

BETWEEN FICTION AND PASSION. TWO CENTURIES OF MEXICAN HISTORY THROUGH THE TELENОВОLA*

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ABSTRACT

Rethinking the practice of historiography through certain productions, whether on the big or small screen, has become a topic of common interest in the academic field. In this sense, this article aims to study a particular period of Mexican history, from the mid-18th century to the first decades of the 20th century, through a specific television genre: the telenovela, a product that, incidentally, has gradually become one of the most consumed audiovisual products in Latin America.

Keywords: Telenovela, México, History.

ENTRE LA FICCIÓN Y LA PASIÓN. DOS SIGLOS DE HISTORIA MEXICANA A TRAVÉS DE LA TELENОВОLA

RESUMEN

Repensar la práctica de la historiografía a través de determinadas producciones, ya sea en pantalla grande o pequeña, ha ido convirtiéndose en un tema de interés común en el ámbito académico. A partir de este planteamiento, el presente artículo tiene como objeto el estudio de un período concreto de la historia mexicana, comprendido entre mediados del siglo XVIII a las primeras décadas del siglo XX, a través de un género televisivo determinado: la telenovela, un producto que se ha convertido en uno de los resultados audiovisuales más consumidos en América Latina.

Palabras clave: Telenovela, México, Historia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of history in the audiovisual media is not a novelty. The representation of historiography through this format has been proposing the viewer, for decades, a new way of immersing themselves in past eras. The

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link between audiovisual productions and History was already investigated in depth by Marc Ferro¹, arguing that cinema was a feasible tool to be analyzed as a source of this discipline, and as such, viable in its teaching². Starting from this idea, and following the approach of Charlois Allende³, rethinking the practice of historiography, not only through cinema, but also through the television format, has become a topic of common interest, “understanding that the presence of historical discourse on television is something recurrent”, giving rise to “different academics, both from history and from communication, who have set the theme of their investigations in this narrative crossover” (Charlois, 2011: 131).

Precisely, at this point we place the start of this study; we propose a journey through Mexican history through a certain television genre: the telenovela. We will address the issue by drawing up a general outline on the origin and development of the telenovela industry in Mexico; and, in a second part, we will focus attention on the appearance of the historical subgenre and period piece genre raised in this type of productions, referring to a specific period of the history of Mexico and the telenovelas that have inspired its plot between the mid-eighteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, approximately 1940.

2. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TELENOVELA IN MEXICO

In reference to the origin of this genre, its first backgrounds are found in the English sentimental novel of the eighteenth century⁴, whose development

- 1 We refer among other publications of the author: Ferro, M.: *El cine, una visión de la Historia*. Akal, 2008, 168 págs; “Perspectivas en torno a las relaciones Historia- Cine, *Film- Historia*, vol. 1, # 1, 1991, pp.3-12; “La Historia en el Cine”, Fondo Aleph, Virtual Library of Social Sciences, 2005, pp.3-10.
- 2 Ferro, M., *Cinema and History*, Detroit, Wayne University Press, 1986, 29-31 p. Vid. in: Gabriela Jonas Aharoni, “Telenovelas de época y cine: la intertextualidad como herramienta que construye segmentos de la memoria histórica argentina (1984-2004)”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [Online], Online since 11 July 2012, connection on 16 September 2016. To complete the idea, we will point out that: “cinema is an auxiliary source to the extent that it is considered that through the historical reading of a film, whether it is documentaries, newsreels or fiction films, we can be carry out a counter-analysis of the society that produces it”.
- 3 Charlois Allende, A. J.: “De la historia de la telenovela a la telenovela histórica. Las características del formato de la telenovela a través del desarrollo de la industria televisiva”. *Folios*, Journal of the Faculty of Communications of the University of Antioquia. # 26, 2011, p.s.129- 150.
- 4 León Valdez, R.: “La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social “. *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, p.s.123-147. The author points out as precursors of the sentimental novel the writings of Samuel Richardson and his work *Pamela*, in 1740; Juan Jacobo Rousseau and *La Nueva Eloisa* in 1761; Laurence Sterne with *Sentimental Journey*; or *Pablo y Virginia*, de

was part of the Romantic Movement where the high emotional content presented by its plots prevailed⁵. Also, in the nineteenth century, the marked sentimental trend and its “deliberate attraction to cause readers to cry” (León, 2014:126). As a “complement” to this sentimental novel, we must point out the initiative on the part of newspapers, in countries such as France, England or the United States, to publish some of these stories in magazines, gazettes and newspapers⁶, broken down into chapters⁷. However, the most direct background of the telenovela, as we know it today, was the radio soap opera, which emerged in 1926 in the United States in the heat of the growing radio industry. It was then that different manufacturers’ firms, through advertising agencies, began to sponsor this type of program (Barrón, 2009: 79). The patrons of these radio broadcasts were mostly engaged in the manufacture of soaps and cleaning products for housewives who listened to the radio while performing household chores. This is how well-known brands (Colgate Palmolive, Peet, etc.) became interested in the initiative, giving rise to the term Soap Opera, to name this type of melodramatic radio program⁸ that, under the “protection of soap”, would end up moving to the television format with the same name⁹.

In Mexico, the first radio soap operas began to be heard in the late thirties¹⁰, reaching a large number of listeners with stories such as *El derecho de*

Bernardino de Saint- Pierre in 1788.

- 5 It was a melodrama that basically consisted of having a protagonist, an antagonist and an hindered love that finally emerges victorious. Reyes de la Maza, L.: *Crónica de la telenovela I: México Sentimental*. México, Editorial Clío, 1999, p. 10. Vid. in: Barrón Domínguez, L.: *Mexican Telenovela Industry: process of communication, documentation and commercialization*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2009, p. 78
- 6 Ibidem, p. 127. “The stories that addressed this genre showed heroines who lived situations of romance, action, drama, and suspense where the highlight was a scene of intrigue that kept the reader in a state of expectation to know what the outcome would be”.
- 7 Barrón Domínguez, L.: *La industria de la telenovela mexicana: procesos de comunicación, documentación y comercialización*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2009, p.s. 78-79.
- 8 They also acted as sponsors representing brands of cereals, beverages or medicines, as the radio soap opera became an effective method to promote their products. León Valdez, R.: “La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social”. *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, p. 127.
- 9 At first, the initiative to transfer these stories to the audiovisual format did not arouse great interest among the producers, since it was thought that for most of the listeners (mainly women), the novelty would not be well received. The explanation was simple: the radio could be part of the daily activities of housewives, that is, listening to the radio soap operas while performing daily tasks did not suppose any kind of distraction; however, the new soap opera format required momentarily abandoning domestic activities. However, the first incursion of the radio novel into the audiovisual field was carried out in the United States in 1950, with the television melodrama entitled: *The First Hundred Years*, obtaining an audience ranking that reached almost four million viewers. Ibid., p. 128.
- 10 Following the idea of Martín Barbero, we will point out that the aforementioned “newspaper novel or saga” typical of the nineteenth century, was introduced in Cuba through the readings that were made in the tobacco factories while the workers carried out their work. Apparently, from there the model

nacer (Right to be born) (1938) or *Anita de Montemar* (1941)¹¹. However, in the mid-twentieth century, the splendor of radio soap operas began to decline due to the arrival of television, and with it the takeoff of the audiovisual representation of this genre.

The initial stage of the Mexican telenovela begins with the appearance of the national television industry from the fifties¹², beginning to emerge and shape in the 60s through the so-called "teleteatro", where we not only find the adaptation of classic authors works translated into Spanish, but also the conversion of the old radio soap operas to the television format. The aforementioned radio soap opera *Anita de Montemar* of 1941, is transferred to the small screen in 1967 with the same title; the same goes for stories such as *La Mentira*, whose radio version premiered in 1952 and its television namesake in 1965; *Cristina*, a 1954 radio soap opera adapted for television in 1962 as *Encadenada*; or *Corazón Salvaje*, broadcasted in 1955 and televised with the same title in 1966¹³.

These first telenovelas are already beginning to present a series of characteristics of the genre, differing from the so-called American Soap Opera, both in duration and narrative structure. While the American has an average

was taken for the radio production of serial stories, many of whose titles were moved to Mexico in television format. Martín Barbero, Jesús and Muñoz, Sonia (Coord.): *Televisión y melodrama. Géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia*. Tercer Mundo Ediciones, Bogotá, 1992. Vid. in Charlois Allende, A. J.: "De la historia de la telenovela a la telenovela histórica. Las características del formato de la telenovela a través del desarrollo de la industria televisiva". *Folios*, Journal of the Faculty of Communications of the University of Antioquia. # 26, 2011, p. 133.

- 11 Barrón Domínguez, L.: *La industria de la telenovela mexicana: procesos de comunicación, documentación y comercialización*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2009, p.79.
- 12 The first television channel in Mexico was XHTV, operational as early as 1950 and owned by Rómulo O'Farril. That same year, Mexican engineer Guillermo González Camarena was granted the concession of a new channel, Channel 5, known as XHGC; and in 1951, it began broadcasting a third channel, which was assigned the acronym of XEW TV, owned by Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta. In 1955, the three stations merged into a single audiovisual medium, giving rise to the so-called company Telesistema Mexicano S. A. de C.V., direct background of one of the main Mexican audiovisual companies: Televisa, also a precursor of the telenovela in Mexico. The aforementioned Telesistema Mexicano began to bear fruit through a system of repeaters, and the television signal expanded throughout the Mexican territory, becoming the first national television station and reaching coverage in the 32 states between 1955 and 1968. León Valdez, René: "La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con "beneficio social". *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, p. 129.
- 13 On June 6, 1958, when the first Mexican telenovela considered as such appeared. It was *Senda Prohibida*, whose former radio production had been the story written by Fernanda Villeli. The importance of this title lies in the fact that *Senda Prohibida* already has the characteristics of a telenovela as such: it consists of chapters with sequences between each one, importance of suspense at the end of each chapter, and is transmitted through a television channel, in addition to having certain advertising sponsorships. Barrón Domínguez, Leticia: *La industria de la telenovela mexicana: procesos de comunicación, documentación y comercialización*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2009, p. 86.

length, remaining on screen even years, the Mexican ranges between 90 and 120 chapters approximately, with exceptions at certain times. On the other hand, the narrative structure has in the Mexican case a less open ending; these are stories that affect melodrama and endings that claim the reward for the suffering of their protagonists throughout the plot¹⁴. In the same way, another of the characteristics of these first Mexican telenovelas is the emphasis on love relationships, beyond the reflection of everyday life and the approach to deeper problems (Orozco, 2006: 21).

They also had a specific audience, women, especially housewives, and their plot revolved around the future of their protagonists and martyrs, women who personified roles ranging from selfless mothers, to Cinderella, naive damsels, and even villains. The recordings of these initial telenovelas were made live until the inclusion of the videotape in 1965, which lowered production costs and began the first exports of telenovelas to other Latin American countries. Already between 1965 and 1967, the time slot dedicated to telenovelas was raised from two to three and a half hours a day, in response to the remarkable audience that they were acquiring.

Also in this decade, new subgenres of melodrama begin to appear, among them, the historical telenovela, such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; they also begin to stand out among other authors, who would become one of the main virtuosos of the telenovela genre, Caridad Bravo Adams¹⁵. Likewise, and as can be seen in the table that we reproduce at the end of this study¹⁶, most of the Mexican telenovelas of this time were produced by Ernesto Alonso (precursor of the so-called historical telenovela with the screenwriter Miguel Sabido) and

14 Orozco Gómez, G.: "La telenovela en México: de una expresión cultural a un simple producto de marketing? New Epoch, # 6, 2006, pp. 11-35.

15 She is one of the most prolific Mexican writers in terms of the creation of stories that were adapted to the format of the telenovela, and whose plots have been covered on more than one occasion and at different times. Under her authorship, there are such well-known titles as: *La mentira* (adapted as a telenovela not only in Mexico, but also in Brazil, Venezuela or the United States under the title of *La mentira*, *El amor nunca muere*, *Calúnia*, *El Juramento*, *Corações Feridos*, *Cuando me enamoro* o *Lo imperdonable*). *Yo no creo en los hombres* (versionada hasta cuatro veces en México, una de ellas con el título *Velo de novia*). *La intrusa*, *Pecado mortal*, *Abrázame muy fuerte*, *Que te perdone Dios*, *Laberintos de pasión*, *Corazón que miente*; the "hyper versioned", both in telenovela and film format *Corazón Salvaje*, *Orgullo de mujer*, *El enemigo*, *Adiós Amor mío*, *Mas allá del corazón*, *Cita con la muerte*, *Cristina Guzmán*, *Sueña conmigo* *Donaji*, *Más fuerte que el odio*, *Amor en el desierto*, *Lo prohibido*, *Deborah*, *La desconocida*, *Águeda*, *Cristina*, *El precio de un hombre*, *La hiena*, *Aprendiendo a amar*, *Alma y carne*, *Bodas de odio* (remade three times in Mexico, the first retaining in the same title and the other two as *Amor Real* y *Lo que la vida me robó*); *Herencia maldita*, *Al pie del altar* or *Una sombra entre los dos*.

16 Summary-Table with the main characteristics of the historical and period telenovelas selected to develop this article are synthesized.

represented a good part of the protagonists actresses such as Carmen Montejo, Maricruz Olivier or Spaniard actress Amparo Rivelles (Barrón, 2009: 90).

Continuing the chronological development, the decade of the seventies represented for Mexican telenovela the beginning of the consolidation of the genre; exports increased, telenovelas were imported from Peru or Venezuela, with titles such as *Simplemente María* or *Cristal*, and successful foreign telenovelas began to be adapted that in turn became an exportable Mexican product. It even increased in the number of chapters per telenovela, as well as the different subgenres within it continued to rise: the children's telenovela (*Mundo de juguete*, 1974) or the didactic kind (*Ven conmigo*, 1975), which promoted literacy in the country). Along with this, the arrival of color television, which dyed nuances and details that was progressively becoming one of the most consumed television products in the country.

From the eighties onwards, the consolidation of telenovela in Mexico will be a constant. Exports increased to 80 per cent between 1982 and 1983, representing, in addition, between eighteen and twenty-two thousand hours of broadcast per year. The countries of Eastern Europe were becoming a favorite export area; the subgenres of the telenovela multiplied, appearing the police telenovela with titles such as *Cuna de Lobos* (1986); horror soap operas, such as *El maleficio* (1983); and great successes began to occur both nationally and internationally, embodied among others by stories such as *Los ricos también lloran* or *Muchachita* (Barrón, 2009: 97). Likewise, the telenovela ceased to be an exclusive product for women, trying to capture new audiences with themes aimed at men and young people, emerging the so-called telenovelas of "social content" (outlined in the middle of the seventies), which through habitual stories tried to influence the social life of Mexico¹⁷. Accompanying and endorsing the resounding success of the telenovela, the number of viewers was increasing, to such an extent that, following the estimates of IBOPE¹⁸, one of the telenovelas we will refer to later, (possibly one of the Mexican telenovela with most adapted versions) *Corazón Salvaje*, issued in

17 Charlois Allende, A. J.: "De la historia de la telenovela a la telenovela histórica. Las características del formato de la telenovela a través del desarrollo de la industria televisiva". *Folios*, Journal of the Faculty of Communications of the University of Antioquia. # 26, 2011, pp. 138- 139.

18 IBOPE corresponds to the acronym of the *Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics*, a Mexican subsidiary in charge of measuring the audience in the Valley of Mexico, through the People meter system, small transmitters installed on the television that allow to know in which channel the device is tuned. In: Aguilar Díaz, Miguel A., Rosas Mantecón Ana and Vázquez Mantecón, Verónica: "Telenovelas: la ficción que se llama realidad". *Política y Cultura*, # 4, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Xochimilco, 1995, pp. 173- 185.

1993, reached a weekly average of about 40 points, which would be equivalent to more than six million inhabitants of the Metropolitan area of the Valley of Mexico (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, 1995: 174).

3. ABOUT REALITY, FICTION AND PASSION. A MEXICAN STORY THROUGH THE TELENÓVELA

As noted in the previous section, in the sixties new subgenres of melodrama started to appear, among which the so-called historical telenovela stood out, mainly sponsored by the tandem formed by Ernesto Alonso in the production and direction, and Miguel Sabido in the script work¹⁹. Gradually, and always aiming to contribute to the social function of entertainment, this type of story began, not only to promote cultural and nationalist interest, but even came to have government sponsorship (León, 2014: 132).

In this way, and once presented the telenovelas' format in which we will focus, we must point out an important aspect that will mark the development of this epigraph. Starting from the subgenre of telenovela that proposes in its plot the development of a historical content, we will differentiate between the historical telenovela itself, and the period telenovela. In this sense, the historical telenovela, as its name suggests, narrates a specific period of History (of Mexico in this case), or the biography of a relevant character, to which are added a series of fictional characters, whose loves and heartbreaks develop within the plot. We could say then, that the fictional story adapts to the historical reality that is intended to be shown. For its part, the period telenovela, recreates moments of the past, locating itself in an "indeterminate" point of History, whose object is none other than to adapt it to the fictional plot it presents. It is a type of novel that puts the emphasis on details: costumes, furniture, setting and all those accessories and elements of the period that is intended to recreate, but where historical rigor passes to a second or third level.

4. MEXICAN HISTORY THROUGH PERIOD TELENÓVELA, SERIES AND MOVIES (1956-2011)

Thus, delimited both concepts, it remains only to delve into Mexican history through the 33 productions selected for this study²⁰, and that were is-

19 Both authors were part of the project called Weekly Telenovela. It was a series of short stories (about five chapters each) whose success lay precisely in the brevity of the arguments and the quality of the stories, developing the first soap operas recreated and inspired by past eras. León Valdez, R.: "La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con "beneficio social". *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, pp. 129- 130.

20 It is about 29 telenovelas, 2 TV series and 2 movies.

sued in the country between 1956 and 2011. To do this, we will follow the chronological order posed by the stories, pointing out that a good part of them belong to the model of a period telenovela and, therefore, they do not specify exactly their historical location. However, most of them refer throughout their plot to some fact, event, detail or historical character that has allowed us to locate them in a relatively successful time.

We begin our journey from the second half of the eighteenth century. The telenovelas *Pasión* and *Alborada*, in both starring the same actor, the Mexican Fernando Colunga. They present a plot that, judging by the setting, the characterization of its characters, as well as the allusion to certain elements such as Inquisition, the mention of the figure of the Viceroy, or the representation of the most classic piracy (in addition to the reference to the “droit de seigneur”), make us place it at this point in Mexican history. Both represent clear examples of the so-called *period telenovela*, where the importance does not lie in the narration of historical events, but in the development of the different stories in which their characters are involved, paying special attention to the love relationship of the protagonist couple.

The following two telenovelas propose a different image: *Los Caudillos* and *La antorcha encendida*²¹, moving us to a specific and identifiable period in the history of Mexico: the background and development of the independence process, as well as the decline of New Spain in the face of insurgent uprisings²². However, it should be note that while the plot of *Los Caudillos*, although faithful to historical events, focuses much of its attention on the sentimental evolution of the protagonist, *La antorcha encendida*, gives special importance to the real historical characters, especially to the figure of the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, without neglecting the different love stories, heartbreak, jealousy and intrigue. Likewise, it recreates with enough fidelity certain historical events²³ of the time, highlighting sequences such as the

21 Considered the last historical telenovela produced by Televisa in 1996. With it, the project initiated by Ernesto Alonso is closed. Alonso, producer of this story, wanted to make known through television the most important events in the history of Mexico recreating facts and characters, real and fictional that consolidated the telenovela industry in Mexico against other powers that began to be part of the telenovela production market. León Valdez, R.: “La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social”. *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, p. 142.

22 We point out in the summary table, attached at the end of the article, the broadcast of a television series: *Gritos de Muerte y Libertad* (13 chapters) where, leaving aside the usual melodrama in telenovelas, we proceed to recreate the historical events immediately prior to the independence process and the course of this.

23 José Manuel Villalpando was part in the production of *La antorcha encendida* as a historical advisor, having previously ventured into this field and being responsible for the historical research of the te-

well-known *Grito de Dolores* or the takeover of the Alhóndiga de Granaditas on September 28, 1810²⁴.

Next, titles such as *The Mummies of Guanajuato* or *Legends of Mexico*, both produced by Ernesto Alonso in the sixties, place us in what could well be the transition between colonial Mexico and the nineteenth-century period. It is true that its historical location is not precisely determined, but it does seem to adapt to those two times. The first of them, *Las Momias de Guanajuato* (1962) presents us with an argument that revolves around the life stories of the bodies that ended up being petrified. It not only exposes love plots, but also drama and horror, themes shared with *Leyendas de Mexico* (1968). In the latter, mysterious legends of the colonial era are reproduced, such as: “*La Llorona*”, “*El callejón del beso*”, “*La mulata de Córdoba*”, or “*Doña Beatriz, La Sinventura*”²⁵.

Then, the next batch of telenovelas is again framed in the “period” novel model: *Corazón Salvaje*, *Amor Real*, *Ramona*, and *El Zorro: la espada y la rosa*, place us in the course of the new Mexican Republic. In this sense, the version of *Corazón Salvaje* of the year 2009 sets its plot in Veracruz around 1850; the historical references, with greater or lesser precision, are not remarkable, apart from proposing as an incentive the beautiful images of the location, or the pretended setting of its scenes and characters. However, the argument revolves only around the comings and goings of the protagonist love triangle.

Similar characteristics arise the productions *Amor Real*, *Ramona* and *El Zorro: la espada y la rosa*. The first, *Amor Real*, refers to some “historical notes”, especially when mentioning certain characters in Mexican history. It refers to Juan Álvarez, the Alliance for Progress party, and its leader, Pedro Baranda. The protagonist of the plot, Manuel Fuentes Guerra, born from the rape of an Indian woman at the hands of the owner of a hacienda, seems to be in

lenovela produced two years earlier, in 1994, with the title of *El vuelo del águila*, the dramatized adaptation of the biography of Porfirio Díaz.

- 24 We do not want to miss the opportunity to transcribe “the talk” of Father Hidalgo in the so-called “*Grito de Dolores*” at 5 a.m. on September 16, 1810: (...) *We take up arms to take away the command of the gachupines, who have surrendered to the French and want us, the Americans, to suffer the same fate, which we will never consent. (...) We must save our holy religion from the wicked, end the privileges of the gachupines that have done us so much damage. Look at the hungry face, the rags, and the sad condition in which they live (...) because we are the owners of these lands... Long live independence, long live America, die bad government, die gachupines.* This sequence belongs to chapter 39 (1-4) of the telenovela.
- 25 As we have explained, these stories made mention of “the popular councils that happened during the period of New Spain”, and were starred by “souls in sorrow, sinister characters who lurked in the dark, or slaves who escaped in ships drawn on the wall”. León Valdez, R.: “*La telenovela histórica en México: apuntes para la construcción de un proyecto con “beneficio social”*”. *Multidisciplina*, # 18, 2014, p. 131.

favor of what in the soap opera is called the “army of the people’s party”, defender of the suppression of the privileges of the ruling class of the country. This telenovela could therefore be placed in the mid-nineteenth century.

The chronological environment is clearer in *Ramona*. This production is presented to us as a love story located in California after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, right on the border between Mexico and the New Northern State. Years after the border war between Mexico and the United States, the quarrels and conflicts over the possession of land continued in force. In that context, the love was born between *Ramona*, daughter of the wealthy Moreno Gonzaga family, Mexicans who resolve to stay to live in California, and *Alejandro*, an indigenous member of the Yahís tribe.

Similar geographical location presents the telenovela *El Zorro, la espada y la rosa*, a Colombian-American production linked to the history of Mexico. Its plot is set in the city of Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles, and exposes part of the life of Diego de la Vega, whose true identity is that of the well-known hero “El Zorro”.

The historical references follow one another; San Martín and Bolívar are spoken of as contemporaries. However, we find again the main feature of the period telenovela; the historical recreation is nothing but the “backdrop” that adapts to the fictional plot of its characters.

Continuing the chronological development of Mexican history through the telenovela, it is the turn of three productions that, although it is not the specific objective of our study, well deserve a more complete investigation of the historical approach they propose. These are *La Tormenta* (1967), *Maximiliano and Carlota* (1965), and *El Carruaje* (1972). The first of them, *La Tormenta*, is considered an excellent historical production that exposes the history of Mexico between the promulgation of the Constitution of 1857, and the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910 (León, 2014: 134), paying special attention to the period of government of Benito Juárez. Along with the recreation of the historical facts, this telenovela includes in its plot the theme of indigenism and miscegenation, being its protagonist an Indian originally from Oaxaca who, after learning to read and write, decides to join the army of Juárez. Obviously, the argument is accompanied by the everlasting love relationships that characterize the genre, even more when *La Tormenta* extends its history for more than 30 years.

The second telenovela presents a different nuance, *Maximiliano y Carlota*, released in 1965. This production romantically recreates the history of the emperors of Mexico who ruled at the time of confrontations between con-

servatives and liberals. However, despite the fact that the love story was successful, the treatment that the telenovela gave to certain historical figures, made even the Mexican government itself express a clear disagreement. The disagreements occurred due to the way Benito Juárez's character was presented. To illustrate this, we reproduce verbatim the following quote:

The telenovela was an immense success in telling the romantic story of two deluded princes, whose only sin was to love each other in the land of Indians (...) In this case, the villain whose evil opposes these loves to the point of sending the Austrian Quetzalcoatl to the wall was the very "Benemérito de las Américas", Benito Juárez (León Valdez, 2014: 134)²⁶.

However, redemption came a few years later, in 1972, when the telenovela *El Carruaje* premiered, the first historical telenovela in color where, again, the plot places us during the government of Juárez; this time, from a very different perspective. The years of the War of Reform mark the evolution of this production when Juárez, prevented from establishing his legitimate government in Mexico, must move to the north of the country in a carriage, carrying with him the documentation that confirmed him as effective president. In this case, the critics were much more benevolent, praising the image that was represented of one of the most outstanding characters in Mexican history.

The next historiographical stage could be placed at the beginning of the government of Porfirio Díaz, from the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century.

Titles such as *Alondra*, *Los plateados*, some versions of *Corazón Salvaje*, especially the one of 1993, *Bodas de Odio*, *Pueblo chico infierno grande*, *Azul tequila* and *Yo compro esa mujer*, they tended to draw inspiration from this period to recreate their melodramas. Now, the one that does clearly raise its argument during the years of the Porfiriato, is *El Vuelo del Águila*, since it is the dramatized biography of its main protagonist, Porfirio Díaz, and his rise to power for 30 years.

As part of the plot, and with various historical advisors, it represents with some veracity, real events such as: the War of Reform, the battle of May 5 in Puebla or the *Decena Trágica*. However, also in this case the telenovela received harsh

26 León Valdez refers in its quotation to: Soto, 2011, p. 244. Apparently, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mario Moya Palencia, along with prestigious historians, expressed their rejection of the handling of the character of Juárez, conceived as a villain for sending Maximiliano to be shot, without disclosing the true reasons behind this action. So much that, Ernesto Alonso as producer, along with Miguel Alemán, were sent to call by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, to make clear their annoyance at the perverse recreation that had been made of Benito Juárez in the telenovela.

criticism; especially those that pointed out that the character of Porfirio Díaz had been shown from an only positive point in relation to the actions he carried out during his mandate. It was even argued that “the telenovela responded to commercial and not cultural interests” (León, 2014: 141). Also set in the Porfirist stage is the telenovela *La Constitución*, premiered in 1970, coinciding with the anniversary of the promulgation of the Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico. Its history recreates the precarious and exploitative living conditions in which the indigenous people lived, as well as the need to establish a constitution that would establish the rights of Mexicans (León, 2014: 136).

And at this point in the study, we will finish the analysis by referring the two telenovelas that will conclude our journey through the history of Mexico. It is the “pack” formed by the productions *La Tierra and Senda de Gloria*. The first of them issued in 1974, focused on the course of the so-called Cristeros War in Mexico during the government of Plutarco Elías; regarding the second, *Senda de Gloria*, covers the historical period located between 1917 and 1940 through a series of personal and family plots adapted to the time, with the clear intention of “linking the viewer with the national plot”²⁷.

It begins with a brief allusion to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910, the assassination of Madero and the struggle initiated by Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa and Venustiano Carranza against Huerta government. The different melodramatic plots, headed by the protagonist couple, Andrea Álvarez and Manuel Fortuna, she was rich and he was poor, are happening and adapting to the historical evolution of the country after the Revolution, linking with historical characters and events that marked post-revolutionary Mexico.

5. CONCLUSION

Finally, as a conclusion, we compile a series of ideas developed throughout the article highlighting, in the first place, the one that considers the audiovisual format, whether film or television, as one of the platforms from which past eras can be recreated. In this sense, and supported mainly by the progressive success of the telenovela in Mexico, the new television format became a viable tool to remember the past following a certain line of action. On the one hand, the historical telenovela born shortly after the takeoff of this genre and, secondly, the period telenovela.

27 Charlois Allende, A. J.: “De la historia de la telenovela a la telenovela histórica. Las características del formato de la telenovela a través del desarrollo de la industria televisiva”. *Folios, Journal of the Faculty of Communications of the University of Antioquia*. #26, 2011, p. 145.

As we have seen, the subgenre of historical telenovela as it is, will know its period of splendor in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Productions such as *El Carruaje*, *La Constitución*, *El vuelo del Águila*, *La Tierra* or *Senda de Gloria*, preceded by those first stories among which *Los Caudillos* or *Las momias de Guanajuato* stood out, tried to recreate, with more or less fidelity, a specific historical period of Mexican history. Its fictional plots were adapted and accompanied the historical events of the country. However, alongside the historical telenovela, the development of the period subgenre also printed its own character, where melodrama itself was the main objective. The historical recreation was little more than the setting from which the plot developed, and consequently, the historical rigor could not be counted as an incentive. This is how we have seen it through titles such as: *Corazón Salvaje*, *El Zorro*, *la espada y la rosa*, *Azul Tequila*, *Alborada*, *Pasión* or *Pueblo chico infierno grande*.

In any case, there is no doubt that the recreation of the History of Mexico, carried out by the telenovela genre, has contributed to the representation of different proposals; and beyond the fidelity sought to real historical events, it has developed a certain model through which History can enter our lives with a single "click".

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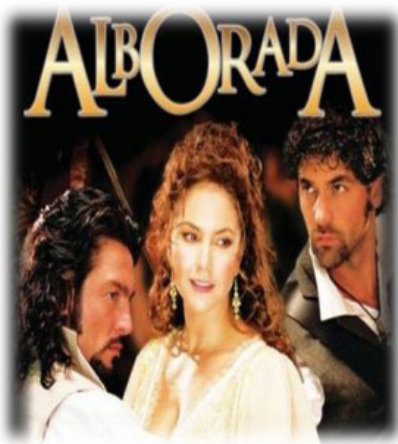
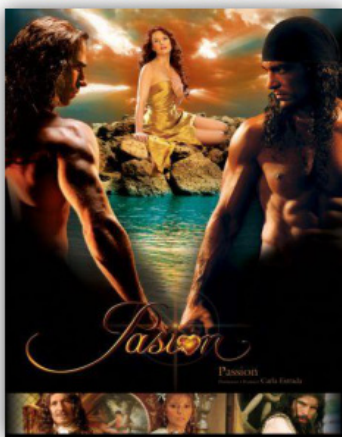
Table1.- Summary table “Main characteristics of the historical and period telenovelas”.

Title	Gender	Period	Broadcast	Production	Chapters
Pasión	Telenovela	Colonial-1740/50	2007	Carla Estrada/ Televisa	95- 115
Alborada	Telenovela	Colonial	2005	María Zarattini / Televisa	90
Los Caudillos	Telenovela	1790-1811	1968	Ernesto Alonso Telesistema Mexicano (Televisa)	---
La antorcha encendida	Telenovela	1785 a 1811	1996	Ernesto Alonso / Televisa	140 National 70 Inter.
Gritos de Muerte y Libertad	TV Series	Colonial- independence	2010	Leopoldo Gómez Televisa	13
Las momias de Guanajuato	Telenovela	Colonial	1962	Ernesto AlonsoT. Mexicano	
Leyendas de México	Telenovela	Colonial	1968	Ernesto Alonso /T. Mexicano	30
Los bandidos de Río Frío	Telenovela	1810/1830	1976	Televisa	

Title	Gender	Period	Broadcast	Production	Chapters
Corazón Salvaje	Telenovela	1850	2009	Salvador Mejía / Televisa	135
Amor Real	Telenovela	1850	2003 /2004	Carla Estrada /Televisa	95
Ramona	Telenovela	1847/1850	2000	Lucy Orozco /Televisa	74
El Zorro: la espada y la rosa	Telenovela (Colombia)	XIX	2007	Hugo León RTI Producciones Sony Pictures Telemundo	112
La tormenta	Telenovela	1857-1910	1967	Miguel Alemán /T. Mexicano	91
Maximiliano y Carlota	Telenovela	1864- 1867	1965	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	50
El carruaje	Telenovela	1867	1972	Miguel Alemán /Televisa	44
Alondra	Telenovela	Fin XIX	1995	Carla Estrada /Televisa	76
Santa	Telenovela	Fin XIX	1978	Miguel Sabido /Televisa	---
Los plateados	Telenovela	1900	2005	Marcelo Mejía /Tele-mundo	148
Azul tequila	Telenovela	1860- 1870	1998	TV Azteca /ZUBA	160
Pueblo chico infierno grande	Telenovela	Fin. XIX	1997	Ernesto Hernández / Televisa	150
Corazón Salvaje	Telenovela	1900	1993	José Rendón /Televisa	160
Bodas de odio	Telenovela	1905- 1919	1983	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	150

Title	Gender	Period	Broadcast	Production	Chapters
Juan del Diablo	-Movie -	1900	1956		
Corazón Salvaje	Movie	1900	1968		
Juan del Diablo	Telenovela	1900	1966/ Puerto Rico	Telemundo	
Corazón Salvaje	Telenovela	1900	1966	Ernesto Alonso, T. Mexicano	62
Corazón Salvaje	Telenovela	1900	1977	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	168
Yo compro esa mujer	Telenovela	1900	1990	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	160
La Constitución	Telenovela	1900	1970	Ernesto Alonso, Miguel Alemán T. Mexicano	84
El vuelo del águila	Telenovela	Porfiriato	1994	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	140
El encanto del Águila	TV Series	1910-1928	2011	Leopoldo Gómez / Televisa	13
La tierra	Telenovela	1920-1930	1974	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	99
Senda de Gloria	Telenovela	1917- 1940	1987	Ernesto Alonso /Televisa	135

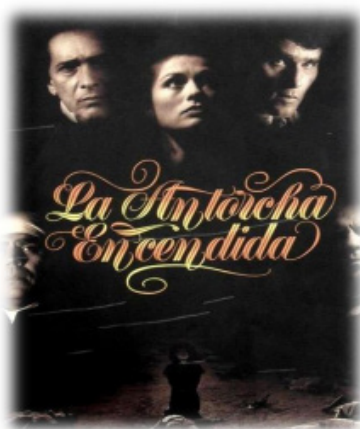
ANNEX OF IMAGES:



Pasión / Alborada

Web source: www.ilovetelenovelas.com/telenovela/pasion

Web source: www.cinicosdesinope.com/cine-y-series/asi-esta-el-elenco-de-la-novela-alborada-en-la-actualidad



La antorcha encendida

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Different adaptations of Corazón Salvaje (films and soap opera between 1956 and 2009)

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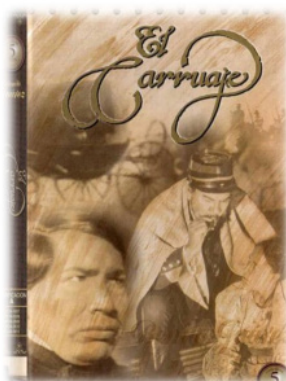
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Pueblo chico Infierno grande/ Yo compro esa mujer

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Senda de Gloria/ Azul tequila

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