From *caravelas* to *telenovelas*

Popular culture, cultural exchange and cultural appropriation

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Abstract
Brazilian telenovelas have always been very popular in Portugal but in the last years this popularity is decreasing. It seems Portuguese audiences prefer Portuguese telenovelas instead. Why is this so? Within the context of the relationship between Portugal and Brazil, Portuguese identity and theories of cultural exchange and cultural appropriation, this essay, through interviews to ten different subjects, tries to analyse why this is happening.

Key words
Telenovelas, identity, popular culture, cultural exchange, cultural appropriation

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1 Introduction

One group of politicians went to the house of the Defense Minister of Guatemala to ask him to lead a coup. The Minister answered very rudely while closing the door in their faces: “Do not bother me I am watching the telenovela”.¹ This story might seem a little farfetched and even absurd. However in Portugal, when the first Brazilian telenovela – Gabriela – was aired in 1977, the Portuguese parliament suspended one of its sessions so the MP’s could watch it (da Costa, 2003: 159). This episode illustrates how Brazilian telenovelas have always been very popular in Portugal; one can go as far as to say that the Portuguese public has been ‘hooked’ by the genre telenovela.

From 1977 until 1992, the public television aired in both its channels 57 telenovelas of which 52 were from Brazil. The Portuguese began producing its own telenovelas in the 80’s although a novelty that was awarded some watching more out of curiosity than because of anything else, they never displaced the Brazilian ones from being the most popular. From 1992 onwards with the creation of two private television networks, telenovelas from Venezuela and Mexico were also aired. So, in 1994 we have a total of 14 telenovelas, from Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Portugal, being aired daily by three different networks. The number of telenovelas being aired today is still the same however it is only telenovelas from Brazil and Portugal. This means that the telenovela is one of the main reasons why the Portuguese spend time watching television, an average of more than 4 hours a day, making this the highest average in Europe (da Costa, 2003: 106-7).

1.1 Aim of essay

Brazilian telenovelas have been the uncontested preference of Portuguese audiences since its introduction in the Portuguese television market. However the start of two private TV networks brought national fiction production, i.e. telenovelas to a new beginning in recent years. It seems Brazilian telenovelas are being displaced from being the most popular and Portuguese telenovelas are taking their place and each year they attract more viewers. Why is that so? The aim of this essay is to try to find out why the Portuguese audiences are changing its telenovelas viewing preferences, i.e, why are the Portuguese preferring Portuguese telenovelas rather than Brazilian telenovelas?

This essay can be situated within the context of the relationship between Portugal and Brazil and contribute to debates about cultural exchange and appropriation, and popular culture.

1.2 Portugal and Brazil: an asymmetrical relationship?
The relationship between Portugal and Brazil has from the beginning been an interesting one to say the least since it has always been different from the relationship the rest of Latin America has had with Spain. In contrast to the Spanish colonial possessions in the Americas, independence was declared not by local creoles discontent with the impositions from the metropolis, but by a Portuguese king, Dom Pedro I who preferred to defect from the metropolis and lead the rebellion against the homeland rather than return home (from where his father had departed to escape Napoleon’s troops).

Between 1500 and 1822, when Brazil became independent, the relationship between both nations was the typical one between colony and colonizer. After independence and until 1889, the relationship cooled but the ties linking them remained strong, mainly because of the bi-national monarchy: the father D. João VI in Portugal, and the son D. Pedro (I) in Brazil. It is noteworthy that D. Pedro wrote the constitutional texts for Brazil (1824) and Portugal (1826) mirror images of one another, which survived until 1889 and 1910 respectively, and that while definitely being Emperor of Brazil, D. Pedro II, opted for internment in Portugal.

During the period 1889 and 1926 the relationship took on a new political dimension since Brazil became a Republic and influenced political events in Portugal, where the monarchy came to an end in 1910 after a republican revolt. The political instability suffered by the republican regimes in both countries was similar. During this period there was high Portuguese migration to Brazil, and a close intellectual contact between republican circles in both countries. The close proximity of political developments between these nations continued into the second half of the twentieth century, but at different rhythms. In Brazil, the Republic ended with a military coup, which signalled the coming to power of Getúlio Vargas, who instituted the New State, modelled along the lines of the Salazar regime that had come to power in Portugal a few years earlier after a military coup. After WWII their paths diverged in the wake of a period in which trade and social interchanged diminished. So while Brazil turned to democracy in 1945, the Salazar regime consolidated its hold in Portugal, and the former colony became a haven for many exiles of the Portuguese regime, nevertheless Brazil’s democracy was cut short in the midst of intense political polarization of the Cold War by a military coup in 1964. In spite of the fact that both regimes were anti-communist and repressive and became internationally isolated (for human rights violations in the case of Brazil and for a stubborn colonialism in Africa in the case of Portugal) and
although there was mutual sympathy between both regimes, the nature of Salazarism and the military authoritarianism in Brazil were quite different.

In 1974 Portugal went through an officer led Revolution that brought intense political change, which transformed national foreign policy and inserted the country into the international system. The colonies were surrendered and Portugal began to turn to Europe, initiating negotiations to enter the EEC (European Economic Community) becoming a member in 1986. In Brazil on the other hand, the regime began to liberalize in 1976 but it was only in 1985 that power was transferred to a civilian government and after the first free democratic elections in 1988, Brazil finally returned to democracy in 1989. Portugal had by this time undergone significant political and social changes and the distance between the two nations seemed to be great. There was not much Portuguese investment in the country and migration flows had decreased since Portuguese immigrants opted for other Western European countries from 1960’s onwards. However there was some Brazilian investment in Portugal and the beginnings of what has become Brazil’s popular cultural ‘imperialism–in–reverse’ with the arrival of the first telenovelas in Portugal.

From 1990’s to the present the relationship has been characterized by several factors: first, the insertion of both nations into regional integration blocks – the EU and the MERCOSUR and the establishment of closer bilateral ties as members of these groups; second, the liberalization and privatisation of the economies and rapid economic growth increased private investment, particularly of Portuguese investment in Brazil; third, a shift in migration flows, with many Portuguese moving to Brazil, particularly the northeast, but above all, with a massive flow of Brazilians to Portugal, from the early 1980’s onward, newly attractive as a growingly prosperous member of the EC; and fourth, an increasingly complex and rich cultural and academic relationship, with enormous potential for growth.

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2 Derived from the concept ‘reverse media imperialism’, mentioned for the first time by Rogers and Antola (1985) to refer to when Third World nations, in this case, Latin America, penetrate the mass media system of an industrialized nation such as the United States. However Biltereyst and Meers (2000) argue that the international activities of the Mexican Televisa and Brazilian Globo networks cannot be considered a form of ‘reverse cultural imperialism’ but seen in a context of overall strategies to conquer overseas markets.

3 The information contained in this and the above paragraphs was taken from “Relations between Brazil and Portugal: From Caravelas to Telenovelas and Beyond” by Alexandra Barahona de Brito (associate investigator, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais) on a thematic session on the priorities for external action of Portugal – Bilateral relations, during the XXIII International Conference in Lisbon, December 5-6, 2005
1.3 Theoretical Framework

There have been debates within Latin American studies about “cultural imperialism” usually associated to the United States in relation to other countries mostly third world countries. For example, Jean Franco (2004: 184) says that the exportability of mass culture (particularly U.S. culture) is an important factor in Latin American societies. First, it provides a common cultural repertoire that crosses national boundaries and thus tends to superficially blur the local idiosyncrasy (=peculiarity) on which the idea of the national character formerly depended. Second, mass culture usually uses formulas that can readily be adjusted to local circumstances.

Another author, Carlos Monsiváis (2004: 170) tells the ‘story’ of U.S.- Mexican relations and its consequences on Mexican national culture. The traditional and popular Mexican culture was challenged and changed by the expropriation and adaptation of U.S. values. Monsiváis talks of two modernisation processes by which Mexican national culture was updated into the framework of mass culture: radio and cinema during the 1920-40s and rock music and television series during the 1950-70s.

Anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral (2002:219) developed a concept called lusotopia, which means that because Portugal and its former colonies have had a long historical contact they share a world of things, ideas, forms and people that do not have anything specific among them. The sharing of this world is a condition for the constitution of identifications between Portugal and former colonies but it does not necessarily form group identities. This lusotopia is balanced against European identifications, that is, in recognition of similarities and the sharing of a common world with Europe. Since the 80’s the lusotopia identifications have been challenged by the European identifications (p.223).

What is interesting in this case is the fact that it is not Brazil that is at the receiving end of this “cultural imperialism” but the other way around. Looking at the particular case of Portugal one might wonder why have the Brazilian telenovelas been very popular from the beginning. Is it because of this immediate recognition of a shared world of common items such as language and things, what Pina-Cabral (2002) calls lusotopia? Or because of the exportability of the telenovela with its “common cultural repertoire that crosses national boundaries” and “with its formulas that can readily be adjusted to local circumstances” like Franco (2004) says? Have Brazilian telenovelas been like Monsiváis (2004) modernizing process, updating the Portuguese into the framework of mass culture, making them appropriate a cultural product from Brazil, the telenovela?

4 luso- is used to define everything that is Portuguese
1.4 Other key concepts

Since the aim of this essay is to discuss processes of cultural exchange and appropriation by looking at the specific case of Portugal and Brazil and by asking why are the Portuguese audiences changing its telenovela viewing preferences, it might be useful to define what audiences are and how can one see that its viewing preferences are changing.

The main concerns within media studies have been with how people receive media messages: do people receive media messages in a passive way or are they seen as actives agents who work to decode and interpret the message?

According to Fiske (1987: 99) television is such a complex cultural medium full of contradictory impulses it can on one hand promote the dominant ideology of the few and on the other promote an oppositional or at least different cultural capital for the subordinated groups which constitute the majority of the society. Television, says Fiske, consists of programs that are transmitted, of meanings and pleasures that are produced from them, and of the way it is incorporated into the daily routine of its audiences. He argues that programs are produced, distributed and defined by the industry. However texts, still according to Fiske, are the products of their readers, i.e. a program becomes a text at the moment of reading, when it interacts with the audiences and activates some of the meanings and pleasures that it is capable of provoking. Therefore the readers are the producers of texts, the makers of meanings and pleasures.

On the other hand Morley (1992: 87-88) puts forward that the audience should not be thought of as ‘an undifferentiated mass of individuals’ but rather as ‘a complicated pattern of overlapping subgroups and sub-cultures, within which individuals are situated’. And as such members of a particular sub-culture will tend to share a cultural orientation towards decoding messages in a particular way. Therefore their individual readings of messages will be framed by their shared cultural formations and practices. These will in turn be determined by the position the individual has in the social structure. Morley (1992: 21) argues that audiences do not see only what they want to see, i.e. a message (or program) is not simply a window on the world, but rather a construction. And as such it is not an object with one real meaning, there are within it signifying mechanisms which promote certain meanings, even one privileged meaning, and suppress others: these are directive closures – in the form of headlines or high status news for example – encoded in the message (or program). Also the message is capable of different interpretation depending on the context of association. For Morley (1992: 31) there is a difference between having power over a text (message, program) and having power over the agenda within which that text is constructed and presented. The power of the audience to reinterpret meanings is hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralized media institutions to construct the texts, which the audience then interprets.
Another concept that might be useful to discuss is identity because of the relationship between Portugal and Brazil. According to Woodward (1997: 2, 9), identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position and the ways we are different from those who do not. Usually identity is defined by difference, by what is not, and by the marking of inclusion or exclusion – insiders and outsiders, ‘us’ and ‘them’. Identities are also often constructed in terms of oppositions such as man / woman, black / white, normal / deviant. Identity is thus marked by difference and difference is underpinned by exclusion: if you are a woman you cannot be a man, if you are black you cannot be white. For Woodward (2007: 2, 14) identities “are produced, consumed and regulated within culture – creating meanings through symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions which we might adopt”. Representation includes the signifying practices and symbolic systems – of language and visual images for example – such as those involved in media production, through which meanings are produced and which positions us as subjects. She argues that representation produces meanings through which we can make sense of our experience and of who we are, and as a cultural process, representation establishes individual and collective identities and the symbolic system provides possible answers to the questions: who am I?; what could I be?; who do I want to be? Therefore discourses and systems of representation construct places from which individuals can position themselves and from which they can speak. For example, soap opera narratives and the semiotics of advertising help to construct gendered identities and the media can be seen as providing us with the information that tells us what it feels like to occupy a particular subject position – the street-wise teenager, the worker or the caring parent.

Having discussed the theoretical framework and key concepts of this essay I will now give a brief presentation of the method used.

1.5 Method
The main method used in this research was structured interviews to different people to see how they perceive the rise in popularity of Portuguese telenovelas (for the questions posed see Appendix Two). Ten people were interviewed, six females and four males, between the ages of 23 and 80 (for full information about the interviewees see Appendix One). These were selected in a way that both genders, different ages, and different classes were represented: upper middle, middle, low-middle. The questions were elaborated so that it would help to answer the main question of why are the Portuguese preferring Portuguese telenovelas rather than Brazilian telenovelas. All the interviews were carried out in Portuguese.

The other method used is a critical reading of the texts that discuss the subjects of this essay.
2 Background

2.1 Telenovela
When one talks about telenovela, the word that comes to mind as to its immediate translation is soap opera, since telenovela is a Portuguese word. However telenovela and specifically Brazilian telenovela is somewhat different from the U.S. or British soap opera. “Telenovelas are aired six days a week, in the afternoon and prime-time, and unlike soap operas that may last for many years; telenovelas have duration of six to eight months. This means they end after one hundred and fifty to two hundred episodes and are immediately substituted by new ones. Telenovelas can be classified into five categories: humoristic (light comedies, political satires); Western (take place in rural milieus); thrillers (evolve around a mystery or an unsolved murder); documentaries (emphasize realistic descriptions of everyday life, especially everyday violence); and romantic adventures (with heroes and villains)” (Machado Borges, 2003: 6-7, 41-42). Nevertheless one cannot say that the origins of the telenovela are not connected to the soap opera, in fact the opposite is true.

Soap operas appeared originally in radio and from its beginning it has been permeated by capital, i.e. by its sponsors. Radio was considered the cheapest entertainment form, especially during the Great Depression, a fact that big companies could not ignore. Certain radio sponsor companies like Procter and Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, Lever Brothers, which see their sales drop during the recession and as a way to combat this problem they increase production and try to reach a larger public. And how do they do this? Audience research showed that women preferred entertainment programs and had great influence in what was bought for the household; these companies wanted to sell their products – mostly soap and toiletries. Since daytime radio was cheaper than nighttime they start to produce daytime series for women to which they hire writers, actors and producers. These series have themes that would interest women, like women that are suddenly alone, marriage problems or family sagas. They do not have a central plot that captures the listeners’ attention and which leads to an expected or unexpected end. Rather they have a community of characters fixed to one place who live different dramas over and over again for years. These daytime series became known not surprisingly as soap operas due to its connection with the sponsor companies (Ortiz, 1991: 19-21). But what has this to do with the telenovela?

The answer lies with Cuba: its proximity with Miami, the desire of American capital to expand its frontiers combined with the fact that Cubans liked to listen to American programs made it very easy for an American presence from the beginning. This presence was felt in all
radio sectors, which resulted in a radio network with highly specialized professionals, and it is
within this context that the radionovelas appear. Radionovelas are also sponsored by the same
companies as the American soap operas, target the same audience – women – and have the same
schematic but they include something of the Cuban culture: the focus on the tragic or melodra-
matic side of life, but most importantly they start to focus on another theme - love. Apparently
there was already literature specialized for women dealing with the subject of love. Therefore
nothing more natural than incorporate it in the radionovela, and as such we have a return to the
tradition of the feuilleton\(^5\). Not only the plots become different with these new themes but also
the necessity of having a specific publicity break in the narrative imposed by the sponsors make
this a new type of soap opera. And it is this model, which is exported to the rest of Latin Amer-
ica and later on adapted to TV (Ortiz, 1991: 22-25).

The first Brazilian telenovela is aired in 1951 and throughout the 50’s different texts are
presented in episodes of 20 minutes, which are aired twice a week. The passage of the novela
from radio to television was not an easy one. In spite of the difficulties, 164 telenovelas were
produced and aired by 5 different networks between 1951 and 1963. If in the beginning the
melodrama was the main theme of the plots, from 1954 onwards there is a change in direction;
adaptations of international authors like Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo and Bernard Shaw were
made and even adaptations of cinema films that were popular at the time. The reason was that
the telenovela was seen as a minor genre. Therefore there was the need to ‘elevate’ its intellectual
content by adapting great authors (Ortiz, 1991: 28, 36, 42, 45, and 51).

It is only in 1963 that the daily telenovela has its beginning: there is a change in strategy to
increase audiences. More and more people are reached by the TV: there are technical innovations
within TV networks and companies like Colgate-Palmolive recognize that the TV is a great ve-
hicle to promote their products to the masses, therefore they start to sponsor telenovelas. The
themes return to the melodrama: adaptations from telenovelas from Cuba, Argentina, Mexico
and Venezuela and original themes by Brazilian authors. The adaptations from other Latin
American authors however are done in a way that the Brazilian audience can identify with.
These daily telenovelas are a great success and rapidly they become the programs with more
audience (Ortiz, 1991: 58-69). We can see already at this level an illustration of the processes of
exchange and appropriation of cultural products in the history of the genre telenovela.

During the 70’s we have the consolidation of the Brazilian TV industry and the moderni-
zation of the telenovela. This period is also the consolidation of Globo Television Network who

\(^5\) A specific place on a newspaper page, usually at the bottom, where during the 19\(^{th}\) century, themes like crimes, chronicles and
novels in fragments were published (Ortiz, 1991:14)
because of government cultural policies – that believed in national culture not on imported culture, and had the preoccupation with the level of quality of television programs – invested in telenovelas, which have a more of a nationalist focus and of authors who were experienced with theater and cinema. There is a change in the themes of the telenovela: they are less melodramatic and become more ‘real’, that is, there is a preoccupation by the authors to reflect more or less the Brazilian society and the changes that this society goes through. The duration of the telenovela is defined to 6 to 9 months and the telenovela not only dominates within national fiction production but also competes with imported fiction. At the end of the decade Globo reaches annual average audience levels of 40/50%, which are maintained and sometimes increased throughout the 80’s (Ortiz, 1991: 81-108). Today Globo has become the world’s fourth largest television network producing more than sixty percent of the programs it broadcasts. The telenovela is one of its main products. Not only are they popular, reaching audience levels of 60% but they are also exported to more than 100 countries (Machado Borges, 2003: 34; 58). We recall here of Monsiváis’ (2004) modernization process and apply it to the Brazilian case. Brazilian national culture was updated into the framework of mass culture through the telenovela and in a way managed to combat the ‘cultural imperialism’ that Franco (2004) talks about.

### 2.2 Telenovela in Portugal

Since the first Brazilian telenovela was aired in 1977 by RTP (Rádio Televisão Portuguesa) there is an increase of three to four telenovelas a year. Before the most popular programs in television were films but little by little telenovelas surpassed them in popularity. With the creation of private television networks in 1992 and in 1993 the exhibition of telenovelas reached high numbers. With SIC (Sociedade Independente de Comunicação) the number doubled to eleven telenovelas being aired daily and with TVI (Televisão da Igreja and after Televisão Independente) it increases to 14 (da Costa, 2003: 32-33), a number which is still maintained today.

One cannot talk about the introduction of the telenovela, and in particular the Brazilian telenovela, in Portugal without talking about the historical context that allowed it. From 1928 to 1974 Portugal was under a dictatorial regime, which one can divide in 4 cycles: from 1928 to 1945; from 1946 to the beginning of the colonial war in 1961; from 1961 to 1968; and finally from 1969 to the revolution in April of 1974.

During the first cycle, the state uses propaganda and political persuasion as ‘a government instrument’ and under the principle that ‘the only thing that exists politically is what the public knows it exists’ and that ‘appearances are the reality’. The state tries to give the Portuguese people a national identity, using the press, literature, arts, cinema, theater and radio. During this time
we have the implantation of radio in Portugal, the government had its own radio whose contents are controlled and censured. Private radios were sustained by publicity and by selling airtime; its contents were mainly theater plays, information and religious programs. However it is constrained to the main cities and it is only during the 50’s and 60’s that it managed to expand to the rural areas (Ferin Cunha, 2003c: 3). Here we can not only see an illustration of what Woodward (1997) says about the signifying practices and symbolic systems – of language and visual images for example – such as those involved in media production, through which meanings are produced and which positions us as subjects. Meanings through which we can make sense of our experience and of who we are and as meanings that situated within a cultural process establish individual and collective identities. Morley’s (1992) discussion about the power of the audience to reinterpret meanings not being equivalent to the discursive power of centralized media institutions to construct the texts fits also in the Portuguese case.

The second cycle is characterized by institutionalization of the regime and the necessary changes to its continuation. During this time political activities are transferred to the cultural field, which permits the opposition to manifest itself through art, literature, music and architecture. The traditional media presents contents that show a country in political, social and cultural continuity while the cultural industry tries to present diverse contents to the public. TV arrived in 1953 and its expansion was slow. In 1959 not even half of the national territory was covered by television even though the regime was not slow to realize the potential of television to become the main political instrument of the government. However, if television was on one hand a political instrument of the government, it was on the other an open door to different political, social and cultural images, values and spaces, which would lead to social changes in the 60’s and later to the end of the regime (Ferin Cunha, 2003c: 4-5).

During the third cycle there is great activity in what concerns the media. There is an economic openness, due to Portugal becoming a member in the EFTA (European Free Trade Area) and the colonial war effort, which permits not only the entrance of foreign capital but also from Portuguese private groups. As such economic groups will expand their investment interests into the media (press, radio, distribution and editorial companies). There is an increase in public and the emergence of an urban middle class, which leads to a diversification in products for the masses like, fotonovelas and radionovelas in private radio stations, also football on the radio becomes the program with the highest audience. But at the same time that there is greater activity there is also greater control of TV’s contents by the state even though some media tried to escape this control (Ferin Cunha, 2003c: 6).
The fourth and last cycle is characterized by attempts to political liberalization. In the me-
dia the two lines of force continue: the government censorship and the attempts to escape this
censorship. But if the government increases its censure the investment of private groups in the
media and culture also increases and leads to acts of defiance of regime, like the founding of the
newspaper Expresso in 1973 (still exists today), which frontally attacked the regime in its editorial
s and preferring censure to silence. The end of the regime was not far and radio, television,
press, the cultural and telecommunications industry were inseparable elements of the Revolution

But what has all this to do with the telenovela? Well after the end of a regime of 46 years
there was the need to implant democracy (from 1977 until 1985) and to modernize (from 1986
onwards). In spite of the end of the 70’s being characterized by labor conflicts mostly because of
the measures imposed by the IMF and by social unrest due to migration to the cities from the
countryside and from people returning from the African ex-colonies, the beginning of the 80’s
saw the majority of the population increasingly having access to housing, health, education and
consumption. This progressive urbanization of the population permitted the growth of the middle
class with access to education and jobs with better salaries. This context allowed in turn the de-
velopment of television, which promoted other life styles and other consumption patterns and at
the same time it constituted the right time for the appearance of the telenovela because this kind
of program would be the genre that would meet the expectations of this new middle class (Ferin
Cunha, 2003c: 11-12).

The year 1977 initiates a transition period, which only ends in 1985 with the entrance of
Portugal in the then European Community. There has been the first free elections and the first
constitutional government is in power and wants to start picking up the pieces and putting them
together. During the Revolution years of 1974-76 state television was on the side of who was in
power, and it had only two broadcasting times: lunchtime and evening. The new government
initiates a restructuring of television and reformulation of programs and it is in this context that
the first Brazilian telenovela appears: Gabriela, Cravo e Canela, which will forever alter televi-
sion in Portugal and symbolizes the emergence of a new society with life styles centered in con-
sumption and media. Brazilian popular music, literature, cinema and theater were already very

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6 The code for the coup was given through the catholic radio network, in a program called Limite (The Limit), which
aired between midnight and two o’clock. The indication that the signal would be given this way was published in a
socialist morning newspaper in the reviews section. In this section the radio program Limite was praised by becoming
notoriously better in the last few weeks, with great quality of contents and good musical selection and as such it
should not be missed. At 12.25pm the radio presenter read the lyrics of a popular song of Zeca Afonso (a singer
whose songs had been forbidden) and the Revolution was put into motion (Ferin Cunha, 2003c:8).
popular in Portugal by this time. There were radio and television programs with Brazilian popular music; books from Jorge Amado (author who wrote Gabriela) were best sellers; Brazilian theater plays were presented with quite a success; and Brazilian cinema comes to Portugal through selection festivals and the commercial circuit. (Ferin Cunha, 2003c:12-13).

There are no reception studies about the telenovela Gabriela. However through an analysis of the newspapers of the time which, were much politicized because of the Revolution, it is possible to see the forms of the reception of this telenovela. Each newspaper tends to reflect certain tendencies of the Portuguese society, and the treatment of the broadcasting of this telenovela as genuine news, will tend to turn the stories of the telenovela as the history of the revolutionary years. That is, in a country fragmented by political quarrels in the national and familiar spheres, Gabriela, comes to create cohesion and social consensus because of the interactivity that it promotes with its audience. It does this through the basic unit of the family, creating a cultural and political mediating factor between the various social groups. Moreover the telenovela, usually a program for women, becomes in Portugal a program mainly watched by men. (Ferin Cunha, 2003c:13 and 2003b:9).

In 1977 there were only 150 television sets per 1000 inhabitants so it was normal for people in villages and neighborhoods to gather to watch television in public places like cafés and associations, afterwards it was natural to discuss what is was watched. But men did this gathering, they are the ones that can go to these cafés and associations while women stay at home, or even if they have a television set at home, during the broadcasting time, women are busy with dinner or clean up. It is only later with the increase of television sets per household and the broadcasting of telenovelas at times that women can watch that this tendency will change (Ferin Cunha, 2003b: 9,19).

According to the analysis of the newspapers of the time the public tends to appropriate Gabriela through the political and social context of an after Revolution in questions of identity in post colonialism, in questions of women’s emancipation, sexual liberation and changes of life styles and traditions. Therefore we have comparisons between characters of the telenovela, like Glorinha, a woman who is prohibited by her husband of opening her window and who tries to open it nevertheless; this struggle is compared with the struggle of the Portuguese people for its freedom. Or that all women, might they be girls from the telenovela’s brothel or from rich families fight the same fight for emancipation and for society to accept them as they are. The telenovela becomes thus not only a model of modernization but also a public success, which
means that it is from now on a continuous presence in television. Gabriela is broadcasted again during lunchtime and new Brazilian telenovelas are bought, which reach audience levels of 92% (Ferin Cunha, 2003b: pp.9-10, 16). This question of the immediate popularity of the Brazilian telenovela takes us back to the initial questions of this essay: was there an immediate recognition of a shared world of common items such as language and things, what Pina-Cabral (2002) calls lusotopia? Or was the exportability of the telenovela with its “common cultural repertoire that crosses national boundaries” and “with its formulas that can readily be adjusted to local circumstances” like Franco (2004) says which made it a success? Also this success will raise questions about the Portuguese cultural identity.

The hegemony of Brazilian telenovelas will create debates in the media between those in government institutions and cultural industry and this will result in alternatives for those that do not like the Brazilian telenovelas: Portuguese ones. These telenovelas were produced by RTP (public television) and inspired in the Brazilian model but with national themes and actors. The first one, Vila Faia, was aired in 1982 and in its first five episodes had an audience of 71% and it ended up having an audience of 91%. 23% of the public considered this telenovela better than the Brazilian ones, while 55% considered it as good as, and only 12% of the public considered it worse. The other attempts during the 80’s to stop the ‘Brazilian colonization’ were not so successful as this first one and Brazilian telenovelas continued to have the highest audience levels and the Portuguese ones could not capture the attention of the public (Ferin Cunha, 2003c: 16).

The 90’s bring a new phase in the Portuguese television, the beginning of private networks and a new turn on debates about Portuguese identity and Portuguese cultural products: first SIC in 1992 and then TVI in 1993, both these networks will realize that if they want to compete with the public television they have to invest in telenovelas. SIC was the first to realize this, and Globo who until then was a partner of RTP acquires 15% of the private channel SIC and from 1994 onwards SIC is the only channel in Portugal, which can air telenovelas from Globo. This situation forces the other networks to find alternatives and make room for national production; they will hire professionals from Brazil and Europe and will adapt telenovelas and series from other countries and create their own texts. SIC maintains the lead in audiences until 2000 when TVI after broadcasting the reality show Big Brother (considered the telenovela of real life) will capture part of the audiences of SIC and will maintain it with the broadcasting of Portuguese telenovelas. SIC will try to regain audiences continuing to air Brazilian telenovelas and try new things like having Portuguese actors in Brazilian telenovelas or having Portuguese telenovelas with Brazilian actors, but also investing in national production (Ferin Cunha,2003c: 18-19, 21 and da Costa, 2003: 15).
From 2001 until today 34 Portuguese telenovelas have been aired between the three networks, RTP, SIC and TVI however TVI has produced 24 of them. Of the 15 telenovelas being aired today eight are Brazilian; one is a co-production with Brazilian and Portuguese actors and filmed both in Portugal and Brazil; the rest are national productions.7

But how has the Portuguese audience seen the development of the Portuguese telenovela?

2.3 Brazil in Portugal
In order to understand how the Portuguese public has received Brazilian telenovelas all these years, it might be interesting to see in what ways the Brazilian presence is felt in Portugal.

Brazilian popular music, literature, cinema and theater have always been a constant presence in the Portuguese society. However it has been through telenovelas that this culture has been mostly diffused. Before the telenovela Gabriela was aired in 1977, it was preceded by a massive launching campaign that involved all of the media: the newspapers had half page pictures of the telenovela saying it was coming and connecting it to the author Jorge Amado who was already a reference for many Portuguese people; the radio aired Brazilian popular music. There was a public presentation of the telenovela, its actors and main characters at the Ritz Hotel with a cocktail, an interview with Jorge Amado, and a show with music from several Brazilian artists like Vinicius de Morais, Toquinho e Maria Creuza (Ferin Cunha, 2003b: 6-7). This kind of campaigns has always preceded Brazilian telenovelas, maybe not as big as the one for Gabriela, but they still happen today. SIC network which, as we have seen above, has the exclusive right to broadcast for Globo telenovelas, manages to have a concerted effort to promote Globo telenovelas before and during its broadcasting. Through its newspaper Expresso, gossip magazines and television programs, which interview the actors, directors, and authors and show the locations, give great visibility to the productions. Also the telenovela music and songs CD is continuously promoted on television and it is very common for Brazilian actors and artists to come to Portugal to present theater plays and shows which normally sellout. In this way the Portuguese public is exposed to a lot of the Brazilian culture and it is quite normal for Portuguese people to know whom Brazilian actors and artists are. It is very common to find restaurants that serve Brazilian food like picanha and feijoada and serve the drink caipirinha, there is Brazilian music available for mobile ring tones, there is TV publicity with Brazilian musicians, and in the

7 Brazil: Páginas da Vida (Globo/SIC), Pé na Jaca (Globo/SIC), O Profeta (Globo/SIC), Paraiso Tropical (Globo/SIC), Bang Bang (Globo/SIC); Os Ossos do Barão (BandeiRantes/RTP); Vidas Opostas (Record/TV Cabo), Bicho do Mato (Record/TV Cabo). Co-production Brazil/Portugal: Paixões Proibidas (BandeiRantes/RTP). Portugal: A Vingança (SIC), Floribella (SIC); Morangos com Açúcar (TVI), Doce Fugitiva (TVI), Ilha dos Amores (TVI), Tu & Eu (TVI)
last years Brazil has been one of the favorite destinations for holidays, there are daily flights to the main cities of Brazil.

Another way Brazilian presence can be felt is through its people. Portugal, traditionally a country that ‘sent’ immigrants – and a lot of them to Brazil – has in a few years, become a country that ‘receives’ immigrants. From a former 6% the immigrants have become 10% of the population. Therefore the question of the ‘other’ amongst the ‘us’ is a new phenomenon that deserves some attention, since Portugal on the one hand has been the ‘other’ and, on the other hand, has dealt with the ‘other’ in their own territory during more than 400 years of colonization (Ferin Cunha, 2003a: 1).

It is in the 80’s that we can start to see a migratory current to Portugal, which has been maintained since then with an average of one thousand entrances per year. In spite of this modest number Brazilians are the second largest immigrant community in Portugal (a fact that might have influenced the way Portuguese audiences look at Brazilian products). The most important factors that make Brazilians immigrate to Portugal are the common language and culture. The socio-economic profile of the Brazilian immigrants is a relatively high education at least higher that the Portuguese average, nevertheless this is not representative of the majority of the community. They work usually in the specialized services sector like design, artistic professions, publicity, media production, IT, beauty salons and spas, restaurants and bars and in football. One should expect in the future an increase in the number of Brazilian immigration and the community has created roots and has expectations in relation to their social integration, they expect a positive discrimination treatment and want to be an instrument of integration between the two countries, now referred to as sister nations (Trindade, 2001: 172 and Viana, 2001:180-1).
3 Discussion and Analysis

Having the Portuguese context in mind we might now return to this essay’s initial question of why the Portuguese audiences are changing its telenovelas viewing preferences, i.e, why are the Portuguese preferring Portuguese telenovelas rather than Brazilian telenovelas? And how this in turn is connected with debates about popular culture and cultural exchange and appropriation.

3.1 Telenovelas audiences
First it is important to establish that Portuguese telenovelas do indeed have more audience than Brazilian ones.

The following table was compiled by Marktest the company in Portugal that collects information about all kinds of product consumption and audience profiles. It is a table with all telenovelas airing in the three networks (RTP, SIC and TVI) between January 2005 and September 2006. It shows the number of episodes analyzed between certain dates and gives the average rating and share of that telenovela, for that number of episodes during that time.

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8 Audimetry is the technique used to measure audiences. A device called peoplemeter, which measures the time spent watching television is connected to 600 homes in Portugal that have television, this represents a total of 1850 individuals who in turn represent a universe of 8,971,000 individuals. There is the word rating, which refers to the average audience per second, that is, the time that the individual has contact with the program. Then we have the word share, which refers to audience quota, which is calculated from the total time spent watching a certain channel in relation to the total time spent watching television. There is also the word reach, which refers to the total audience, i.e. the percentage or the number of individuals who have contact with a certain program for at least a second (www.marktest.com)
As it is shown in Table 1 it has been a long time since Brazilian telenovelas have reached rating values higher that 10% it is only now with Páginas da Vida that rating values have reached 13,8% during the first month of exhibition (www.marktest.com/wap/a/n/id~cfa.aspx 16/05/07).

While Portuguese telenovelas have usually reached levels above the 10% and even values as high as 16,5% or higher like the one which is being aired now, Ilha dos Amores which, in its first
episode reached 19% and until now has had an average of 16.1% (www.marktest.com/wap/a/n/id~dbc.aspx 16/05/07).

So we can safely say that Brazilian telenovelas, according to this data, are not as popular as they used to be. Why is that so? That is what the authors in the next section tried to find out.

3.2 Previous research

There have not been many people who researched the main subject of popularity of Brazilian telenovelas versus Portuguese telenovelas, nevertheless there are some authors that in one way or the other try to explain why national fiction production has developed.

Isabel Ferin Cunha (2003c:1), a researcher at Coimbra University is one of them. She argues that there is a clear acceptance of the Brazilian telenovela. Nevertheless, she stresses the fact that there are also elements that point to a change of behavior of Portuguese audiences in relation to Brazilian telenovelas. As a basis for this change she points to three different factors. First, the stable growth of the ‘middle class’ and ‘low middle class’ since the 90’s, led to new tastes in TV programs. Second, the expansion of cable TV brought exposure to new and different programs. Third and final, the ‘audiences’ war’ waged between the four TV channels led to new strategies of programming and investment in new television programs.

Another author that wrote about national television fiction (telenovelas) is Catarina Duff Burnay (2006) a researcher at the Portuguese Catholic University. She points out that since the 70’s with the introduction of the first Brazilian telenovela and throughout the 80’s we have in Portugal the consolidation of the Brazilian cultural industries – books, music, theater and cinema. For instance: radios air Brazilian music, books from Jorge Amado (a Brazilian author, whose novels have been adapted to telenovelas) are sold out. The author believes that this continuous relationship with the ‘different’ (Brazilian) has made this ‘other’ a constitutive element of the Portuguese identity. Since, like Woodward (1997) defends, identity is relational, it depends on another identity for its existence; there is a search for new cultural contents which leads to debates about linguistic questions and the need for “Portuguese productions as an alternative for those that do not like brasileiradas”9. It seems as if the national identity, from the year 2000 onwards and after exhaustion of the readings of Brazilian telenovelas, establishes its own claims (Burnay, 2006:63).

Burnay (2006) says then that the TV networks, mostly TVI (private), have found a market for new national products. This maybe has happened due to better technical means, the saturation

9 brasileirada = Portuguese from Brazil, since it has a different accent, some Portuguese people like to think it is not Portuguese but Brazilian
of the characters and plots of the Brazilian telenovelas (maybe reinforced by the constant presence in the Portuguese society of Brazilian products and contents – actors, musicians and food), and by the calling to identify more with the European values – the European identifications of Pina-Cabral (2002). Taking advantage of myths, heroes, imaginary and taboos the new TV networks have tried to find a place in this market, which is based on the revitalization of the idea of the Portuguese nation. As such in the attempt to ‘capture’ new public – especially young public who has grown up with four different TV channels and with diverse programming not based on Brazilian contents – they find themes and plots that will appeal to different social classes and different generations. Also there is a tendency, on the part of authors, producers and directors, to retrieve environments, locations, stories and characters that point to the collective imaginary of the Portuguese population (Burnay, 2006: 63-64).

According to Burnay (2006) then the ‘other’ may be considered as the established and the ‘I’ the novelty to be explored or in the words of Manuel Alegre (Portuguese author and politician) “talvez tenhamos de não ser para podermos voltar a ser” (maybe we have to not be so that we can be again). It may have been necessary to appropriate Brazilian fiction so that national fiction could be developed (p.64). Monsiváis discusses this same question but refers to the case of Mexico and the United states.

The last author I found is Jorge Paixão da Costa (2003), a professor at University Lusófona in Lisbon points out that the way of producing telenovelas of the Brazilian Rede Globo de Televisão (Globo Television Network) and its telenovelas has served as reference to the national production since its beginning in the 80’s until today. This has resulted in what he calls the Portuguese case (o caso português). Da Costa (2003:107) argues that the production of Portuguese telenovelas has to be observed and systematized in three phases, each with its own characteristics and causes. The first, beginning in 1982, was initiated by the political will of the then Program Director of RTP (public television). The second phase, beginning in 1992, was due to the fact that Globo acquired 15% of the private channel SIC and from then on SIC is the only TV network in Portugal that can air telenovelas from Globo creating thus an opportunity for national production. The third and last phase starts in the year 2000 due to two factors: on one hand the other private network TVI, which had been very successful with the ‘reality shows’, sees in the national production a way to regain audiences, on the other we have the public television RTP which sees itself losing ground to the other channels taking a new stance concerning telenovelas.

So on one hand we have Ferin Cunha’s (2003) explanation that modernization, so to speak, brought new ways of looking at television programs and especially at telenovelas. On the other hand Burnay (2006) speaks of a national identity which has been challenged: Brazil, which has been a constant and accepted presence and is part of that identity (maybe through Pina-
Cabral’s *lusotopia*) might now be rejected by that same constant presence and by a call to identify with European values (Pina-Cabral’s European identifications). Still on another, da Costa defends that the Portuguese telenovela has been directly influenced by the Brazilian telenovela. He argues that the production, the narrative structure and all the telenovelas produced by the Globo Television Network have served as reference to national fiction.

It will be interesting to see how the people interviewed explain their preferences and if they are or not influenced by the context of the national identity, by the dilemmas of *lusotopia* and European identifications, or by the Portuguese social reality with Brazilian immigrants and products.

### 3.3 Interviews

There is at least a major comment that would be important to be made at this stage. In order to have results that would be more representative, a larger number of people and of more diverse backgrounds should have been interviewed (ten people were interviewed between the ages of 23 and 80) However, due to the limitation of time and space this was not possible (see Appendix One for more information about the interviewees).

As mentioned before the questions were elaborated in a way that it would help to answer the main question of why are the Portuguese preferring Portuguese telenovelas rather than Brazilian telenovelas and also around the three main theories presented by the above mentioned authors (see Appendix Two for the questions posed).

#### 3.3.1 Watching and favorites

The first three questions were about watching habits. Do people watch telenovelas or not, which ones do they watch and which are their favorites? These questions would help to see right away if the interviewees were leaning to one particular direction: Portuguese or Brazilian telenovelas.

Of the ten interviewees only two did not watch telenovelas; Teresa and Alfredo. Teresa, a thirty-nine year old woman, married, has one daughter and works as a maid said she did not watch them because it was not interesting. Alfredo, a fifty-two year old man, who works as a comercial manager, and lives with his wife and son in a villa in the outskirts of Lisbon, said there are other programs, like *Discovery* or *National Geographic*, he rather watched.

The others that did watch telenovelas, watched regularly but only on SIC and TVI, not on RTP. Susana, a thirty year old secretary who lives with her paraplegic mother, said she both watched Brazilian and Portuguese. As did Simão, a thirty-four year old single man who is unemployed at the moment. Amélia, a eighty year old widow, retired and who lives with her daughter and
her family, watches almost all of the telenovelas, Brazilian and Portuguese, airing today, since, as she says, has nothing else to do. Alda, a seventy-two year old widow, retired and who also lives with her daughter watches both Brazilian and Portuguese. Cristina, a thirty-nine year old single woman who works as a Special Education teacher, said she watches mostly Brazilian telenovelas but now and then she watches Portuguese ones. While João, a twenty-three year old single man who works as a restaurant waiter only watches a Brazilian telenovela at the moment.

There were only two interviewees who only watched Portuguese ones: Josefina, a fifty-two year old widow, who lives with her three teenage children and works as a hotel maid; and Paulo, a forty year old man, married, has one child and who works as an optical technician.

When asked about their favorite telenovela right now, Susana, Cristina e João gave just names of Brazilian telenovelas, while Simão gave the name of a Portuguese one. Paulo only watches telenovelas of a Portuguese author (born in Mozambique and who lived many years in Brazil - can one see lusotopia here?), and Josefina does not have patience to see Brazilian telenovelas because they do not tell us [Portuguese] anything. Amélia and Alda have as their favorites both Brazilian and Portuguese telenovelas.

Actually, when it comes to watching preferences it does seem that the interviewees lean more towards Brazilian than Portuguese telenovelas.

3.3.2 Popularity contest
I also asked the question about which telenovelas do they think are more popular in order to find out why Brazilian telenovelas are loosing popularity. To this question half of the interviewees answered Brazilian telenovelas while the other half answered Portuguese. The reasons given for the popularity of Brazilian telenovelas were: Brazilians have been doing them for a longer time (Teresa); they have better quality and more rotation of actors (Simão), they are more diverse in its plot, actors and locations (João); they are always good (Amélia); and Brazilians are good in what they do (Alda).

For the popularity of the Portuguese telenovelas the reasons given seem to have been influenced by the context of national identity and to echo the words of Burnay (2006) – better technical means, the saturation of the characters and plots of the Brazilian telenovelas. On the one hand, they have become better and Portuguese people are getting saturated of everything that comes from Brazil (Alfredo). On the other hand, Portuguese telenovelas represent the Portuguese society (Susana); they have achieved a better technical level and include our customs and lan-
guage\textsuperscript{10} (Paulo); they have Portuguese actors (Josefina specified the good looking ones); they have things closer to the Portuguese people (Cristina).

According to the interviewees both Portuguese and Brazilian telenovelas are popular: the Brazilian ones continue popular because they are good and the Portuguese ones are becoming popular because they are getting better and more representative of the Portuguese society and culture.

### 3.3.3 Brazilians do it better

The reason to ask if the way of doing Portuguese telenovelas was like Brazilians do telenovelas was twofold: on one hand to test da Costa’s (2003) argument that Brazilian telenovelas from Globo have served as reference to national fiction; and on the other to see if Brazilian telenovelas have been like Monsiváis (2004) modernizing process, which has updated the Portuguese into the framework of mass culture, by appropriating the telenovela.

Half of the interviewees answered that the Portuguese try to copy the way Brazilians do telenovelas. Susana thinks we do copy in order to get audiences, Paulo says that they are indeed a reference for production, and Amélia believes Portuguese try to copy but Brazilians do it better. While Alda is not sure Portuguese telenovelas follow the way of Brazilian telenovelas but she believes the Portuguese are getting better at doing telenovelas. The other half agrees that Brazilians do telenovelas differently than the Portuguese. Simão thinks it has to do with their culture, their way of looking at the world, at television, and at the theatre; it is a different way. Cristina believes that Brazilians are more natural when it concerns telenovelas while the Portuguese are not. Josefina says that the way of doing it might not be the same but Portuguese telenovelas are already very good compared to years ago, and João is convinced that the way of doing them is very different: Portuguese do it so much worse.

So da Costa’s (2003) argument seems to be correct in so far as Portuguese do have Brazilians telenovelas as a reference. At the same time, it does seem that the Portuguese by appropriating the genre telenovela, producing it themselves and adapting it to Portuguese reality have entered the mass culture business like Monsiváis (2004) talks about. But according to some of the interviewees although Portuguese have become better at doing telenovelas Brazilians still do it better.

\textsuperscript{10} Paulo used here the specific word language and not accent which is significant; Brazilians and Portuguese do have the same language but different accents. See also footnote 9.
3.3.4 Learning

It was interesting to see that when asked if people could learn from telenovelas, half the interviewees indicated Brazilian telenovelas as examples. Maybe this is an illustration of Franco’s exportability of mass culture and a factor that made and might still make Brazilian telenovelas popular.

For Teresa and Susana one can learn nothing, while for Amélia and Alda people can learn about real life. They named as an example the Brazilian telenovela *Páginas da Vida*\(^{11}\). Alfredo thinks one can learn about different cultures, different places and different ideas (referring to the Brazilian ones) and Simão about the country of the telenovela. Paulo, Cristina e João all say it depends on the telenovela and point to the Brazilian one *Páginas da Vida* as an example of one to learn things from. Josefina points out that from telenovelas one can learn to dream but dreaming is also part of life.

3.3.5 Modernity and values

Since Ferin Cunha (2003) argues that modernization, so to speak, brought new ways of looking at television programs and especially at telenovelas it would be interesting to see if telenovelas, mainly Brazilian ones were the reason of their own decrease of popularity. That is, by showing other life styles and promoting different consumption patterns and introducing other values, Brazilian telenovelas might have brought with it the need to have those [telenovelas] but in a way that would speak more to the Portuguese society. For example, Susana pointed out that it was in the Brazilian telenovelas that one started to see different values, especially other ways of thinking about social aspects. But now one can also find them in Portuguese telenovelas, to which João and Josefina gave *Morangos com Açúcar*\(^{12}\) as an example.

All the interviewees with the exception of one think that telenovelas can be considered a modernizing agent, promoting mostly different consumption patterns but also other values. Alfredo remarked that with Brazilian telenovelas the way Portuguese speak Portuguese became less orthodox. So, in a way, one can say that the language was ‘modernized’. Cristina was alone in thinking that for other life styles and consumption patterns one should look for information programs and not telenovelas.

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\(^{11}\) This telenovela begins with a doctor delivering twins of a young unmarried woman who dies giving birth. The twins are a boy and a girl who has Down Syndrome. Because of this her grandmother rejects her and tells everybody she also died during the birth, later the doctor adopts the baby girl. The subject of children with Down Syndrome approached by this telenovela has created a lot of discussion in the Portuguese society about this issue.

\(^{12}\) This is a telenovela for teenagers; the plot is around different youths in a school and their interaction with one another, their teachers and their families. Throughout the stories of the characters different issues like teenage sex, drug and alcohol abuse, relationships, homosexuality, etc. are approached.
3.3.6 Brazilians in Portugal

The question of how do you think Brazilians in general are seen in Portugal, would help to see if there might be any connection between how Brazilians are seen and the decrease of popularity of Brazilian telenovelas.

Only three of the interviewees said that they considered that Brazilians are well seen in Portugal: Teresa says they are well seen, Alda thinks they are well seen, and Amélia says they are well seen, esteemed the way Portuguese are also in Brazil, while the rest was not so generous in their opinion. Susana thinks they are not reliable, they do not inspire confidence. Simão says they are seen in a bad way, maybe because Portugal was the colonizer country and a bit racist. Paulo is of the opinion that they have been better seen than today, mostly because the Brazilian of the telenovela is not the Brazilian we meet on the street with the good and bad things, and since Portuguese are more taciturn they do not like those that are more open, they see them as trying to be better than they are. Josefina said she hears that as workers Brazilians are not good but as she has never worked with them so she cannot be sure, but she thinks Portuguese see Brazilians in a good way. João said they are seen in a bad way, he cannot explain why but that is the idea he has. Cristina was of the opinion that before it was the Brazilians who had prejudice against the Portuguese – who, Brazilians thought, were backward and provincial. Now the Portuguese have prejudice against Brazilians because of those who immigrate, the way they ‘integrate’ the Portuguese society through professions not well seen, which give the Brazilians a bad connotation. Alfredo also agrees that they were better seen than they are today but Brazilian immigration to Portugal altered the way Portuguese look at them.

One cannot say that it has been the Brazilian immigration to Portugal that triggered the decrease of popularity of Brazilian telenovelas, but one cannot dismiss it completely. According to the informants there is a difficult acceptance of Brazilians in the Portuguese society and their image is not a good one. It might be that these factors, not in a conscious way, have contributed for the way Brazilian telenovelas are seen today and their popularity reflects the ‘popularity’ or not of the Brazilians in Portugal. However it must be stressed that there is not a clear connection between the two but as Ferin Cunha (2003a) puts it: the question of the ‘other’= Brazilian amongst the ‘us’= Portuguese is a phenomenon that deserves some attention.

3.3.7 Brazilians on TV

The way media in general presents Brazilians is very important for the way Portuguese people see Brazilians because as Woodward (1997) puts it, it is through the symbolic systems of language and visual images such as those involved in media production, through which meanings
are produced and which positions us as subjects. She argues that representation produces meanings through which we can make sense of our experience and of who we are, and as a cultural process, representation establishes individual and collective identities, that is, it creates the ‘us’ and the ‘other’. So when asked how do you think Brazilians are represented on television in Portugal? The interviewees answered in the following way.

Teresa thinks they are represented in a positive way, while Susana is of the opinion that whenever one hears about Brazilians on TV it is usually associated with prostitution, not so much with crimes, and with football. João has a similar opinion but he thinks they are often associated with crime: shooting, killing or prisons. Simão says that if it is associated with music and acting then it is in a positive way. Although Paulo believes they are more represented in Portugal than Portuguese in Brazil, Brazilians are represented in a positive way. Josefina is of the opinion that both good and bad things about Brazilians are represented on TV. Cristina believes that a more negative image is shown, Brazil is not only poor people; it is very rich, with good authors, good musicians and so on and that image is not diffused. Amélia and Alda both agree that they are represented in a good way, while Alfredo says that the way they are represented is not real but an image that is sold mostly through telenovelas. That image is of a modern Brazil with high living standards but the way Brazilians live is very different. Of course those things exist but not for most of the population. Still that image is so well sold that even Brazilians in Portugal try to live that image by minimizing European cultural values.

3.3.8 Flooded or not flooded that is the question

In a general way the interviewees do not think Portugal is ‘flooded’ with Brazilian products. Amélia does not think so and Alda does not see many Brazilian products in Portugal. Teresa for example says that is only in terms of telenovelas but the Portuguese are catching up. Susana agrees that Brazil is loosing ground and João says not so much anymore. Paulo, Cristina, and Alfredo are of the opinion that we are ‘flooded’ but in a good way, i.e. Paulo says that part of the Brazilian culture is quite good and Cristina believes Portuguese people are always interested in Brazilian products: music, theater, actors, because they can captivate more easily. While Alfredo says that we are not so much ‘flooded’ with products per se because it is expensive to import products from Brazil, but in terms of imported Brazilian music, it is different. Portuguese always imported Brazilian music which in his opinion the Portuguese contributed a little bit with the folklore and a lot with the slaves from Africa, which is why they [Brazilians] are such musical people.
It seems that the interviewees consider that it is normal to have Brazilian telenovelas, music and shows in Portugal, like it is a part of the cultural environment.
4 Conclusion

The aim of this essay was to try to find out why the Portuguese audiences are changing its telenovelas viewing preferences, i.e., why are the Portuguese preferring Portuguese telenovelas rather than Brazilian telenovelas? The answer to this question is not as easy as it might have seemed initially because on one hand we have the empirical material implying that Brazilian telenovelas are still popular: the interviewees lean more towards Brazilian telenovelas; half of them considered them more popular than Portuguese ones; they are a reference for production of Portuguese ones because they are good; and they are given as an example of telenovelas one can learn from, and finally Brazilian culture and products presence in Portugal is in a way considered natural in the Portuguese society. On the other hand we have, also through the empirical material, a recognition that Portuguese telenovelas are gaining popularity: they are getting better and closer to the Portuguese reality.

Pina-Cabral’s (2002) insights on lusotopia v. European identifications might help to understand better this situation. The long historical contact between Portugal and Brazil with the shared world of things, ideas, forms, people and language, made it easy for the acceptance and popularity of Brazilian telenovelas. Nevertheless one should not forget that the exportability of a mass cultural product like the telenovela, like Franco (2004) says, contributed to this acceptance. The common cultural repertoire that crosses national boundaries and the use of formulas that can readily be adjusted to local circumstances were both even more exacerbated in this case because of the common world of lusotopia. However this did not last forever because while the sharing of this world was a condition for the constitution of identifications between Portugal and Brazil (hence the easy acceptance of telenovelas), it was not necessarily a condition for group identity, and this easy acceptance raised questions about the Portuguese cultural identity. It is as if these identifications of lusotopia between Brazil and Portugal threaten the European identifications of the Portuguese identity which have been brought to the fore by Portuguese membership in the European Union (EU).

There seems to be a need then, like Burnay (2006) discusses, for the national identity – after becoming exhausted of the readings of Brazilian telenovelas and being called to identify more with the European values – to establish its own claims, that is to find an identity closer to Portuguese and European identifications and not so close to the identifications of lusotopia.

Portuguese telenovelas by revitalizing the idea of the Portuguese nation with its themes and plots, environments, locations, stories and characters that point to the collective imaginary of the Portuguese population seem to have come to reinforce this new identity. And it is here that
one can see the Portuguese national culture being updated into the framework of mass culture like Monsiváis (2004) argues. But of course this was done also because the telenovela as a product was seen to be a public success. The Portuguese TV industry wants to have a part of the telenovela cake so to speak, and like da Costa (2003) argues and as the subjects of the interviews confirmed, they produce Portuguese telenovelas having the Brazilian ones as a reference. Apart from the first ones produced by RTP which got some high ratings, the ones that eventually supersede the Brazilian ones in terms of popularity are produced during the last decade by TVI (see table 1).

And if Portugal’s identity is closer to European identifications everything that is closer to the identifications of *lusotopia* is seen in a different light: Brazilian telenovelas lose their popularity and its people lose their appeal. Immigration flows have been inverted: Portugal is a country that receives immigrants (mostly due to the fact of Portugal becoming a member of the EU) instead of being a former immigrant country which has also reinforced this new identity, and as such Brazilians are not as well seen as they once were.

So looking at the particular case of Portugal, one might say that Brazilian telenovelas have been very popular from the beginning and somewhat still are because of an immediate recognition of a shared world of common items such as language and things, which Pina-Cabral (2002) calls *lusotopia*. But also because of the exportability of the telenovela with its “common cultural repertoire that crosses national boundaries” and “with its formulas that can readily be adjusted to local circumstances” like Franco (2004) says. But the callings of Pina-Cabral’s (2002) European identifications require a new identity away from this *lusotopia*, which is reinforced by national fiction to which the market has responded. Brazilian telenovelas have been like Monsiváis (2004) modernizing process, updating the Portuguese into the framework of mass culture. The Portuguese have then appropriated a cultural product from Brazil - the telenovela - and made it their own: with stories closer to the Portuguese reality and closer to the Portuguese heart.
Appendix One

Interviewees quoted in the text

Alda: seventy-two year old widow, retired. Third grade. Mother of five, lives with her daughter in Lisbon.

Alfredo: fifty-two year old man. Industrial degree, works as a comercial manager, and lives with his wife and son in a villa in the outskirts of Lisbon.

Amélia: eighty year old widow, retired. First grade. Mother of two, lives with her daughter and her family in Lisbon.

Cristina: thirty-nine year old single woman, Post graduate University degree in Special Education and works as a Special Education teacher and lives in Lisbon.

João: twenty-three year old single man. Incomplete high school, works as a restaurant waiter and lives in Lisbon.

Josefina: fifty-two year old widow. She completed basic grammar school and works has a hotel maid. She lives with her three teenage children in Lisbon.

Paulo: forty year old man. Married and has one child. Imcomplete high school education. Works as an optical technician and lives in Lisbon.

Simão: Thirty-four year old single man. Post graduate university degree in Sociology. Unemployed, lives in Lisbon


Teresa: thirty-nine year old woman. Married and has one child. Incomplete high school education, she works as a maid and lives in Lisbon.
Appendix Two

Interview Questionnaire

1) Do you watch telenovelas? Which ones and on which network?
2) Do you watch them everyday?
3) Which is your favorite telenovela? Why?
4) Which telenovelas do you think are more popular, Portuguese or Brazilian? Why?
5) Do you think the way of doing Portuguese telenovelas is like the way Brazilian do telenovelas?
6) Do you think people can learn something from telenovelas? Ex.?
7) Do you think telenovelas can be considered a modernizing agent, promoting other lifestyles, other values and other consumption patterns?
8) How do you think Brazilians in general are seen in Portugal?
9) How do you think Brazilians are represented on television in Portugal?
10) Do you think Portugal is ‘flooded’ by Brazilian products and culture?
11) Personal data: sex, age, educational level, marital status, occupation, residence

There was also a questionnaire for those who said they did not watch telenovelas:

1) Why don’t you watch telenovelas?
2) Have you never watched any telenovela or is it just now that you don’t watch?
3) In spite never watching telenovelas do you know what are the telenovelas being broadcast today?
4) Do you think telenovelas are popular programs? Why?
5) Which telenovelas do you think are more popular, Brazilian or Portuguese? Why?
6) Do you think people can learn something from telenovelas? Ex.?
7) Do you think telenovelas can be considered a modernizing agent, promoting other lifestyles, other values and other consumption patterns?
8) How do you think Brazilians in general are seen in Portugal?
9) How do you think Brazilians are represented on television in Portugal?
10) Do you think Portugal is ‘flooded’ by Brazilian products and culture?
11) Personal data: sex, age, educational level, marital status, occupation, residence
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