

Re-Creating Women of the Past in Historical Series on Mexican Television: The Work of Patricia Arriaga Jordan

Authors : Maria De Los Angeles Rodriguez Cadena

Abstract : This paper discusses how the fictional versions of women of the past contribute to advance today's ideas of social justice, personal freedom and emancipation as well as to highlight the creative challenge of constructing people and events on fictional narratives on television that incorporate multiple and simultaneous layers of meaning and complexity. This project builds on existing scholarship on audiovisual texts by exploring an influential but under-studied director. In two Mexican television series, Patricia Arriaga Jordan, an award-winning television producer, scriptwriter and director, constructs the life of two outstanding women that have played an influential role in national history and captured Mexican's popular imagination for generations: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Malinche. Malinche (2018) tells the story of an extraordinary indigenous woman, Malintzin, during the Spanish Conquest (1511-1550) that is considered to have played a key role in the fall of the Aztec empire by acting as translator, negotiator and cultural mediator for the Spanish conquerors. Juana Ines (2016) portrays Sor Juana, a poet, essayist, playwright, theologian, philosopher, nun, of XVII century colonial Mexico, one of the brightest minds of her time, and now recognized as the first feminist of the Americas who wrote on the rights of women to an education, religious authority and feminist advocacy. Both series, as fictional narratives that recreate defining historical periods, specific events and relevant characters in the History of Mexico can be read as an example of what is called texts of cultural memory. A cultural memory text is a narrative that bonds the concepts of history, identity and belonging, and that is realized and disseminated through symbolic systems such as written documents, visual images, and dramatic representation. Cultural memory, through its narratives of historical fiction, emphasizes memory processes (historiography) and its implications and artifacts (cultural memory) mainly through the medial frameworks of remembering, which are the medial process by which memories (narratives, documents) participate in public knowledge and become collective memory. Historical fiction on television not only creates a portrayal of the past related to the real lives of protagonists, but it also significantly contributes to understand the past as an ever-evolving entity that highlights both, the necessary connection with the present as part of a developing sense of collective identity and belonging, as well as the relevance of the medium in which the past is represented and that ultimately supports the process of historical awareness. Through the emblematic recreation of national heroines and historical events in the unique context of historical drama on television, those texts constitute a venue where concepts of the past and the traditionally established ideas about history and heroines are highlighted, questioned and transformed.

Keywords : cultural memory, historical fiction, Mexico, television, women directors

Conference Title : ICCFMS 2023 : International Conference on Communication, Film and Media Sciences

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 15-16, 2023