

## THE PRODUCTION OF TV FICTION ADAPTATIONS IN SPAIN (1950-2012)

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### *Abstract*

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the most significant TV adaptations in Spain from 1956 to 2012. First of all, the following article comprises a brief overview of a number of the most significant fiction adaptations produced by the public television network TVE, rounded out with a more in-depth account of the TV adaptations developed from the 1990s onwards, when commercial television networks, such as Antena 3 and Tele 5, entered the audiovisual market.

Recently, the adaptation of TV series based on foreign programmes has become widespread in Spain. One special category encompasses programmes adapted to the Spanish television market from foreign series formats (US, Latin America and Europe). Television networks and production companies turn to such major television markets in order to identify successful series and formats that may be remade into the buyer's context.

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### Introduction

Perhaps because of the difficulties involved in developing original projects and the increase in the sale of international formats that have performed successfully in other markets, the adaptation of TV series based on foreign programmes, such as *Doctor Mateo* (Antena 3, 2009-2011) and *Las chicas de oro* (The Golden Girls, TVE, 2010) or *La chica de ayer* (The Girl from Yesterday, Antena 3, 2009), has recently become widespread in Spain, similar to other European markets.

TV adaptation from other formats or series dates back to the earliest days of the television industry in Spain. The original producer of TV fiction adaptations in Spain was the public television network, TVE; no other company could compete in this regard. It should be noted that from 1956 to 1990, the period during which the television sector was dominated by the state-supported TVE, television programmes were produced by the public network, either in-house or in conjunction with independent production companies that had close ties to the film industry. The first TV fiction genres began to conform to standard formats during that time: plays and serialized novels in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by miniseries and drama series from the 1960s onwards.<sup>1</sup> Many of

these TV fiction productions were adaptations of previously published plays and novels, which had enjoyed national and/or international success.

In order to study the production of TV adaptations in any country, it is necessary to clarify some previous concepts from a theoretical perspective: format, genre, TV adaptation and remake. Jonathan Bignell defines format as “the blueprint for a programme, including its setting, main characters, genre, form and main themes.”<sup>2</sup> According to this author, genre is a set of characteristics, conventions and general key elements which identify the format.<sup>3</sup> Other authors like Moran underline that television formats can be adapted into texts because they have several rules which can be adjusted into different markets and cultural contexts.<sup>4</sup>

There are several authors who have studied the concept of adaptation as regards to cinema<sup>5</sup> although it is quite unexplored within the Spanish television context.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, we should underline the differences between a traditional adaptation (from a novel, a poem, or an historical event to a TV show) and a television remake (adaptation in the same medium). For this article, we will include traditional adaptations and remakes as one of the most produced in the Spanish context. As Linda Hutcheon states: “an adapted text migrates from its context of creation to the adaptation’s context of reception. Because adaptation is a form of repetition without replication, change is inevitable.”<sup>7</sup> As such, any adaptation and TV remake is unique and original in itself, as it always involves creating something new.

## The production of TV fiction adaptations at TVE (1956-1990)

Televised plays may be regarded as the first type of television adaptation in Spain. Such productions evince the first attempts to re-cast theatre-based shows, which had remained unchanged for many years, shaped by television pacing and production. The televised play was also the first fiction genre to be broadcasted on TVE. In production terms, two stages may be discerned: the live broadcast of theatre and the recorded plays. Live broadcasting entailed the first attempts to standardize the production process. Such plays were thirty minutes in length, they were recorded on a single set using two or three cameras, and had limited production values in terms of lighting and sound.

The advent of video-recording in 1960 enabled a radical overhaul of the production process for televised plays. The play could be filmed in parts, not necessarily in chronological order, and be put back together subsequently in the editing suite. Production could even be extended over several days, with some scenes shot on external locations. Recorded theatre of this kind created certain production parameters that would later be applied to other TV fiction genres.

The director and producer Juan Guerrero Zamora was the principal promoter and driving-force behind such important theatre productions as *Fila cero* (The Zero Row), *Gran Teatro* (The Great Theater) and *Estudio 1* (Studio 1).<sup>8</sup> Over the course of thirty years, television viewers became used to seeing high-quality national and international plays produced for the small screen. The most renowned adaptations included *Before Breakfast* by Eugene O’Neill (1957, *Teatro en la Televisión Española*, Theatre on Spanish Television), *La herida luminosa* (The Light Wound) and *La señorita Trevelez* (Miss Trevelez) by Carlos Arniches (1958, *Fila cero*), Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (1967, *Teatro de siempre*, Old Theatre), among many others.

As was the case in relation to the televised play, the advent of the video-recorder had a transforming impact on the production criteria for the adapted novel as a television genre. Live broadcast was gradually phased out, although scenes were still shot in one take and in real time as if such broadcasting were still the norm.

In terms of serialization, the adapted novel genre may be further subdivided into weekly and daily televised novels. *Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle, *Gas Light* by Patrick Hamilton and *Dial M for Murder* by Frederick Knott were among the most successful weekly televised novels in the 1950s and 1960s, adapted and directed by Juan Guerrero Zamora.<sup>9</sup> The most significant programme in the category of daily televised novels was *Novela* (Novel), which was broadcast for almost twenty years. Between thirty and fifty adaptations were produced per year for broadcast in the *Novela* time-slot; each episode ran between twenty and thirty minutes; each novel comprised between two and five episodes; the adaptations were from both Spanish and foreign writers.

The adaptation of novels for television also entailed the further implementation of a number of production standards, which were to be put into practice in the national series produced from the 1990s onwards, albeit to a much lesser extent because of the relatively speedy production process and low budgets. The adjustment of shots to broadcast criteria, the combination of (video-based) studio scenes with scenes shot in exterior locations using cinematic devices, and the use of a number of sets were some of the most significant standards in this regard.

By the 1970s, both the televised play and the adapted novel began to look like television genres that had run their course, largely due to factors beyond TVE's control. A new television genre had begun to appear on other television networks across Europe: the miniseries, which bore close similarities to the serialized novels described above. A number of scholars have defined this genre as "the serialized adaptation of literary works based on a cinematic narrative style."<sup>10</sup> One of the defining features of the miniseries is that it comprises fewer than thirteen episodes. *The Forsyte Saga* (BBC, 1967) was the first instance in European broadcasting of this television genre. In terms of production costs, the genre proved costly, since each miniseries was one of a kind, requiring a tailor-made production schedule and budget. The production process for a miniseries was similar to that of a film. The budget-per-episode costs for miniseries produced in the 1980s ranged from € 120,000 for *Los gozos y las sombras* (The Joys and Shadows) and € 100,000 for *Ramón y Cajal* to € 300,000 for *Goya*.<sup>11</sup> Given such high budget costs, the in-house production model (whereby the miniseries was produced using only the television network's own resources) was soon abandoned, to be replaced with outsourced or independent production through international or part-funded co-production agreements.

International co-productions draw on the participation of a number of financial partners, usually television networks and/or production companies from other countries, which agree to share costs or to undertake more ambitious projects through shared or associated funding contracts. The other option was for TVE to outsource the production of miniseries to independent production companies in Spain.

The miniseries as a genre marked a further milestone in the history of television production and fostered the establishment of new production criteria. Moreover, as described in some detail below, the miniseries continued to be a preferred genre for TV fiction adaptations during the 2000-2012 period. Parameters of progress in this regard included the use of a more cinematic language in the *mise-en-scène*, such as the extensive use of natural locations to give the production a sense

of spectacle; a special focus on artistic design in the recreation of historical periods; the use of film cameras; higher budgets; lengthier production schedules; and episode running-times of between sixty and ninety minutes.

An analysis on the subject-matter of miniseries discloses that the genre is dominated by adaptations. Three types of miniseries may be defined: literary, biographical and original.<sup>12</sup> The defining feature of literary miniseries is that they involve the adaptation of renowned Spanish novels such as *Cañas y Barro* (Reeds and Mud, 1978) and *La Barraca* (Hut, 1979) by Blasco Ibáñez, *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1980) by Benito Pérez Galdós, *Los pazos de Ulloa* (The houses from Ulloa, 1985) by Emilia Pardo Bazán, among many others. Biographical miniseries are based on the lives of significant figures in Spanish history. As Manuel Palacio notes, they enable “the combination of historical events ideally recalled in the people’s collective memory with fictional characters that represent ‘real’ and invented situations in a convincing setting.”<sup>13</sup> Among the most important biographical miniseries of the 1980s were *Cervantes* (1981), *Ramón y Cajal* (1982), *Teresa de Jesús* (1984), *Goya* (1985), *Lorca, muerte de un poeta* (Lorca, Death of a Poet, 1987) and *Miguel Servet* (1988).

In the 1990s, due to the emergence of private television networks and the competitive climate generated as a result, such major miniseries filmed in cinematic style and drawing on substantial budgets ceased to be profitable projects for TVE, and their production thereafter dropped considerably.

Finally, we would like to discuss the development of drama series other than the genres of televised plays, adapted novels and miniseries at TVE. Unlike the other genres, drama series of this type were originally shaped in terms of longer-running serialization and adhered to specific characteristics of television as a medium.<sup>14</sup> TVE produced a significant number of such drama series between 1956 and 1990; adaptations were less common than series produced by pioneering Spanish creative screenwriters and producers, such as Antonio Mercero (*Verano Azul*, Blue Summer, 1981-1982), Adolfo Marsillach (*La Señora García se confiesa*, Mrs García Confesses, 1976-1977) and Narciso Ibáñez Serrador (*Historias para no dormir*, Stories to Keep You Awake, 1966-1968). *Historias para no dormir* comprised stand-alone episodes, some of which were based on original scripts and others on horror stories written by famous authors as Ray Bradbury and Edgar Allan Poe.

## Adaptation in a competitive television market (1990-2000)

The early 1990s marked a key phase in the emergence of private television networks and competition that prompted changes in programming conventions, budget distribution and TV fiction production strategies. Because of the widespread establishment and development of independent production companies during that time, the 1990s may be regarded as the definitive starting-point for the Spanish television fiction industry.<sup>15</sup>

The competitive market also caused an increasingly significant revolution in television viewing habits among audiences. The commitment by networks to achieving the highest possible viewer ratings led to a new emphasis on the idea of audience “loyalty,” a concept that had been more or less invisible during the period in which TVE held a monopoly on the television sector in Spain. Television series play one of the most powerful roles in generating audience loyalty. Thus, both

public and private television networks opted for the same strategy: the production of series to attract higher audience rates. In specific terms, their commitment was to long-running series, programmes that were produced to be broadcast over the course of more than one season, peopled with characters and storylines designed to hold the viewer's interest from one episode to the next. The main difference to the short run series broadcast by TVE before the privatization of the market lays in the fact that the principal plot conflict was not resolved in the first thirteen episodes of the series; rather, the plot might be extended for as long as it continued to generate audience ratings. The script is written as the series progresses and in light of viewer preferences. Hence, a much closer relationship arises between the programme and its audience and the immediate social context, prompting the inclusion of more relevant and real plotlines in the evolving narrative.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the long-running series produced in the 1990s (*Farmacia de guardia*, Pharmacy on Duty; *Médico de familia*, General practitioner, and others) were based on original ideas and broadcast alongside series and miniseries based on adaptations, although the latter were fewer in number. Some of the adaptations produced by public and commercial television networks during this period are outlined in more detail below.

First, TVE altered its production strategy in response to the new market competition, undertaking a range of innovative initiatives such as the *Taller de Telecomedias* (Telecomedy Workshop).<sup>17</sup> Although the production of literary and biographical adaptations went into decline at TVE, it continued to be the network that produced the highest number of series based on adaptation. In line with its previous strategy, TVE remained committed to the development of miniseries based on the lives of major figures such as *Blasco Ibáñez* (1997), *Severo Ochoa: La conquista de un Nobel* (Severo Ochoa: The Conquest of a Nobel, 2001) and *Vientos del pueblo: Miguel Hernández* (Winds of people: Miguel Hernandez, 2002); and to the adaptation of literary works including *Los jinetes del Alba* (Riders of the Dawn, 1991), *El Quijote* (Don Quixote, 1992), *Celia* (1992), *Entre naranjos* (Among Orange Trees, 1998), *La Regenta* (1995), *Don Juan* (1997) and *El secreto de la porcelana* (The Secret of the Porcelain, 1999).

In 1995, TVE adapted *The Golden Girls* for the first time. The director Antonio del Real adapted the scripts from the original series and the remake was called *Juntas pero no revueltas* (a Spanish expression meaning "together, but apart..."). *Makinavaja*, a sitcom produced in 1995 was based on the film of the same name; and *El último choriso* (The Last Thief, 1992) depicted the life and times of Ivá, a graphic artist working for the weekly humour magazine *El Jueves*.

The strategy adopted at Antena 3 was to focus on original Spanish series, including such achievements as *Los ladrones van a la oficina* (Thieves Go to the Office, 1993-1996) and *¡Ay, Señor, Señor!* (Oh, Lord, Lord!, 1994-1995), as well as the network's outstanding success: *Farmacia de guardia* (1991-1995). Antena 3's production of an adaptation and sequel to TVE's *Curro Jiménez* (1976-1979) during the 1990s should also be noted in this regard. In 1994, the production company Aurum, which belonged to Antena 3 at the time, produced *Curro Jiménez, el regreso de una leyenda* (Curro Jimenez, the return of a legend) in conjunction with Sancho Gracia Producciones, a series comprising thirteen episodes that portrayed the life and times of the famous Spanish outlaw almost twenty years after the original television production. Finally, the series *¡Por fin solos!* (Alone at Last!, 1995) was an adaptation of a film of the same name directed by Antonio del Real and first released in 1994. However, the series generated very little audience interest, and only seven episodes were broadcast.

Given the extraordinary success of *Médico de familia* (1995-1999), as well as other similarly successful series such as *Periodistas* (Journalists, 1998-2002), *Siete vidas* (Seven Lives, 1997-2006), *El comisario* (Police Inspector, 1999-2009), *Hospital Central* (2000-2012) and serials such as *El súper* (The Supermarket, 1996-1999) and *Al salir de clase* (After School, 1997-2002), Tele 5 also began to focus on the development of home-grown series. Tele 5 also produced a wide range of adaptations during the 1990s, some of which met with very little interest among viewers, prompting the network to drop them from the programming schedule. Such adaptations may be subdivided into three categories: adaptations based on films, on foreign series formats, and on literary works.

One of the most significant cinema-based adaptations was *Truhanes* (Rogue, 1993-1994), which drew on the film of the same title (1983); both series and film were directed by Miguel Hermoso and starred Paco Rabal and Arturo Fernández. The series *Historias de la puta mili* (Stories About the Fucking Military Service, 1994) was based on the comic drawn by the cartoonist Ivá, which had also been adapted for cinema; insofar as possible, the scripts for the series followed the graphic stories published in *El Jueves* which parodied the depiction of US troops in American movies.<sup>18</sup> The same approach was taken with regard to *Todos los hombres sois iguales* (All Men Are the Same, 1996-1998), based on the 1994 film of the same name, and likewise produced by Bocaboca.

The adaptation of foreign series formats included imports from Italian commercial television Canale 5: *Casa para dos* (House For Two, 1995), which lasted for only six episodes on Tele 5 because of low audience ratings; *Querido maestro* (Dear Teacher, 1997-1998), which was more successful and ran over three seasons; and *Hermanas* (Sisters, 1998) which lasted for two seasons.

Finally, the series *Petra Delicado* (1999) was an adaptation of the literary character invented by the writer Alicia Giménez Bartlett, a police inspector based in Barcelona, who appeared for the first time in the novel entitled *Ritos de muertes* (*Death Rites*) in 1996; the series, comprising thirteen episodes, starred Ana Belén.

Due to the competition between television networks and the speed at which the programming schedule consumes its own contents, many of these adaptations marked an attempt on the networks' part, to avoid failure by using series formats that had already proven successful in generating audience loyalty. Nevertheless, television networks and production companies remain aware of the fact that there is no such thing as a sure success in the audiovisual industry.

## A typology of television adaptations in Spain (2000-2012)

The production of television adaptations in Spain has begun to peak again nowadays. The typology of the programmes produced in recent years may be categorised as follows. These distinctions are made by the authors of the article after the examination of the most important titles adapted in Spain between 2000 and 2012. The classification is as follows: 1) historical adaptations; 2) literary adaptations; and 3) adaptations based on foreign series formats.

First, there has been an increase in the number of historical or period drama series produced. The preferred format used by Spanish production companies is the miniseries. In 2010, a total of seven miniseries made the top twenty list of television broadcasts for the year. The miniseries with the highest audience ratings was *Felipe y Leticia* (Felipe and Leticia): more than five million viewers tuned into the second episode, a 24.6% audience share (Fórmula TV, 2010). An overview



of the main historical and/or biographical series produced during this period is provided below:

- Miniseries, biographical, made-for-TV movies (biopics). This category comprises series adapted from the lives of members of the royal family or other important public figures in Spanish cultural life. These productions are shaped by a common theme: they tell the story of Spanish people and/or events in Spain. Among the most significant were: *La Duquesa* (Telecinco, 2010), about the Duchess of Alba; *Los Borgia* (Antena 3, 2008), which recounted the life and times of the Borgias, the family to which the only two Spanish popes in history belonged; *Adolfo Suárez, El Presidente* (Adolfo Suárez, the President, Antena 3, 2010), which dealt with the political career and personal life of one of the most significant presidents in the history of Spanish democracy; and finally, *Felipe y Letizia* (Felipe and Letizia 2010, Telecinco), which tells the story of the early days of the romance between the heir to the Spanish throne and his future bride.

- Miniseries or made-for-TV movies based on recent historical events. Many of the television adaptations based on historical events have drawn on the recent history of Spain, especially the transition to democracy; for example, *23-F, El día más difícil del Rey* (The Hardest Day of the King, TVE, 2009), which dealt with the failed *coup d'état* in 1981, and more recently still, the failed attempt by the terrorist organization ETA to assassinate King Juan Carlos I in Mallorca in 1995, as depicted in the made-for-TV movie, *Una bala para el Rey* (A Bullet to the King, Antena 3, 2009).

- Miniseries or made-for-TV movies based on major news stories or contemporary issues. Such productions may be regarded as “instant movies” because they deal with very recent and significant news events. Among the most prominent programmes in this regard were *Padre Coraje* (Father Courage, Antena 3, 2002) which told of the killing of Juan Delgado at a petrol station in Jerez de la Frontera in 1995 and his family’s fight to see justice done; *48 horas* (48 Hours, Antena 3, 2008), an account of the murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco at the hands of ETA; *El caso Wanninkhof* (The Wanninkhof’s Case, Antena 3, 2008), which offered an account of the disappearance and murder of Rocío Wanninkhof, a nineteen-year-old girl, in 1999; *Días Sin Luz* (Days Without Light, Antena 3, 2009) which followed the fifty-four day search for a young girl called Mari Luz Cortés, whose body was eventually recovered (the girl’s father oversaw the production of the miniseries); *Vuelo IL8714* (Flight IL8714, Telecinco, 2010), about the Spanair airplane crash at Barajas Airport (Madrid) in August 2008 and the official enquiry into its causes; finally, *Alakrana* (Telecinco, 2010), which depicted the hijacking of the Basque fishing vessel, the Alakrana, by Somali pirates, and *11M, para que nadie lo olvide* (11 M, For nobody to forget, Tele 5, 2011) which told how the biggest terrorist attack in Spain was planned.

The second category in the typology of adaptations produced between 2000 and 2012 comprises programmes based on literary works, most of which were Spanish-language texts written by Spanish or Latin American authors. Significant series in this regard included *Arroz y tartana* (Rice and Trap, TVE, 2003) directed by José Antonio Escrivá, based on the novel by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez; *Las cerezas del cementerio* (The Cherries of the Cemetery, TVE, 2005), based on the work of Gabriel Mir, a writer from Alicante, which tells the story of the relationship between a young engineering student and an older woman who is unhappily married to an English ship-owner (the story is set on the Valencian coast at the turn of the twentieth century); and *Un Burka por Amor* (A Burka for Love, Antena 3, 2009), a miniseries based on the eponymous book by Reyes Monforte, concerning the life and times of María Galera, a woman from Majorca who married an Afghani man, went to live in Afghanistan and experienced great difficulty upon trying to return to Spain.

## Foreign TV series adaptations in Spain

Finally, the third category encompasses programmes adapted to the Spanish television market from foreign series formats (in the US, Latin America and Europe). As it happened worldwide and has been studied by many European scholars,<sup>19</sup> many international formats have been adapted in Spain, including drama, comedy and soap-operas. Television networks and production companies turn to such major television markets so as to identify successful series and formats that may be remade in the buyer's context. Examples include *Mesa para cinco* (La Sexta, 2006), an adaptation of the US series *Party of Five* (Fox, 1994-2000); *Matrimonio con hijos* (Cuatro, 2006), the Spanish adaptation of the US comedy *Married with Children* (ABC, 1987-1997). The series entitled *Suárez y Mariscal: caso cerrado* (Suarez and Mariscal: closed case, Cuatro, 2005) was based on a German format, *Niedrig Und Kuhnt* (Sat 1, 2003-); *Los simuladores* (The Simulators, Cuatro, 2006-2007) was based on the Argentinian series of the same name (Telefé, 2002-2003); *Hermanos y detectives* (Brothers and Detectives, Telecinco, 2007-2009), likewise based on the 2006 Argentinian series of the same name; the soap opera *Sin Tetas No Hay Paraíso* (Without Breasts There is No Paradise, Telecinco, 2008-2009), based on the Colombian series of the same name, which was broadcast on Caracol Televisión in 2006 (the original Colombian series, in turn, was based on the novel of the same name by Gustavo Bolívar); *Doctor Mateo* (Antena 3, 2009-), based on the British series *Doc Martin* (ITV, 2002-); the comedy series *Lalola* (Antena 3, 2008-2009) was based on the Argentinian comedy of the same name broadcast on América TV in 2007 and 2008; and most recently, the second adaptation of the famous sitcom *The Golden Girls* (NBC, 1985-1992) *Las chicas de oro*; *Pasión de Gavilanes* (Antena 3, 2010) is an adaptation of the Colombian tele-novela called by the same title written by Julio Jiménez and broadcasted originally by R.T.I. Televisión, Caracol Televisión and Telemundo (2003-2004); another successful TV adaptation in Spain has been the soap-opera *Yo soy Bea* (Telecinco, 2006-2009) from the original Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la Fea* (I am Betty, the Ugly; which also inspired the American TV series *Ugly Betty*). As Chicharro suggests, soap-operas are more flexible to adapt themselves into different audience and television systems. This is exemplified through the Spanish television trends of the last decades.<sup>20</sup>

We want to pay special attention to one of the most important TV adaptation coming from the European market: *La chica de ayer* (The Girl From Yesterday). It is the Spanish adaptation of the British TV series *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007). The original series has been broadcast in a number of countries, including the US, Canada, France, and also Spain; and the series format has been adapted in two foreign markets, the US and Spain.<sup>21</sup> ABC adapted the *Life on Mars* format for the American market, but the adapted series did not enjoy the expected success among critics and viewers. ABC cancelled the series after one season; difficulties with genre definition, as well as a failure to establish a clear identity, have been cited as possible explanations for its underperformance.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of adapting the British series for the Spanish market first arose in Los Angeles where Álvaro Ron, one of the series' directors, was working. Ron has produced a number of films, including *Mia Sarah* (Gustavo Ron, 2006), *Americano* (Kevin Noland, 2005) and *Green Zone* (Paul Greengrass, 2010). He came across the original script for *Life on Mars* and felt that a Spanish version would have significant potential. He wrote an adaptation prospectus and sent it to Antena



3, which was intrigued by the possibility. Sonia Martínez, the Director of TV Fiction at Antena 3, set out the reasons that prompted the network to purchase the broadcasting rights:

*We were intrigued by Life on Mars. It was one of the formats we wanted to get our hands on. We had very high expectations from the very beginning: a love story, a family to be rebuilt, a trip to be seen as a mission to be fulfilled, a character that has to learn to face life, himself, his friends... all set years in the past. A second chance at life, to learn how to approach it... A great format.*<sup>23</sup>

Enthused by the project, Antena 3 requested adaptation pitches from a number of Spanish production companies. The most convincing pitch was made by *Ida y Vuelta*, which developed the production of the series. *Ida y Vuelta* had already produced a number of series for Antena 3, such as *Círculo Rojo* (Red Circle, 2007) and *Física o química* (Physics and Chemistry, 2008-). Antena 3's only condition was that Álvaro Ron, who had come up with the idea, be included in the production team. The series comprised a total of eight episodes, each with a running-time of seventy minutes. The shooting schedule ran over six months, from September 2008 to February 2009. There were a series of meetings with the BBC in London throughout the production process for *La chica de ayer*, the purpose of which was to oversee the eight episodes of the Spanish version that had been approved by the BBC. Representatives of the BBC visited the set in Madrid, observed auditions, met the cast, and supervised the pilot episode. However, with the exception of the first episode, which reached an audience share of 19.7%, the series failed to meet the viewer ratings expected by the network; as a result, the production company was forced to bring the series to a close in the eighth episode.

## Conclusions

The overall purpose of this article was to present a general and classificatory overview of the most important TV adaptations in Spain from 1956 to 2012; in historical terms, TVE, the state public service broadcaster, has been the biggest investor in such productions. The wide-ranging overview of adaptations presented in this paper illustrates the preeminent significance and influence of plays, novels and also foreign TV series as sources in the production process. Traditionally, many TV fiction adaptations come from relevant authors within Spanish literature and theatre. These TV adaptations produced by TVE from 1956 and 1990 have mainly a pedagogical objective to bring well-known tales and stories closer to the audience. Furthermore, since copyright expired on these materials, the producers had easy access to them.

On the contrary, from 1990 onwards, TV adaptations stemming from private channels, and from TVE, have mainly a commercial objective. Miniseries or made-for-TV movies based on major news stories or contemporary issues have a great appeal for contemporary viewers. Recently, there has been a notable increase in the adaptation of foreign television series (comedy, soap opera, and drama) in the Spanish market over the course of the last ten years (2000-2012). TV producers trust in these formats due to the previous success they have in the original country. Therefore, producers attend the most remarkable TV markets like MIPCOM (Cannes), NATPE (Las Vegas) or Los Angeles TV Screening (Los Angeles), among others, to sell and buy television formats.

By and large, the circulation of European TV series has been quite positive in Spain, as the examples illustrated in this article make clear. Adaptations such as *Life on Mars* or *La Chica de Ayer* are symbolic examples of the complexities involved in (re)producing a series from another audiovisual market. The Spanish creators look at them as a source of inspiration to reproduce successful international series. However, the results in artistic terms and in terms of audience ratings have been mixed. Some of the adaptations have not matched the success of the original versions on which they are based. Spanish media professionals cannot limit their approach to the simple application of the know-how acquired through the purchase of the rights to the series; rather, there are issues relating to the content that require in-depth revision and re-construction on the part of scriptwriters, producers and directors.

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- 1 Patricia Diego, *La ficción en la pequeña pantalla. Cincuenta años de series en España*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2010, p. 11.
- 2 Jonathan Bignell, *An Introduction to Television Studies*, Routledge, London 2004, p. 118.
- 3 *Ibidem*.
- 4 Albert Moran, *The Pie and The Crust: Television Programs Formats*, in Id., *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity*, University of Luton Press, Luton 1998, pp. 13-15.
- 5 See for example: Marta Frago, "Reflexiones sobre la adaptación cinematográfica desde una perspectiva iconológica," in *Comunicación y Sociedad*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2005.
- 6 María del Mar Grandío, Patricia Diego, "The Influence of the American Sitcom on the Production of TV Comedy in Spain," in *Scope. Journal of Film and TV Studies*, no. 16, 2010, <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=16&id=1170>, last visit 15 January 2013.
- 7 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York 2006, p. XVIII.
- 8 Virginia Guarinos, *Del teatro al cine y a la televisión: el estado de la cuestión en España*, in Rafael Utrera Macías, Virginia Guarinos Galán (eds.), *Televisión, Teatro y Cine*, Padilla Libros, Sevilla 2003, pp. 61-77.
- 9 *Mariona Rebull* and *El viudo Rius* (The Riu Widower) by Ignacio Agustí might also be highlighted in this context. See: Patricia Diego, *La ficción en la pequeña pantalla*, cit., pp. 22-23.
- 10 Manuel Palacio, *Historia de la televisión en España*, Gedisa, Barcelona 2001, pp. 152-153.
- 11 Patricia Diego, *La ficción en la pequeña pantalla*, cit., p. 26.
- 12 See: Patricia Diego, *La producción de miniseries durante la etapa hegemónica de TVE (1956-1990)*, in Elsa Moreno, Elea Giménez Toledo, Cristina Etayo, Ruth Gutiérrez Delgado, Cristina Sánchez Blanco, José Enrique Guerrero Perez (eds.), *Los desafíos de la televisión pública en Europa*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2007, pp. 445-455.
- 13 Manuel Palacio, *Historia de la televisión en España*, cit., p. 157.
- 14 Encarna Jiménez Losantos, Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (eds.), *El relato electrónico*, Filmoteca Valenciana, Valencia 1989, p. 37.
- 15 Patricia Diego, *La ficción en la pequeña pantalla*, cit., p. 51.
- 16 *Idem*, p. 53.
- 17 *Idem*, pp. 72-76.
- 18 *Idem*, p. 68.
- 19 See for example: Els De Bens, Hedwing De Smade, "The Inflow of American Television Fiction on European Broadcasting Channels Revised," in *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 16, no. 51, 2001,

- pp. 51-76; Daniel Biltereyst, Phillippe Meers, "The International Telenovela Debate and the Contra-Flow Argument: a Reappraisal," in *Media, Culture and Society*, no. 4, 2001, pp. 469-497; Kristin Moran, "The Global Expansion of Children's Television: A Case Study of the Adaptations of *Sesame Street* in Spain," in *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2006, pp. 287-300.
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- 21 Joseba Bonaut, Teresa Ojer, *El trasvase de formatos exitosos: el caso de Life on Mars*, in Alejandro Salgado (ed.), *Creatividad en Televisión. Entretenimiento y ficción*, Fragua, Madrid 2010, pp. 202-225.
- 22 Serra Tinic, "Life on Mars as Seen from the United States: The Cultural Politics of Imports and Adaptations," in *Flow TV Journal*, [www.flowtv.org/2009/04/life-on-mars-as-seen-from-the-united-states-the-cultural-politics-of-imports-and-adaptations-serra-tinic-the-university-of-alberta/](http://www.flowtv.org/2009/04/life-on-mars-as-seen-from-the-united-states-the-cultural-politics-of-imports-and-adaptations-serra-tinic-the-university-of-alberta/), last visit 10 October 2012.
- 23 Production Diary, *La chica de ayer*, p. 5.