). El televisor, y la invitación que nos hace a poner atención en lo que ocurre en él, forma parte de esa construcción de modelos a los cuales recurrir para poder interactuar con otras personas: es unión entre el aspecto simbólico de una sociedad (la cultura) y la materialidad de la misma (la vida de las personas y sus condiciones de existencia).

Por otra parte, la estructura del noticiero al momento de presentar la información entrega una asociación que puede resultar beneficiosa para el régimen de Pinochet, pues una noticia feliz, que ofrece alegría, que une a la sociedad a pesar de las diferencias, como lo hace el fútbol, hace que la recepción de la noticia siguiente sea tomada como algo “no tan malo”, o incluso, “positivo”, pues encaramos los conflictos bélicos y económicos como un solo país, sin deferencias ideológicas.

Finalmente, consideramos en esta función que el televisor se convierte en una forma de limpiar la imagen violenta y cruda que tiene el régimen de Pinochet, en relación con ciertos sectores más bien dubitativos sobre el golpe de Estado y el actuar de los militares y otros agentes. Personas como Juan o Ana tienden a situarse en el medio del espectro político, pues no quieren tener represalias por ser asociados a algún sector en particular.

Ahora bien, ¿cómo relacionamos el rol centrípeto del televisor (y sus funciones) con la violencia y el contexto del país? Cuando nos preguntamos por el rol que tiene la pantalla del televisor, nos estamos refiriendo a si esta nos lleva hacia dentro de su marco, es decir un efecto centrípeto, o si nos lleva hacia afuera, ocasionando un efecto centrífugo. Esta diferencia que se establece a partir del trabajo de André Bazin, entre el marco de un cuadro y el borde una pantalla, es algo que podemos utilizar para reflexionar sobre el rol que tiene el televisor de la familia Herrera en *Los 80*.

A primera vista es lógico pensar que hay más similitudes con la pantalla de cine que con un cuadro. Sin embargo, en este trabajo hemos podido observar que ocurre lo contrario. La pantalla en *Los 80* cumple un rol centrípeto con la sociedad y con la información, pues remite a su propio interior, llevando a los personajes (la familia Herrera principalmente) a pensar y experimentar su cotidianidad a partir de lo que ocurre al interior de la imagen televisiva. Tal como si Juan o Ana estuvieran observando una pintura, sus pensamientos, reflexiones, miedos y esperanzas se relacionan con lo que aparece en ella, con las formas, los trazos, los colores, las texturas, etc. No los lleva a ir más allá, a cuestionar sobre lo que están observando. No se preguntan, siguiendo con el ejemplo de la pintura, si los trazos

son sutiles o gruesos, si los colores son los apropiados, si las sombras realzan o no ciertos colores, o si lo que están viendo les hace sentir alguna emoción de valencia positiva o negativa.

Lo que hace la pantalla, entonces, es crear una especie de margen o límite, generando una diferencia entre el afuera y el adentro, entre lo que está en el interior de la pantalla, y lo que está por fuera de ella, es decir, a lo que hace referencia, a la porción de la realidad que sirve como base para la construcción de las noticias y los programas deportivos o de entretenimiento. Así, la importancia de lo centrípeta radica en su doblez hacia su interior y su reducción de la diferencia entre lo que aparece en la pantalla y la realidad, proponiendo centrar la mirada y el pensamiento hacia dentro del marco y no hacia afuera.

Es en el cine que encontramos “un campo (un adentro de la imagen) que funciona desde una constante extrañeza que nos permite relacionar con el espacio de afuera, construyendo la imaginación política de una época desde el diálogo inevitable entre ambos espacios”.<sup>27</sup> Para el caso de esta serie, al televisor de la familia Herrera le falta esa extrañeza, esa chispa que aviva la duda y la incertidumbre sobre lo que se está observando. No existe diálogo entre el afuera y el adentro, simplemente hay un “encuadrar”, un “enmarcar” lo que ocurre por fuera de ella, limitando así la participación política y las relaciones interpersonales.

Por lo tanto, la importancia que identificamos en el marco de la pantalla de los televisores en la serie radica en dos aspectos principales. Primero, porque no permite pensar sobre el “afuera”; lleva solo a mirar y disfrutar del “adentro” (las excepciones a todo esto son los personajes de Claudia y Exequiel). Segundo, y ligado al punto anterior, porque evita, bloquea y difumina la posibilidad de la imaginación política al interior del contexto en el que viven. Es decir, la violencia opera por medio de la pantalla porque reduce toda posibilidad de cambio a nivel material y también psicológico y afectivo de los personajes. No pueden pensar distinto a lo que se muestra en la pantalla, el margen es reducido y la duda, incluso, puede ser castigada. Por eso es que vemos que los personajes antes de opinar en contra del régimen, porque saben que las cosas no están bien, prefieren callar y agachar la cabeza para seguir trabajando, porque toda esperanza de cambio ha sido llevada a su mínima expresión por medio del secuestro, la tortura y la desaparición forzada de personas contrarias al régimen.

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27 Carolina Urrutia, “El giro narrativo: Nuevas tendencias en los géneros de representación en el cine y la televisión contemporáneos,” en *V Panorámica del audiovisual chileno*, coords. Johanna Whittle y Enrique Núñez (Santiago de Chile: Facultad de Comunicaciones, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2017), 33.

## Conclusiones

En este trabajo hemos analizado el rol que tiene el televisor en la ficción *Los 80* y su relación con la violencia. Para esto hicimos una revisión de todos los episodios de la primera temporada en donde estuviera el televisor presente, o bien, que se aludiera a él. Registramos las escenas, las describimos y las analizamos a la luz de las funciones sociales que trabajan Casetti & Di Chio, del concepto de imagen centrífuga y centrípeta de Bazin y de violencia de Galtung.

A partir de las funciones sociales encontramos que el televisor y la información que entrega hace un realce de la dimensión afectiva (miedo, alegría, inseguridad, incertidumbre, etc.), para cautivar a la audiencia sobre las temáticas que son consideradas como más relevantes y eludir los problemas sociales (*suspensión*). También encontramos que, aunque el televisor se encuentre apagado, las temáticas que este aparato ingresa en los espacios privados permanecen y son recogidos por los personajes para comentarlos en otros momentos (*prolongación*). Otro hallazgo interesante fue ver cómo el televisor imita y/o asume distintos roles o funciones al interior de la familia Herrera, provocando que muchos aspectos de la violencia del régimen se observen en los personajes y en su relación con el mismo televisor (*simulación*). Finalmente, con respecto a la última función social, podemos decir que existe un proceso de *simplificación* de las problemáticas sociales, así como de las características de los actores que participan en ellas.

Destacamos el uso de estas funciones pues permitieron vincular lo cotidiano (tanto lo doméstico como lo social y lo público) con el contexto en el cual se inserta la sociedad en su conjunto y el televisor como aparato cultural. Además, fue interesante observar que en varios casos operaba más de una función al mismo tiempo.

Con el análisis de estas cuatro funciones sociales, validamos la idea de que el televisor se comporta de *forma centrípeta*, ya que no busca relacionarse con el exterior (pensamiento y reflexión sobre la realidad), sino que busca movilizar hacia su interior para asumir las cosas que se están mostrando. Por consiguiente, el televisor se relaciona con algo que acá denominamos *violencia pública*. Este tipo de violencia se caracteriza por: buscar la forma de influir en la percepción de la realidad cotidiana de los personajes, intentar darle forma a la realidad y convertirla en valores y estereotipos fáciles de digerir y que funcionen como modelos a seguir, evitar y difuminar la posibilidad de la imaginación política, desestructurar el vínculo social otorgado por el debate de lo común y provocar la fragmentación de la sociedad en bandos.



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Claudia Bossay

## Historical Walkabout

Returning the Archival Records Used in *Los 80* TV Series to the Streets of Santiago

**Abstract:** This article explores the origins and uses of the archival material that appears in the TV series *Los 80* (Channel 13, Wood Producciones, 2008–2014), particularly its first season. From the analysis developed for NITS (from the Spanish Núcleo de Investigación de TV y Sociedad, born in Universidad de Chile) and for the GUMELAB interdisciplinary research project, we can recognize that the two most used types of archives in the TV series are moving images and sound archives, both of which are also further classified in regards to their origin (songs, news – radio and/or television –, TV shows, advertising, films, etc...), and whether they are diegetic or non-diegetic. Through the analysis and classification of the use of archival material, we will understand the expressive capacity of said material within the TV series. After this analysis, a route through Santiago’s city centre was developed, which passes through strategic points of the city in the TV series. This will allow us to stop at strategic points to see some synthetic clips of the contents (mostly archives) used in the TV series, developed specifically for this instance. Through them, the attendees of this walking tour entitled “Remembering & travelling” will be invited to reflect on the historical meanings that the TV series develops.

Both the analysis of the archive and the design of the tour are activities that had not been performed previously in relation to this TV series. The participants highlighted its originality and how it allowed them to contrast the TV series against family memories of the period and historiographical data, producing a rereading of the TV series and how it represents the second decade of the civil-military dictatorship in Chile.

**Keywords:** archival footage; Chile; historical fiction; walkabout; historical senses.

**Resumen:** Este artículo explora los usos y orígenes de los materiales de archivo que aparecen en la serie *Los 80* (Canal 13, Wood Producciones, 2008–2014), particularmente de su primera temporada. De este análisis desarrollado para NITS (Núcleo de Investigación de TV y Sociedad, originado en la Universidad de Chile) y para el proyecto de investigación interdisciplinar GUMELAB, podemos reconocer que

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los dos tipos de archivos más utilizados en la serie son imágenes en movimiento y archivos sonoros que incluyen el uso diegético y no diegético de estos archivos. También podemos encontrar canciones, noticias de radio y televisión, programas televisivos, películas, publicidad, entre otros. Comprendemos así los usos y capacidad expresiva del archivo en la serie.

Tras este análisis se procedió a desarrollar un recorrido por Santiago Centro, recorriendo puntos estratégicos de la ciudad en la serie. Esta nos permitirá detenernos en puntos clave para visionar clips de síntesis, desarrollados especialmente para esta instancia, de los contenidos (mayormente archivos) utilizados en la serie. A través de ellos se invitará a los asistentes de este tour a pie titulado “Recordar y recorrer” a reflexionar sobre los sentidos históricos que desarrolla la serie.

Tanto el análisis de archivo, así como el diseño del tour, son actividades que no se habían realizado previamente en relación con esta serie. Los participantes destacaron su originalidad y cómo les permitió contrastar la serie contra los recuerdos familiares del periodo y datos historiográficos, produciendo una relectura de la serie y de la representación que ésta lleva a cabo de la segunda década de la dictadura civil militar en Chile.

**Palabras claves:** archivos; caminata; Chile; ficción histórica; sentido histórico.

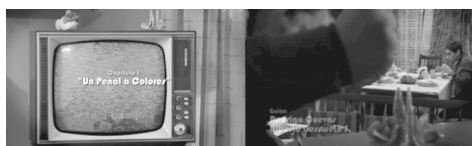
## Introduction

The Chilean television TV series called *Los 80* (Canal 13, Wood Producciones, 2008–2014) begins with an immediate act for recalling the memories from this decade. The opening credits are presented entirely over archival images from the time. We see Chile’s capital city forty years ago, we recognise the faces of Chileans from that time, and we recall the texture given to the image by video cameras. This is what all the introductions to every episode will be like. They are composed of montages of archival footage, material which is different in each introduction, as they are meant to contextualise and summarise what the episode will be about, foreshadowing the challenges presented to the main characters as well as the broader historical context surrounding the episode.

The beginning of the first episode further reinforces this reminiscing invitation. On the one hand, it starts with a full-body (cubed) television set, with porcelain figurines on top. The screen is showing the image of a famous Chilean football idol from that time, then static fills the screen. As a reaction to the signal interruption, Juan Herrera (Daniel Muñoz), the father of the protagonist family, stands up from what we will later come to recognize as the dining room, and roughly taps

the television to recover definition. The physical gesture of tapping, the sound, the memory of this everyday occurrence takes the audience not only to a memory of how things looked but also to a kinetic memory, the sound of hitting the TV set, the ecstasy of being able to recognise the image again. It is a tactile, sensory memory. Felix (Lucas Bolvarán) the youngest son screams “Don’t break my tv!” as the mother demands that her husband be more careful. This opening scene also presents all the main characters in the TV series: the Herrera family and their television set. Jarpa suggests that “for theoretical and practical purposes, we will consider the material object “family television” as another character, as it is directly related to the family; the messenger providing historical context for the Herreras, and the main mediator between the imaginary of the time and the personal experiences of the audience.”<sup>1</sup> The TV will be an important protagonist in the TV series, the lord and master of the common area in the Herrera household, and the portal that allows the archival footage to become one of the most eloquent and novel expressive elements of the show.

These first black and white images that we see on the TV in the living room, also show the dictator Augusto Pinochet, affably called president. They are immediately followed by the Chilean national football team amongst multiple celebrities that will share the screen with the Herreras. This is a fine example of the entertainment promoted by television in the real 1980s and remembered through this TV series. Including the credits, the episode has not even been on the air for five minutes, and the archive has already established its transcendence for this show. This leads us to wonder: what is the archival footage shown in the TV series like? what is the function this archive performs within the show? Furthermore, could these materials, and the plot of the first season, help us create a walkabout through the emblematic sites portrayed within the TV series which still exist in the city centre of Santiago, with the objective of reflecting on the historical senses developed by the TV series?



**Fig. 1:** Captures from the first episode of *Los 80*, and the protagonism of the television set.

<sup>1</sup> Guillermo Jarpa. “Recuerdos a colores: una exploración al dispositivo moral expuesto en la primera temporada de *Los 80*”. Presented in the colloquium *Historical Discourses in Chilean Television Fiction*, held at the ICEI, 5 Abril 2017. [http://www.historiayaudiovisual.uchile.cl/nuevo\\_sitio/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Los-80-Ponencia-v.180606.pdf](http://www.historiayaudiovisual.uchile.cl/nuevo_sitio/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Los-80-Ponencia-v.180606.pdf) (June 2023).

In order to answer these questions, a critical viewing of the TV series was conducted, recording in an Excel document each appearance of archival footage. The database categorized entries by season, episode, type of archive present, description of the content, and scene duration. On some entries it was also recorded how the material was presented, whether within the narrative or edited together with the fiction. The type of archives could be summed up as: archival footage, audio archive, and material archive. The three categories were further divided into diegetic and non-diegetic appearance. Also, there were other subcategories, specially audio and image, such as advertisements, news footage, tv or radio programs (particularly Cooperativa Radio, which were recorded for the show, as there are few radio archives in the country), as well as music.<sup>2</sup> Material archive included print media, such as magazines and newspapers, examples are a magazine with the advertisement of the colour television set that Juan buys for the family: “Tatung Dynamic”, Exequiel Pacheco (Daniel Alcaíno) reads to Juan in episode one. Later, Juan watches a television store through its window display. We can see the recognizable Javier Miranda and Carlos Caszely repeated in every screen. Also, in the same episode we can see Ercilla Magazine, with its cover that reads: “Pinochet says: We will not touch the dollar”, that same episode includes details of the newspaper covers after devaluation of the dollar.

As was recalled in the programme *TV o no TV* (2008), television was an important commodity in this decade. The presenter Sergio Lagos comments: “In 1982, there are already two million households with a television set, and one third of them is colour”, for a country of almost 12 million inhabitants. Here the Herrera family would have passed from the 2/3 of black and white television sets to the one third of households in Chile, the same year of one of its biggest economic crises. Later in the same commemorative show, the dictator appears giving a speech in which he states that “One out of seven Chileans will have an automobile, and one out of five will have a TV. Those are the goals we have set”.<sup>3</sup> That was the modernization expected for the country.

Through this reasearch process, it was possible to identify the two most common types of archives: The shows and programs created by Canal 13 throughout the 1980s, and contextual footage of Santiago – and Chile – and their inhabitants. It is not

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2 After a presentation the uses of the archival footage within the TV series, held by the Television and Society Nucleus at the Faculty of Communication at Universidad de Chile (NITS, from the Spanish Núcleo de Investigación de TV y Sociedad) and the interdisciplinary research project GUMELAB, it was suggested to include the sound archive, as these songs were also a part of the big hit this TV series was.

3 Sergio Lagos. *TV o no TV, La Televisión chilena a comienzos de los 80s* (2008) broadcast by Canal 13. <https://youtu.be/T5ygowj3Ro>.

possible to state the purpose for having recorded this footage, but probably it came from stock footage for news and other programs from the channel. From these materials we identified the following thematic sub-categories: the history of the channel through their shows and institutional branding, the representation of the economic crisis at the beginning of the decade, the city centre – the main location represented within the archival footage – as a space of commercial boom, and the protest in the city. An exploration of their uses in the show will be presented in the first half of this article.

In the second segment of this article, we will explore two strategies developed from this research, to evaluate the ‘historical senses’ of this fictional TV series within a generation younger than those whom Lorena Antezana and Cristian Cabalin have called the third generation.<sup>4</sup> The first approach was to create different syntheses of the first season through the results of the exploration of the uses of the archive. Four different clips were developed, based on the four most repeated themes: history of the channel, economic crisis, economic boom, and the protest. Then, as a second phase, a walking tour of the city centre was designed, stopping at strategic points that allowed us to see the capsules, discuss the TV series and reflect upon the historical meanings of fiction, and the knowledge and memories the twelve tour attendees have regarding the dictatorship and the TV series itself.

## The content of the archive and how it is used within the TV series

In relationship with the first season, we can identify 130 inclusions of archival material including sound archives and songs and archival footage. 47 were diegetic archival footage, and 29 non-diegetic (including the credits and intros of each chapter). 20 inclusions of diegetic sounds, such as music or news programs, and 34 non-diegetic songs.<sup>5</sup> These add up to 100 minutes over the 10 episodes of the season,

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4 Born in democracy, they were between 18 and 24 in 2018, year of the beginning of the research. Lorena Antezana and Cristian Cabalin. “Memorias de la represión. Violencia política en la ficción televisiva a 40 años del Golpe de Estado en Chile”. *Comunicación y Medios* no. 41 (2020) 82–94. <https://comunicacionymedios.uchile.cl/index.php/RCM/article/view/55927/61583> (11.06.23).

5 Most of the songs are Latin, Hispanic or Italian in Spanish, for example: Almendra, “Muchacha ojos de papel” (1969); Charly García, “Inconsciente colectivo” (1982); Jairo, “Nuestro amor será un himno” (1980); Roque Narvaja, “Yo quería ser mayor” (1981); León Gieco “Solo le pido a dios” (1978); Salvatore Adamo, “La noche” (1965); Silvio Rodríguez, “Ojalá” (1978); Tormenta “Adiós Chico de Mi Barrio” (1971); José Luis Perales, “Y como es él” (1982) and “Navidad” (1974); Paloma San Basilio,

lasting in average 54 minutes each. Hence, archival material constitutes roughly a fifth of the TV series. 30 minutes were from archival footage, and the rest regarding sounds and music.

The archival material fulfils various technical and narrative roles in the TV series. It is mostly used to provide narrative continuity amongst different characters, spaces, and times. Many times, L or J cuts, continuities, or audio advances are used between scenes, taking the sound of the city to the scene or vice versa. Match cuts, or transitions between scenes that maintain the continuity of movement or composition, are also used. All these resources rely on the archival material that helps position the scenes, as well as unifying it with the acted material in a smooth manner.

Another way to introduce the archival material is by playing with the diegetic and non-diegetic. In other words, unlike non-diegetic materials, which are not seen by the actors of the TV series, the idea is to include the channel's historical records in a diegetic manner, so that the actors see it on television, within the narrative of the TV series. There are at least three ways in which this occurs. Most of the time, the material is on the television while the family is watching TV, and they somehow interact with the material – for instance, as presented in the introduction of this text, when the signal gets interrupted (episode 1), or when they talk about the bodies of the Telethon showgirls (episode 5), or comment on the news of the day (episode 2). In general, this footage was previously shown as a montage transition, and presented at the beginning of a new scene, showing the footage masked by the television (i.e., with the black edges the image had on these old television sets). This happens both in Don Genaro's store and the Herrera household. In some cases, the archival material is even shown in a television set, which no one is actually watching the TV (episode 2, information about the river overflow). Finally, sometimes, and particularly when it is important for the content of the TV series, the archival material that is visible on television also appears directly after or before, in full screen, without masking.

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"Beso a beso... dulcemente" (1978); Piero, "Mi querido viejo" (1969), Jeanette "Soy rebelde" (1971); Franco Simone, "Paisaje" (1978); Al Bano and Romina Power, "La felicidad" (1982); Antonio Prieto, "Cómprate un Tambor" (1980); Ricchi e Poveri "Mamamaría" and Umberto Tozzi, "Gloria" (1979). Chilean music used in this season was: Eduardo Gatti, "Francisca" and "Los momentos" (both from 1982); Sol y lluvia, "Por el partido de la verdad" (1980); Los Iracundos "40 Grados" (1984); Los Jaivas, "La Conquistada" (1975); Congreso, "Hijo del sol luminoso" (1981); Víctor Jara "Canto Libre" (1970); Schwenke Nilo, "El viaje" (1983). Finally, in English, we can find Abba, "Super Trooper" (1980); Daryl Hall & John Oates, "Kiss on My List" (1980) Michael Jackson, "Thriller" (1983); Motels, "Only the Lonely" (1982); Air Supply, "The One That You Love" (1981).





**Fig. 2:** Masked archive in the television set at Don Genaro's and in the Herrera household (episodes 9 and 7).

As we identified as a research cluster NITS, the episodes are organised in relation to mediatic or newsworthy events that serve as seams between the past and the fictional stories in the episodes. Some examples are the penalty missed by Chile in the football match against Austria and the devaluation of the dollar (from the first episode), the overflowing of the Mapocho River in 1982 (second episode), the coverage of Independence Day festivities (third episode), or Christmas celebrations (sixth episode), cartoon programmes (fourth episode), and the events known as “first day of protests” on May 11th, 1983, from the last episode of this first season. Therefore, the use of archival material in each case tends to be primordially around said events.

A significant amount of archival footage shown during the first season are recordings of programs from Canal 13. The images that narrate the history of the television channel could be subdivided into three further categories: traditional Canal 13 programming, which fills the screen with TV celebrities (hosts, actors, and actresses). For example, primetime talk-shows – one conducted by Don Francisco, others which presented live music, cartoons like *Condorito* or *Marco* (Nipon Animation, Japan, 1976) animation based on the short novel *Marco, de los Apeninos a los Andes* (1886); soap operas like *Alguien por quien vivir* (Canal 13, 1982) and *Colorina* (Televisa, Mexico, 1980), also advertisements; the news with its main delivery *Teletrece* (1970–today); nationwide broadcasts from the Junta, and the Telethon (1978–today); *Sábado Gigante* (Canal 13, 1962–1992, it still continues today) – the 8-hour omnibus show –, among others. In other words, the history of television itself, particularly from Canal 13, the private corporation that hosted *Los 80*.

*La madrastra* (premiered in April 1981), was the first soap opera in colour that showed real places of the city within a fiction; *Alguien con quien vivir* (mentioned above) used the same technique, a model that *Los 80* would continue forty years later. These were also among the first national soap operas after many years during which Chilean actors rarely appeared on television as a result of the cancellation of programmes due to the dictatorship's censorship. There is even mention of the towers of the San Borja renovation where the soap opera *Torre 10* of the competitor's channel (TVN) will take place in 1984, and where Claudia (Loreto Aravena), the eldest of the Herreras, will live in the next season, also the starting point of the walking

tour. It is important to point out that almost every episode's final credits show images from Canal 13's history. Except for the season finale, for which the audience sent their own family photographs from the 80s. Showing how the credits segment was also watched by the audience, and they wanted to participate in the TV series.

As a way to illustrate that the archive utilized belonged exclusively to Canal 13,<sup>6</sup> *Los 80* features a full inclusion of the Catholic channel's milestones (second subcategory) from the letters in coloured bars at the beginning of the programming used to verify the broadcasting quality, to the introductions or the closing of the children's viewing time with Canal 13's angel cartoons, the mascots of the Television Corporation of Universidad Católica de Chile from 1972 to January 1999. This reinforces the origin of the archival material along with its programming.

The third sub-category is newsworthy contingency. For example, in the second episode, the archival footage narrates the aforementioned overflowing of the Mapocho River and the mudslide that flooded a large portion of Santiago, particularly Las Condes municipality. Journalists are shown interviewing authorities, or these are recorded during public appearances. In regard to prominent people, the dictator General Pinochet and people in other power positions are mainly featured, but there are also some opposition leaders such as student leaders. In these media stories, we can appreciate the military presence on television, as they were a constant presence in the screen, giving interviews and pronouncing speeches, this is further reinforced when soldiers from the Falklands War are presented during the first episode, as well as the welcome ceremony for the new generation of cadets of the Aviation School (9th episode). This material in particular, is used to generate a sequence that, for the first time, creates an interaction between the archival and dramatized material, when the Herrera family appears on their own TV after being "recorded" during the ceremony. Their shot mimics the archival footage shown on the television. Conversely, newsworthy events related with the horror of the dictatorship were not shown, not even highly mediatic ones, such as the murder of Tucapel Jiménez.<sup>7</sup>

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6 At least during this season, progressively the TV series will incorporate more archival material, as for example the use of films: *Gracia y el forastero* (1974, Sergio Riesenber), *100 niños esperando un tren* (1988, Ignacio Agüero), *El Husar de la muerte* (1925, Pedro Sienna). As well as the later inclusion of the *Teleanálisis* archive. Even more, Martín (Tomás Verdejo) will work as a cameraman at *Teleanálisis* (end of 4th season and 5th Season).

7 Tucapel Francisco Jiménez Alfaro was an important leader in Chilean national trade unionism. He was assassinated on 25 February 1982.



**Fig. 3:** The Herrera family watch themselves in their television during the celebration from the graduation from the Aviation School (9th episode).

What was shown on television during the dictatorship, as well as in *Los 80*, were the recordings of arrests of people protesting the regime. From a naive perspective of the present, we might think that the protests were not shown on television, but it seems that the desire to instil fear amongst potential demonstrators was more powerful than showing themselves as what they really were, an administration that controlled by means of fear and violence, as a terrorist dictatorship. This sociological concept utilized by Tomás Moulian,<sup>8</sup> describes a totalitarian regime in which the state holds direct, limitless, and unchecked power over people's bodies, utilizing cruelty as a control device against a society who largely oppose said regime. Once arrested, your body belongs to the regime beyond metaphor, in a literal sense. The basis for terror is no longer an abstract possibility, but a clear future. The fear that those images instil does not come only from the shown police brutality, but from what will happen to those people after the arrest. In this sense, it is more likely that these images were broadcast because, in the regime's eyes, what they show is nothing compared to what they hide. They allow these images to air, because by doing so, people realize that if the regime has no qualms showing police brutality on national television, then what they do in hiding, what they have done to those already missing, is unimaginable. The fourth and last clip was devoted to this subject.

Despite the importance of the footage from the television channel and its news department, the most common use of the archival footage is as contextualising images, which also belong to Canal 13 (probably from the news department as well as from the soap operas that had started recording the city for their shows), however, they show mundane situations, everyday activities, which do not stand out. They not only appear in the introduction to each episode, although this is when we can see most of them. A broader context is shown, including international events and politicians, such as Lady Di and Prince Charles, and Yasir Arafat, among others. This contextualizing archival footage also appears between sequences with little narrative unity, for instance, when we jump from one character to another, or

<sup>8</sup> Tomás Moulian. *Chile Actual. Anatomía de un mito*. Santiago: LOM, 2002.

when a period of time has passed. This use of b-roll to signpost passage of time may be seen in the morning of the next day from the final scene, and we can see the morning traffic, or it is now night-time, and the city lights are shown. In short, the material is used very similarly to the script's sequence headings, the descriptor describing time and space changes in a script.

Amongst these recordings, the most frequent ones are from downtown Santiago. Especially because this is where Juan and Exequiel work, Claudia demonstrates against the dictatorship, and Felix (Lucas Bolvarán) and his paternal grandfather go to the post office to send a letter to Santa Claus. In subsequent seasons, it will also be where Ana López (Tamara Acosta) and Nancy (Katty Kowaleczko) will work, and eventually, where Martín (Tomás Verdejo) will also work. In other words, despite the fact that Juan will change jobs in the following seasons and Claudia will no longer be in university or Chile, the city centre will remain relevant in the TV series, regardless of which character takes us there.

It is possible that so many images contextualise downtown Santiago because it belongs to every family in the city. Everyone needed to go there, as the main administrative and commercial hub, therefore it is also part of everyone who comes to the capital from other regions to visit or run errands. It would be recognisable, not like other neighbourhoods within the city. Perhaps this is the same reason why the neighbourhood where the Herreras live is not particularly recognisable, it looks like many middle-class neighbourhoods. This helps the local audience identify the city centre as their own, regardless of whether the neighbourhood where they grew up resembled the Herrera's neighbourhood or not.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the city centre, the archival footage rarely shows the civic neighbourhood (La Moneda government Palace or the Congress). Let us remember that the civil-military dictatorship did not operate from the house of government during this period but from the Diego Portales Building. In fact, the footage only shows us the eternal flame of liberty on the altar of the motherland,<sup>10</sup> installed by Pinochet, and lit on the anniversary of the Coup d'état in 1975. Conversely, the city centre appears mainly as a commercial hub. In even more detail, it is shown quite often in economic boom, to the detriment of the economic crisis experienced by the country at the time. Television recorded the discounts and thriving economy, probably to

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<sup>9</sup> The city centre also has neighbourhoods. For this reason, it might be good to specify silences and appearances around downtown Santiago. Pericentral neighbourhoods such as San Isidro, San Diego, and Yungay are not shown.

<sup>10</sup> Eternal Flame of Freedom was a ceremonial fire, part of the Altar de la Patria (Altar of the Motherland), located in front of La Moneda Palace in Santiago de Chile. It was lit on September 11, 1975, by Augusto Pinochet to commemorate the coup d'état. It was lit until October 18, 2004, when it was turned off for remodelling done within the context of the Bicentennial of Independence.

encourage consumption and mobilise resources during the recession. Two of the clips created for the walking tour dealt with this apparent contradiction: the economic crisis and the economic boom.

This season also offers some complex montages in which both the archival footage and the fiction are working as a narrative unit in the same scene. An example of this is the already mentioned sequence, when the Herreras see themselves at the ceremony welcoming Martín as a pilot, or when Claudia is arrested by the police in tenth episode, and edited into the archival footage by dressing the actress just like the young woman who was actually arrested during the dictatorship, rather than presenting the archival material through a tv with masking. There are the university students watching their friends being detained, who are once again real people arrested during the 1980s protests in downtown Santiago at board daylight.

## **Los 80 ‘historical senses’ within today’s city and audience**

After this analysis of the archival material from the first season of *Los 80*, we created different synthesis of the four main themes that were most often repeated within the archival material used in the TV series. For these clips, we included key scenes relating to these topics so that the visual summaries would allow the walking tour attendees to remember the TV series.<sup>11</sup> The first was one showcasing the channel’s history, then the economic crisis, economic boom, and the protest. As a second strategy, a walking tour<sup>12</sup> of the city centre was designed, stopping at strategic points that allowed us to watch the capsules, discuss the TV series, and reflect upon the historical meanings of fiction and the memories from the 12 tour attendees, regarding the dictatorship and the TV series itself.

These compendium clips were created by selecting the archival material organized in the research tool developed. As described previously, some of the acted scenes were included, signposting the diegesis of the TV series, so the tour attendees

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<sup>11</sup> I would like to thank Sebastián Úbeda, archival film curator at Cineteca Nacional, for his help with the montage of these clips.

<sup>12</sup> This tour is part of the transfer activities of the GUMELAB project, called “Travel of Dialogue, Remembering & travelling”, which aim to share scientific knowledge with society through the citizen science approach. In 2022, two dialogue tours took place in Chile and four in Colombia with different participants. Documentation of these activities is available on the GUMELAB YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYrASybHesU&t=66s>.

could remember the narrative context which occurred on each location. Let us remember that the first season was aired in 2008, when most of the attendees, who were university students, were around ten years old.

The history of the channel was summarized in a 9:32 clip. However, it was not shown during the walkabout, so we could have more time to hear from the attendees. The images that were included were the ones described in the previous section.

The economic crisis was edited into an 8:39 clip, based on the references from the first season to the economic crisis from 1982, year in which the TV series begins. This includes an excerpt of Pinochet touring the National Textiles factory – where Juan Herrera will work at the start of the TV series –, during the introduction of the first episode. It also includes the declarations of Pinochet not willing to devalue the peso. This is nevertheless confirmed through a National Web of Official Communication of the Government. It also includes a speech where he says that although he had previously said that the peso will not be devaluated, he did it anyways, thinking about the Chilean people. In this sense, the second episode soon includes the contradictions and lies with which the dictatorship managed public opinion. The clip further emphasised them.

The economic boom happening simultaneously to the economic crisis, was summed up in an 8:13 clip. It starts with people shopping, with the city centre streets full of pedestrians. As aforementioned, it includes an image of the Eternal Liberty Flame. It also includes records of the public transportation system, where people with and without shopping bags wait for the bus, or the buses driving through a busy street. The shopping images were mostly from Christmas and back to school sales, it includes images shown within the tv set, but most of them were non diegetic images. They also showed Juan Herrera getting hired in his new job with Don Farid (Benito Quercia). It is in the street where the store is, that the tour ended. These clips also showed the fountain in front of the San Francisco Church, where we did our second stop from the walking tour.

In relationship with the detentions and the violence from the dictatorship, the first season shows the historical violence early in the TV series, such as the arrest of Juan Herrera and the beating of Ezequiel, Claudia giving her opinion at the table and arguing with her family, the rats and the students, the words of Don Genaro, and the montages and lies of Pinochet. But the moment that can be understood as fiction, is precisely the recordings of the arrests during the demonstrations. With them a 9:43 clip was edited regarding the protest. Those are gruelling images, extremely violent, and sadly similar to the images of the police arresting demonstrators during the social outburst and even today.

## “Recordar y recorrer”, wander is to remember



**Fig. 4:** Route developed for the walking tour “Recordar y recorrer” (Remembering and travelling) based on the first season of *Los 80*.

With these clips ready, and tablets leant by the GUMELAB team, we met at Metro Universidad Católica, from there we walked towards the San Borja renovation, where Claudia, the eldest of the Herreras, will live in the next season. The renovation is also where Juan Herrera goes to look for work after National Textiles went bankrupt. This iconic place within the city was the starting point of the walking tour, as it is also in front of the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Centre (formerly called Diego Portales), where the dictatorship held government, as La Moneda needed to be refurbished after being bombed on the day of the Coup.



**Fig. 5:** Images from the walking tour: first in out meeting point, and then on the first stop.

From the renovation we walked towards the Books Square, where on 23 September 1973, with a great media display, the military gathered books taken from the neighbours of the San Borja Renovation and set them on fire in the middle of a public thoroughfare on Diagonal Paraguay street at the corner of Lira. Today there is a plaque remembering the event. Here, after watching the first clip (symbolized with a 📺 in the map presented above), we reflected upon the fact that the TV series only recalls the second decade of the dictatorship, rather than the first decade, which was much more cruel and violent. The attendees declared that it is after 1982 and the huge economic crisis, that protests start with more force and cohesion.

From here, we continued towards the main Avenue, Alameda (or Bernardo O'Higgins Avenue). We continue walking towards San Francisco Church, which appears constantly in the cuts from the show. Here we sat on the fountain and continue watching the second clip, related to the city centre as an economic hotspot. Here we also discussed how the TV series rarely shows the agents of the state, and how it is possible that when the TV series first aired, a broad amount of Chileans were not willing to see the oppression or torture on screen. Here, our attendees described how they also agree that the TV series was mainly about the interactions of the family and their friends, not so much about the dictatorship itself. One of them even identifies with Felix, considering what could be discussed at the dinner table, and what was not allowed. This is very interesting, because in the TV series Felix was around ten years old, the same age our attendees were when the TV series aired in 2008, more than 30 years later. The attendee says his father was like Juan Herrera, furthermore, he states that this helped him to feel connected with the characters and feel personally about the TV series. Myself, born in 1984 (as the youngest of the Herrera siblings, born during the second season), also identified with Felix when I first watched the TV series, and also found that Juan Herrera was very similar to my own father. The massive time gap between the represented period in the TV series, my experience, and the attendees' experiences, contrasted with the similarity of said experiences shows a level of stagnation in terms of our historical senses as a nation.



**Fig. 6:** Second stop of the walking tour, attendees talk about identification with the protagonists.

From this point on, we continued walking towards Universidad de Chile's Casa Central, when we arrived, we crossed the Alameda Avenue and continued to Paseo Ahumada, going by the mechanic stairs that were so many times shown in the introductory and contextualizing clips. We continued walking towards Bombero Ossa street, where there is a pedestrian street that connects with one of the multiple commercial galleries in downtown Santiago. At this point we viewed the clip of the protest. Here, the aforementioned clip of Claudia being detained, created with archival material and clever wardrobe choices allows for two further reflections upon the use of the archive.

First, how the TV series uses the archive, presenting some of the conclusion explored above. Secondly, how much it would cost to buy all this archives to make a TV series, which would render it unproducibile. Secondly how is it used. One of



the attendees said “The archival material tend to be forgotten, we are constantly making more images and we do not think about this incredible amount of archival”. To further explore this point the question of whether the real person who was detained in the archival footage of Claudia’s detention was alive or a disappeared detainee, or if she was tortured, or even more, could she recognize herself. Furthermore, it is very interesting that not only the journalists were recording these images, but the Channel was broadcasting them. The attendees agreed that this was a technique to place fear over the action, protest and rebellion, and that it worked, as an anti-protest culture was put into place – they add that this could still be perceived during the popular uprising from October 2019.

In this sense, the attendees’ comments seem to show how the TV series, and the summary clips, tend to be contrasted with situations from reality, our own families, our own present. They knew information about the period that was not in the TV series, such as the dictatorship having their headquarters in the Diego Portales building or the 1982 economic crisis. The reflection upon the archival material used, also allowed for a reflection about how we narrate the past, and this seems to be part of the historical senses of each period.



Fig. 7: Third and last stop of “Recorrier y recordar” tour.

## Conclusion

*Los 80* success comes at least in a part, from the use of archival images. This production, content and technical function analysis reveals how Canal 13 used its own archive as one of the fundamental pillars of nostalgia and, therefore, one of the keys to the success of the TV series. Their content may be characterised as contextualising for both spaces and times. It follows the logic of sequence headings, mainly by means of urban landscapes strongly centred around the business and administrative centre of the capital, as well as large concentrations of people that allow us to recognise the Chileans of this decade in any present. The material also includes the exhibition of programmes, interview sequences, tv shows scenes, and television events. These shows help create an aura of nostalgia around the TV series, which is strongly emphasized by elements of material culture (print media), as well

as within the *mise-en-scène*, both analysed in this article. Canal 13's programmes are highlighted, as well as the distinctive elements of the Catholic channel's corporation. Footage of events from newsworthy contingency are also of great relevance, informing the Herreras and contextualizing the audience through reports, newscasts, extras, and nationwide broadcasts. We believe that the images, as well as the songs, are mostly from that same year; nevertheless, this is not something we can prove, as we cannot corroborate this within Canal 13's archive. This extraordinary selection could be included in the TV series because the same channel is the owner of the material.

As an example, Nueva Imagen, a prominent audiovisual production company with a large archive, charges 100 dollars per minute of footage used, "which to them is only their property. To us, that testimony and those images seem to be part of the public domain, of the history of many Chileans".<sup>13</sup> However, if royalties had had to be paid to Canal 13 for all the archival footage used, the almost 30 minutes would have been unfeasible for a local production, particularly at a time before streaming platforms, where local productions were mostly restricted to local markets.

As Cherchi suggests in his aphorisms book, "Copyright control emerged from the intention to protect and promote creativity rights. Today, this noble concern has degenerated into an obscene legal device at the service of economic power. The owners of a film are usually its producers, although in some countries, the moral rights of other participants (such as directors, screenwriters, interpreters, camera operators, composers, etc.) are also recognised and protected, this being a prerogative that sometimes becomes hereditary and is passed to families and heirs".<sup>14</sup> Therefore, *Los 80*, was an economically viable TV series, because the same channel owned the rights of those images from the real 1980s. A private corporation own the images of our past, and manage them at their own discretion.

Maybe due to the lack of images available from the past, although most probably because of the veil of silence that ruled the subject of the dictatorship and its violence during, and almost until the explosion of TV series developed during the Bicentennial of Independence commemoration (almost 20 years after the return to democracy), it is possible to perceive stagnation in terms of our historical senses as a nation, when three different generations feel and identify with a fictional family from the dictatorship period, with those fears and that freedom. It can be argued that having the audience empathise with the characters and way of life of a period piece is a hallmark of success for the TV series. To have the audience move from mere nostalgia to identification of a society from 30 years ago surely speaks of the

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13 Sergio Lago. *El futuro de Chile*, CHV, 20 March 2000. <https://youtu.be/wjuW9SsDGVs>.

14 Paolo Cherchi. *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory*, 125 (Barcelona: Laertes, 2005).

quality of the production. From hair, to wardrobe, to set design, all the way through to colouring and dialogue creation, everything must speak of the era represented for this level of identification to succeed. However, in this case, the argument for political stasis is undeniable. It is easy to recreate what you know, what you live through now, far simpler than it is to recreate what you remember, what an entire society remembers. What we heard most often from attendees was not “I used to have that cup”, or “my uncle said they had the same TV at home” (although those kinds of comments did arise). What was most relevant for attendees, and what was the point of identification for them, is how the perception of political interaction does not seem to have evolved, or even shifted, over 30 the last years.

The archival material and the prominent feature of the television set within the Herrera household, as part of those elements that represent a great hit of the TV series, in technical and aesthetic terms, do show an accurate image of the dictatorship. Owning a tv was understood as progress, in spite the quality of the programmes shown. The television held some sort of power over the period, for example, Ana, the mother, tells their children in the second episode: “One more fight and you are grounded without television.” Or in the first episode, when after the news of the economic problems Textiles Nacionales, was facing, a fight begins at the dinner table regarding whether they would have to return the tv or not. “What do you care, you only watch nonsense. At least I become informed”. Claudia says to her brother Martín. Television is a means of entertainment and distraction, and as such, the archival material acts as an eloquent illustration of how the dictatorship managed to hold on to power, by creating a powerful mix of establishing the myth of a growing economy, providing distraction through entertainment, and mixing it with the exact amount of fear to cement control through terror.

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June Carolyn Erlick

## Epilogue

Many a year ago in Bogotá, Colombia, at Christmas time, when kids get to stay up late, I was waiting with my host family to watch a documentary on the Palace of Justice, the 1985 conflagration that took the lives of most of the Supreme Court justices and many civilians when the Army stormed the palace following a guerrilla takeover.

All the other adults had gone to the kitchen, so I started to explain the history to 11-year-old Santiago. He protested, “You don’t need to explain it to me. I saw it all on ‘Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal’ (Pablo Escobar, the Druglord).”

That exchange was the first vivid recollection I have of how memory images work. It’s a concept proposed by GUMELAB, the Berlin-based interdisciplinary laboratory that inspired and organized this book; its acronym in German stands for History Transfer Through Entertainment Media in Latin America. Laboratory for Memory and Digital Media Research. The idea of memory images is that images not only transmit information – what I intended to convey to Santiago – but in their capacity as a memory medium, they also function as memory triggers. Santiago hadn’t been exposed to the history in his grade-school classroom, but he felt he knew the history because the telenovela (narconovela) had created a memory for him. And it was not a memory for him alone, but a collective memory for all those who had watched the telenovela and even those who hadn’t watched it but shared what was happening in the program with friends and colleagues. There might be different points of view or reactions to the series, but the mutual experience created something new – an interaction with history that had not previously existed.

I came to telenovelas through lived experience. As a foreign correspondent, I resided and worked for 14 years in Latin America, mostly in Colombia and Nicaragua. Telenovelas – as they do for many Latin Americans of all generations – punctuated my daily life. They were something you watched and discussed. When I was covering the war in Nicaragua in the 1980s, I became addicted to watching *El Derecho de Nacer* (the Right to Life), a 1981 Mexican update of a 1952 Cuban telenovela. It didn’t take me long to realize the whole country was watching and talking about the same program. In the country’s polarized society, only the telenovelas seemed to cut through both class and political barriers. Like many telenovelas, the

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story is one of social mobility and mistaken identities, in which an illegitimate baby from a wealthy family is rescued by a Black domestic servant and grows up to be a successful doctor.

I decided to write an article about my interactions with people from across the political spectrum as they discussed their views of the show. I found that beyond a distraction from a grinding war, the series was providing identity and unity, a collective experience – even if the interpretation of the telenovela was different. Some found the Black maid, Mama Dolores, to be a symbol of the “poor people who made the revolution,” while others saw the series as an endorsement of bourgeois values and capitalist upward mobility, in essence, anti-Sandinista.

These experiences watching and thinking about telenovelas eventually led to my book, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context* (Routledge, 2018). By the time I wrote the book, I was convinced that these television programs were an instrument for social change and the construction of collective memory. I learned how the broadcasting of *Botineros*, a telenovela about two soccer players who fell in love, led to the approval of gay marriage in Argentina. I discovered how even though telenovelas frequently tap into the Cinderella archetype, they are also strong vehicles for female protagonists and provide their characters with forceful (although sometimes unrecognized) agency. I traced how telenovelas that deliberately set out to stimulate social change actually accomplished that in Mexico with declining birth rates and increased literacy rates.

This volume you are holding in your hand or reading on a screen takes my observations one step further. It grounds the research on telenovelas and television series about memory with a plethora of techniques, worthy of the name of a laboratory, ranging from focus groups to computational data to semiotic analysis to ethnographic work. The activities described by the book’s authors in its various articles often build on the act of viewing through memory walks and discussion groups. Telenovelas and television series are not just something to be consumed and left aside. They create and they develop.

As Mónica Contreras Saiz, the project leader of GUMELAB, points out in her opening article, both these activities and blogs, Instagram, Facebook and the instant message application Telegram extend the life of these telenovelas and their impact on community conversation in the formation of collective memory.

The book focuses on telenovelas and series of memory although, I would argue, that all telenovelas are in a sense about memory, the elaboration of a past with a look towards the future. But defining telenovelas and series in a more conventional sense about memory, Contreras Saiz offers us some helpful categories about how to look at these entertainment products that transform recent political history into melodrama with a heady mix of action, suspense, thriller and comedy. Looking at 80 telenovelas and series of memory from 12 different countries, she identifies

dictatorships, drug trafficking, revolutionary movements, violent political conflicts, political figures and specific historical events in recent history as the predominant topics.

Telenovelas, as I've found in my own research, ignite the public imagination. Fiction, Contreras Saiz notes, provides a strategic way to build memory and transmit history precisely because of that emotional identification. The thirteen authors in this volume make a forceful argument for the effectiveness of that strategy and provide a road map for how that has been accomplished in contemporary telenovelas and television series.

In "Historical Walkabout, Returning the Archival Records Used in *Los 80s* Series to the Streets of Santiago," historian Claudia Bossay, who works in the Faculty of Communication and Image at the University of Chile, makes transparent the process of archival investigation in preparation for a television series that deals with memory.

She takes an in-depth look at how archival material featured in the series *Los 80s* (Channel 13, Wood Producciones, 2008–2014), is located and developed. The article is an outgrowth of the analysis developed for the Spanish Nucleus of Investigation of Television and Society (NITS) (from the Spanish Núcleo de Investigación de TV y Sociedad) and for the GUMELAB interdisciplinary research project. Bossay identifies two types of archives we often take for granted when we're watching a television series or a telenovela. We don't think about the process of finding moving images and sound archives, which are often the glue that moves the action along. The archival footage, in Bossay's words, becomes "one of the most eloquent and novel expressive elements of the show."

Just as places in a fictional work create real physical points of reference (I think about the boom in tourism Colombia's coffee axis after the telenovela *Café con Aroma de Mujer* (Coffee with a Woman's Scent), the analysis led to a route through downtown Santiago emerged: "Remembering and travelling" encouraging tour participants to reflect on the historical meanings presented by the series. However, unlike *Café's* organic tourism boom, the downtown route was a deliberate creation. It thrust the series into the future, allowing walkers to compare their own family experiences from the Chilean dictatorship.

Bossay is eloquent about the role of these archival materials in informing both the television series itself and the subsequent walking tour; "Television is a means of entertainment and distraction, and as such, the archival material acts as an eloquent illustration of how the dictatorship managed to hold on to power, by creating a powerful mix of establishing the myth of a growing economy, providing distraction through entertainment, and mixing it with the exact amount of fear to cement control through terror."

This carefully crafted article, the result of exhaustive analysis, also provides us with a mirror with which to view other series and telenovelas, a way of looking

at these creations of historical fictions through the lens of archival use of clips and music to engage the viewer.

Throughout this book, it's fascinating to observe how different articles can illuminate vastly distinct perspectives on the same television series. It's not that the articles are contradictory in any way; rather it's that the spotlight is aimed at a different aspect of the creation and reception of a series (or telenovela).

For example, in "Everyday audience and violence: social functions of television in audiovisual historical fiction *Los 80: más que una moda* (Canal 13, 2008–2014), Juan Pablo Sánchez Sepúlveda, a political scientist who is a journalism professor at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile, takes a rigorous, in-depth look at the role of television in viewers' daily experience and the perception of the contextual violence of the Pinochet regime.

While quite different from the memory focus of historian Claudia Bossay's article, this article also relies heavily on the archival content of the series – how violence is represented it – while engaging with a theoretical framework to look at the underpinnings of the series. For example, Sánchez Sepúlveda keeps a "diary of reception" in which he notes down scenes in which the family is watching a newsreel on television that depicts political violence (often used by the Pinochet government as a supposed deterrent to dissidents) or some economic challenge. Thus, he can more easily document the role in which these television broadcasts play in the series' plot development. "There is a symbiotic process between television and society, since television organizes or gives form" to events, Sánchez Sepúlveda tells us.

Among his many and deeply researched points, he looks at the role of television as "a type of social mobilizer." But at the same time, as shown in this television series, the device can serve to impose an agenda: "Or, at least, what the channel proposes as the media and political agenda of the moment," he explains. "In this form, the themes that are relevant (worries) for society are the heavy rains, the economic prices, but, at no time, violence or the dictatorial context."

What is exceptional about this article is not only its incisive look at content, but the investigation and reflection of the nature of the television itself: "In each of these cases, television performs a more complex role than the simple exposition and transmission of images in movement," he observes. "Everything changes because the television enters daily life and relates to the characters in their daily routines, with their emotions, desires and fears associated with the context."

I couldn't help but think that Sánchez Sepúlveda has also given us the tools for an analysis of our own reactions to *Los 80: más que una moda*. As we watch the series, with our own particular knowledge about the Pinochet era, what emotions does it awaken? How does it become a part of our daily routine and combine or



conflict with the news we are hearing about current day events? Does it mobilize us or merely become contained in the square box of the television?

“Memorias de una Década a Través de los 80: Vida cotidiana, discurso televisivo y democracia de baja intensidad” (Memories of a Decade through *los 80*: Daily Life, Television Discourse and Low- Intensity Democracy” by Lorena Antezana Barrios, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Communication and Image of the University of Chile, and Eduardo Santa Cruz, Professor at the Faculty of Communication and Image of the University of Chile, gives us yet another perspective on this television series, one of the most popular in Chilean history, one that is highly political in its criticism of neoliberalism and “pacted democracy.”

The article effectively puts into context the fact that when the series debuted, the topic of the dictatorship had never been brought up openly on television “in keeping with the climate of the era, with the so-called “transition to democracy,” the authors note. Thus, the series becomes a way of interpreting not only those events relegated to the past, but the processes and values the viewers have come to take for granted.

Throughout the series, the political stance evolves, as the individual family members portrayed in the series confront a series of events, including Chile’s economic crisis and political unrest. Yet, while focused on the individuality of the family, the series is implicitly – and sometimes overtly – examining what it means to be Chilean. In that process, the market economy and representative liberal democracy – agreed-upon transition to democracy – become major players.

This article complements the others that examine *Los 80* in the sense that it provides a historical, cultural framework in which the values of the series can be more readily perceived – almost like a historical melodrama that is prone to reinforce the values of the time. One thinks of the many biopics that reinforce patriotism and cultural identification with the past. In this case, it is clear from the series – and its manifold interpretations – that the past (of the dictatorship) is over, although it must be remembered, and the present/future is being forged. Although Antezana and Santa Cruz voice criticisms of that future, the article is highly effective in analyzing how those values are being transmitted.

Another article that examines the television series *Los 80*, as well as the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, looks at the dictatorships of each of the those countries from the perspective of typical families with whom the viewer can identify. The depiction of these families provides a bridge between the collective traumas of the past and the lived experience of the current day through the prism of history. In “Family-iarizing with dictatorship – memory and mediation of the collective trauma of dictatorship through the family in two television series of the Southern Cone,” (Family-iarizing with dictatorship through the family in two television series of the Southern Cone,” Karen Genschow, a professor of Romance Languages at Goethe

University in Frankfurt, analyzes how the family narrative in the two programs connects closely with the image of the family promoted by each of the dictatorships, which shared similar ideological foundations and actions.

Like Sánchez and Bossay, she acknowledges the key role played by the archival material in moving the series forward: “The series and its appropriation of the audiovisual archive produce, in this particular case, a difference between ‘us now’ and ‘them then’ and at the same time convey surreptitiously a reflection on the function of the media which, by representing a biased version of reality and excluding repression, terror and violence, did not fulfil its genuine function of informing.”

But at the same time, she emphasizes another real – the emotional, affective impact of following a family through a certain point of time and identifying with it, despite knowing more about the time period than the families in Chile and Argentina actually do. In the Argentine series, Genshow explains, the politics of the day are transparent, involving both disappearances and an armed resistance plot, as well as an “appropriated” child – stolen from dissidents by a military man for his sister.

Much of what is going on in both series, she asserts, takes place around the dining room table, where the viewer gets the chance to look back on history. In a reference to Svetlana Boym, she refers to an interesting distinction between restorative nostalgia, which protects the absolute truth, and reflective nostalgia, which calls it into doubt.

Yet the nostalgia evoked by the Argentine series is also thrust into the future with an educational focus. Like the Chilean memory tour discussed in Bossay’s article, viewers are led along a path of historical discovery. But while the walk in Santiago was created years after the series was first shown, *Cuéntame* was accompanied by a weekly interview program with historians, journalists and others who discussed in an informal conversation the historical veracity of the series.

Watching a television series rooted in memory, as the analyses of *Los 80: más que una moda* (and well as the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*) show, is a veritable archaeological perusal of many layers of history and their perception. The archival material constitutes the found objects, what is unearthed, giving the series veracity and heft. But the found objects acquire their meaning from two different time spectrums, how they were viewed by contemporaries and, in turn, how the viewer of today perceives them. And in both the Chilean and Argentine case, as these authors tell us, there is a different and deliberate addition of a layer of meaning through overt historical context, whether it be the Chilean walking tour or the informational conversations following the Argentine series.

In “Framing the Dictatorship: Uncovering Correlations of Archetypes in Chilean TV Series using Digital History,” Holle Meding of the Freie Universität Berlin take an incisive look at how Latin American dictatorships and autocracies are depicted in

historical television series, in particular examining how this relatively new genre relies on and creates character archetypes.

As Meding observes, television series about the military dictatorship are gaining special prominence in the Chilean case. The popularity of *Los 80* – the first of its type in Chile – let television producers understand that series focusing on the dictatorship could indeed find a wide audience. Chile now ranks among the leaders in the production of historical television fiction in Latin America, and many of these series deal with the dictatorship.

Meding uses an unusual and innovative methodology to help us understand how archetypes function within these stories and how their interactions and pairing contribute to the construction of public memory. She looked at 16 different series though the method of computational analysis to locate key words. It wasn't easy: there are often layers of gradations between hero(ine) and villain, and series sometimes involve the transformation of protagonists from one archetype to another.

The identification of these archetypes is important to understand and further the creation of public memory, of public history. Often, the years of the military dictatorship aren't taught in schools or are glossed over in just a few lessons. Television and, to some extent, film and documentaries brings the theme into the spotlight, creating discussion, polarization and knowledge through their broadcasts.

To measure and quantify these relational archetypes through statistics is to enable a deeper understanding, combined with the other qualitative and quantitative research represented in this book, of how the events of the past are remembered in the presence through historical fiction and the ensuing emergence into the collective memory.

The distinct articles on *Los 80* – including Meding's, which stretches out to other series about the Chilean dictatorship, and Genshow's, which also deals with the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* – have a virtually symphonic relationship with each other, using different instruments and tonalities to work together toward an understanding of the role of historical fiction in the creation of public memory in the recreation of the past.

In Brazil also, historical fiction series were used to explain and confront dictatorial pasts. In *O bem-amado, carnavalizando a cultura política brasileira e enfrentando a ditadura*, Roberto Abdala, a history professor at the Universidade Federal de Goiás in Brazil, uses the technique of semiotics to understand how *O bem-amado* operates on many different levels.

Unlike the Chilean productions (and the Argentine *Cuéntame cómo pasó*), *O bem-amado*, the first Brazilian telenovela in color, was shown during the civil-military dictatorship and not years later. Although the Southern Cone productions make use of levity in moments during the series, *O bem-amado* uses humor as a predominant technique.

Abdala uses classic hermeneutic techniques – the interpretation of language – to understand how the telenovela forms political criticism through humor. His research finds that the impact of this telenovela has been long lasting; its use of satire and acidly critical (carnivalized) depiction of Brazilian political culture and corruption have remained a critical reference to harmful political practices over time.

Like the memory walk of *Los 80* and the post-show dialogues of the Argentine series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, the added value of this telenovela in historical context is that it has become a virtual roadmap of collective memory for not only the dictatorship, but all corrupt political practices.

Moving north to Colombia, Carolina Galindo, an associate professor at the Universidad de Rosario in Bogotá, looks at the representations of the Colombian Army through the two series, “Dos décadas. Dos momentos de una institución: el Ejército Nacional de Colombia en *Hombres de Honor* y *La Niña*.”

The first is a series from 1995, while the second aired during the peace negotiations with the guerrilla in Havana, Cuba. Galindo used analytics of YouTube comments, as well as a qualitative view of some of the episodes. She is careful to depict the historic context in each case. For example, she explains how the series *Hombres de Honor* (Men of Honor) had been preceded by military public relations campaigns, including recording pro-military songs in different popular rhythms and even creating a circus.

The 1995 television series originated with some pilot programs produced by the military, and then adapted by the private Caracol Television. It was an unexpected success, loosely using elements from the U.S. comedy series *M\*A\*S\*H\** and the drama *Tour of Duty*, which create historical fiction around the military and wartime service. With the help of the Army for logistics, the series took the viewer around geographically diverse regions of the country and exposed them to ordinary people that were not commonly seen on television. The soldiers are heroes; good defeats evil.

Twenty years later, in a much different context, *La Niña* (The Girl) tells the story of Belky Bustamante, an adolescent recruited by the guerrilla as a girl, who is reincorporating into society after the signing of the peace accords. She focuses on validating her studies in the hopes of pursuing a career as a medical student. The series is a cry for reconciliation, and although Belky had been a victim of torture and sexual abuse by an army colonel, this abuse is not construed in the series as an attack against the institution. Indeed, one of the series’ “good guys” is Colonel Javier Alzate, who embodies the soldier with democratic values and moral commitment. Thus, Galindo tells us, two sides of the Army are represented in *La Niña* – the rotten apple and the “citizen in uniform.”

Galindo directly asks a question that is a strong but implicit undercurrent in the Chilean and Argentine series discussed above: what is the impact of these images of the Army on two generations of Colombians? With her examination of YouTube comments, she finds that although there is some scattered criticism of the presentation of the Army, the first series was both an effective recruiting tool and a badge of pride for the institution. Comments about *La Niña* were more mixed, representing the polarization of the country around the peace accords. Yet the hope is that the latter series – presenting an experience most Colombians have not been exposed to – can be a bridge to political formation in favor of peace.

In her article, “Through the eyes of a child: Caracol’s attempt to challenge guerrilla representations in *La Niña*,” Franziska Englert also takes a close look at this Colombian production, arguing that the figure of Belky was actually designed as a character to evoke sympathy for excombatants. Like many of the telenovelas and series discussed in this volumen, *La Niña* has an afterlife – an instrument to guide societal change through the creation of empathy at a time the country was involved in a peace process.

Englert drew on extensive interviews with those involved in the production of the series. She also relied on focus groups, which indicated – as Galindo also suggests – that the series teaches viewers to understand nuance and prepares them for the upcoming reinsertion of former guerrillas into the society.

In other words, like the walking tours and post-presentation discussions of the Chilean and Argentine series, these Colombian series are a call to action of a very different kind, a vote for peace and reconciliation.

Exploring two quite different Colombian novelas involving the 1990s war against drugs, *En la boca del lobo* (2014) and *Bloque de Búsqueda* (2016), Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed, professor at the Universidad Externado de Colombia, and Edward Goyeneche-Gómez, associate professor at the Universidad de La Sabana, examine the depiction of state institutions and how their representation leads to debate among the viewers.

As Uribe and Goyeneche-Gómez observe, these telenovelas and series contribute in a very basic way to the creation of a public sphere, one in which there is recognition of corruption in state institutions instead of a simple pitting of the “good” against the “bad” drugtraffickers, for instance. Strong story devices – as we have seen over and over again in the Chilean and Argentine examples – attract the view through the narrative as a way to more useful for prompt discussion of contemporary issues.

In Colombia, the shift to stories centering around the drug traffic escalated in the 2000s, according to the authors. These stories shape the way Colombians – and other viewers – become conscious about recent history, creating a collective memory through the narrative of human interactions. The portrayed events

stimulate dialogue among viewers, who use their own judgements to make sense of the action and, hence, their own recent reality. These conversations may take place among the family, friends and neighbors or in the cyberspace constructs of Twitter/X, Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

Most Colombians experienced the drug wars in very specific contexts, whether in a big city, a marijuana- or coca-producing región, small village, whether poor, middle- or upper-class. The narconovelas take away the specificity of individual experience and allow the viewers through the construction of characters and stories to get the sense of the collective that spans geographic and class divides, as the authors observe.

Like the other Colombian narratives discussed earlier, as well as the Chilean and Argentine cases, *En la boca del lobo* and *Bloque de Búsqueda* use archival material and footage to create a sense of reality. Yet, the programs also broadcast a disclaimer, stressing that the representation of the Army and policía is not intended to tarnish the institutions' image. It is an in-between area between history and fiction, one that is effective in bringing contemporary issues to the forefront, especially that of a weak institutional state.

Continuing the theme of creation of collective memory, Hannah Müsseman eloquently explores the way series and telenovelas have dealt with the 1985 conflagration of the Palace of Justice: “‘Aquel Palacio en Llamas’ – Licencias narrativas para explicar lo inexplicable; La representación de la Toma y la Retoma del Palacio de Justicia en telenovelas y series sobre la historia colombiana.” (“That Palace in Flames’ – Narrative licenses to explain the unexplainable; the representation of the taking and retaking of the Palace of Justice in telenovelas and series about Colombian history).

As my initial anecdote about the Colombian boy who understood *Pablo Escobar: Patrón del Mal* to convey the literal history of the Palace of Justice tragedy, television fiction – both telenovelas and narconovelas – provides a historical framework for many Colombians, many of whom, like Santiago, had not been born when the events took place.

Müsseman quotes George Mason historian Alison Landsberg to explain that memory does not have to be something one personally remembers, but a construct, whether provided by television, film, books or family recollections. It can be closely connected to the trauma of a society. Like the Chilean telenovelas with their extensive use of archival material, the Colombian series dealing with the Palace of Justice use real names – or names close enough to be recognized – as well as footage.

She spells out in a clear way many of the tendencies implicit in previous examinations of what's behind the creation of this collective memory. First of all, she notes, is the act of teaching about a historical event. The other Colombian series discussed in this volumen are very much involved in the process of teaching. As

we read earlier, for example, *La Niña* was the vehicle through which Colombians learned of the challenges of reintegrating into the society. It was the path through which many Colombians learned that those who had belonged to the guerrilla forces were not inherently “bad”. Similarly, *Los 80*, especially for those who had not lived through the dictatorship, was a mirror – complete with archival footage – through which Chileans could come to terms with the dictatorship.

Müssemann also point out that the aim of these memory series is to provide counter-narrative to what people may have learned or assumed about a particular historical period. And, of course, she adds, the purpose is to entertain. To illustrate, she takes a close look at three programs that depicted the historical event: *Pablo Escobar, el patrón del mal*, *El General Naranjo* and *Narcos*. She carefully lays out what is known and not known about the actual events at the Palace of Justice, and how the series cement the collective memory of the unproven connection between the guerrilla group M-19 and Pablo Escobar.

In an intriguing followup to the comparison of accurate and inaccurate information in the three programs, Müssemann uses Twitter (now X) as a basis of study to determine how the Palace of Justice scenes in each of the programs impacted the viewers. As she concludes, no telenovela or series can replace justice or the search for the truth about the traumatic events of November 6 and 7, 1985. Nevertheless, like the Chilean memory walk, they represent a way of thrusting the issue into the future – in the hopes that some viewers may be inspired to carry the quest forward to obtain justice for the victims.

Tatjana Louis of the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá takes us into a different terrain, that of the classroom. In “Telenovelas of memory: A didactic experience,” she tells of her experience providing her students with a theoretical analysis – like many of the authors have done in this volume – and then having them analyze and react to telenovelas focusing on recent Colombian history. The students explored their own reactions and perceptions, as well as the contents of the telenovelas, leading to an understanding of how the medium presents history in many different ways. Like many of the other authors – and as her students learn – collective memory depends on the media.

Two of the series in her course – *Pablo Escobar, El patrón del mal* and *La Niña* – have been discussed by other authors in this book, but she also chooses a third program, *Tres Caínes*, which relates story of the founders of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. With ample direct quotes from the students, the analysis becomes vibrant, a real-life reaction to the issues of collective memory and historical representation. Unlike *Los 80* and other Chilean and Argentine series in which students watching the shows would have to rely on history books or other media representations, students in this class could draw on recent family history or media coverage of the reinsertion process, for example. Telenovelas, students

found, relay information perceived as knowledge and, in return, personal experience shapes the reception of this knowledge and the way in which it passes into collective memory.

At first, Omar Rincón's compelling essay, "Ensayo: Narrar al narco-capitalismo pop" (Essay: To Narrate Pop Narco-Capitalism), seems to be an outlier in this volume that concentrates on collective memory. Looking at books, music, films and telenovelas, he dissects the evolution of a narco-culture – the narco as a superhero of capitalism with a particular aesthetic style and way of life that makes viewers/readers/listeners yearn for that way of life.

It's not an outlier at all. Rincón, who is a professor of media, culture and entertainment at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, skillfully shows how the narconovelas and other media are reflecting and at the same time creating a culture that values money above all, that translates an aesthetic into a goal. In other words, it is creating a collective memory and then converting it into action, which is precisely what most every telenovela discussed in this volume has done. It's a different perspective – not the disappeared or the insurgents or corrupt politicians – but a skillful evocation of another type of public sphere that has shaped and is shaping Latin America.

In this eclectic, powerful volume, the authors are reckoning with the past and its relationship to the rendering of history in the construction of the future. The telenovela and television series on memory are an essential guide to that journey, and the variety of analyses here is a valuable contribution along that path.



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