

### **Abstract**

This study proposes a critical overview enhancing almost twenty texts especially aimed at children that fictionalise the Carnation Revolution in different ways, in some cases alluding to its antecedents and contrasting them with the period after the establishment of democracy. Textual corpus is made up of books/texts by relevant Portuguese writers, such as Manuel António Pina, António Torrado, Luísa Ducla Soares, José Jorge Letria or João Pedro Mésseder, and by illustrators, such as Manuela Bacelar, Marta Madureira, João Caetano or André Letria. This is a remarkable collection of works with high aesthetic-literary quality, which are important in shaping literary competence and in the process of literary education. They involve and challenge the reader, contributing to the preservation of memory, and also playing a fundamental role in stimulating the reading of the world-text, which is very necessary for the younger generations.

**Keywords:** Portuguese Children's Literature, Carnation Revolution, Historical and literary memory

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### **Resumo**

Este estudo propõe uma visão crítica que valoriza quase duas dezenas de textos especialmente dirigidos ao público infantil que ficcionalizam a Revolução dos Cravos de diferentes formas, nalguns casos aludindo aos seus antecedentes e contrastando-os com o período posterior à instauração da democracia. O *corpus* textual é constituído por livros/textos de autores portugueses relevantes, como Manuel António Pina, António Torrado, Luísa Ducla Soares, José Jorge Letria ou João Pedro Mésseder, e por ilustradores, como Manuela Bacelar, Marta Madureira, João Caetano ou André Letria. Trata-se de um conjunto notável de obras de elevada qualidade estético-literária, importantes na formação da competência literária e no processo de educação literária. Envolvem e desafiam o leitor, contribuindo para a preservação da memória e desempenhando

também um papel fundamental no estímulo à leitura do texto-mundo, tão necessário às gerações mais novas.

**Palavras-chave:** Literatura Infantil Portuguesa, Revolução dos Cravos, Memória histórica e literária

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On the 50th anniversary of April 25, 1974

Esta é a madrugada que eu esperava  
O dia inicial inteiro e limpo  
Onde emergimos da noite e do silêncio  
E livres habitamos a substância do tempo  
Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen

This is the dawn I've been waiting for  
The first full, clear day  
Where we emerge from the night and the  
silence  
And free we inhabit the substance of time

## 1. Introduction

Children's literature is understood as a special system for validating values and shaping world views, which is aimed at the reader-citizen in training. It thus represents a special collection that needs to be taken into consideration and revisited. This revisiting is increasingly important given the urgency to recover historical memory, particularly among the younger generations. We are living at a time when history is in danger of being wiped out (a convenient truth for those within certain socio-political circles), when all that prevails is the 'foam of the days', and when attempts are being made – often with clear intent – to distort and evoke certain historical periods as if they were a fictional text. At such a time as this, it seems there is an urgent need to address a moment like the 25th of April, 1974, together with its antecedents and aftermath. In fact, the preservation of memory, and its construction through literary reading, are of crucial importance today:

Reading or being given something to read to create memory... Because depriving young people of literature is denying them the possibility of reliving history through fiction. Fiction rooted in life, recreating what historiography was unable or unwilling to tell. Fiction that involves and challenges the

reader, fostering identifications, stimulating a critique of the present anchored in a 'lived' understanding of the time that has passed. Reading. Reading to (re)live, create memory, convert it into a legacy and a pillar of active citizenship. This is one of the purposes of writing. And of children's and youth literature.

(Ramos, Gomes, & Silva, 2009)

This study presents a selection of books to read or to be given to read which, in different ways, recreate the 25th of April, thus reviving memory, a collective memory, revised through fiction and now also cemented through literature that has children as its potential extratextual recipients.

## **2. A note on children's literature that "prepared for April"**

In the period between the Military Dictatorship (1926-1933) and the Estado Novo – or New State – (1933-1974), under the rule of Salazar, children's literature was hampered by the 'natural' constraints of a repressive, totalitarian regime that controlled every aspect of culture and society. When, in 1950, the censorship services issued their *Instructions for Children's Literature*, they did not favour the creation or dissemination of "independent" literary expressions or those not adhering to Salazar's ideology. Although we can recognise the emergence of unique literary voices, whose presence in the history of Portuguese children's literature is unquestionable (they will be briefly mentioned below), there was a proliferation of conservative texts in line with the regime whose main aim was indoctrination. "Fending off" censorship was not an easy task for authors who wrote especially for the young. However, there are several examples of published works that, due to their ideological and thematic configuration, clearly at odds with the precepts of the state, seem to have escaped the "blue pencil". Such texts clearly announced a renewing impulse, a civic awareness and a desire to awaken consciousness, which, although mainly anticipated to be read by children and young people, inevitably also reached the adults who accompanied them. In short, they are a collection of texts for children which, despite the constraining environment, sought in some way to innovate and reveal their authors' intention to remain independent.

Many of these literary figures or writers, attentive to children and the defence of their rights, acted with the necessary discretion and subtlety during the Salazar regime. Through their socio-political and/or pedagogical-cultural intervention and their writing, one of the forms of action they took was to help "prepare for April", stimulating reflection through the literary word and calling for change. Papiniano Carlos, with his *A Menina Gotinha de Água* (1963), praised energy and unity. Luísa Ducla Soares and her *A História da Papoila* (1972) did the same, whispering about the vital importance of freedom. But before that, for example, Sidónio Muralha, in the poems "Grilos e Grilões" and "Joaninha", from *Bichos, Bichinhos e Bicharocos* (1949), thematised oppression and social inequalities, as well as poverty. Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, in *A Noite de Natal* (1959), fictionalises two different childhoods with special delicacy. António Torrado, in *O Veado*

*Florido* (1972), also emphasises the indispensability of freedom for beauty, dreams and life, suggesting his opposition to dictatorial precepts. Matilde Rosa Araújo is also one of those who, in several books (*O Sol e o Menino dos Pés Frios*, from 1972, is one of them), did not hide her anguish and solidarity with the many unprotected or helpless children she came across.

### 3. Children's literature and the 25th of April: Memory(ies)

Without intending to be exhaustive but seeking to emphasise the technical-compositional and ideo-thematic singularities of each selected volume, the approach taken by this research is to revisit eighteen works/texts that fictionalise the Carnation Revolution in different ways, in some cases alluding to its antecedents and contrasting them with the period after the establishment of democracy.

The study will thus present a reading of a representative textual corpus that includes different narratives, listed here in chronological order (date of first edition).

This overview begins with *História de uma Flor*, by Matilde Rosa Araújo (1976/1983/2008).



**Figure 1.** *História de uma Flor* book cover.

Published for the first time in 1976, in the collection «Cadernos da Juventude e Cultura»/12, under the title *Vamos Contar...* and subtitled «Três Histórias de Matilde Rosa Araújo e Manuel Ferreira» which includes the short stories «O Homem e o Carneiro» [by Manuel Ferreira], «O Cágado e o Lagarto» [by Manuel Ferreira] and the narrative under analysis here, this text by Matilde Rosa Araújo was also reprinted in 1983 in the book *A Velha e o Bosque*. *História de uma Flor* was published independently in 2008 by Editorial Caminho, with expressive illustrations by João Fazenda.

In her own tone and timbre, the author symbolically fictionalises the grey, dark and sunless time of the dictatorship, as experienced by a flower, contrasting it with another time when Spring appears and opens «curtains of light». A beautiful flower – which the text doesn't differentiate, but Fazenda's illustrations recreate as a red carnation – is a symbol of hope, as is the music itself and the gesture of a child picking it. Themes such

as freedom, friendship, fraternity, joy and dreams permeate the narrative and give a glimpse of the thematised context:

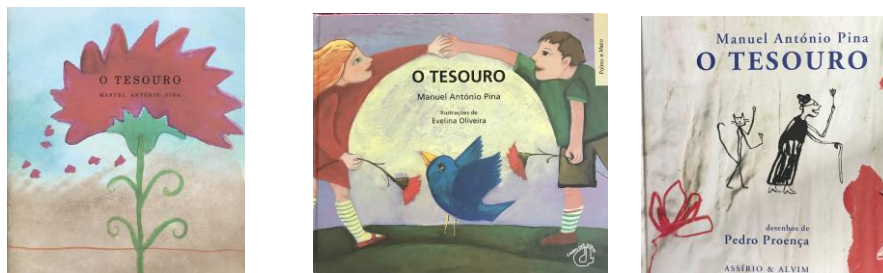
There were red flowers everywhere in the streets. On the chests of women, men, in the eyes of children, in the silent barrels of rifles.

It wasn't even a war or a party.

It was the world with an open heart.

(Araújo, 2008, s./p.)

Another significant work that has been reissued is Manuel António Pina's *O Tesouro* (1993/2005/2013).



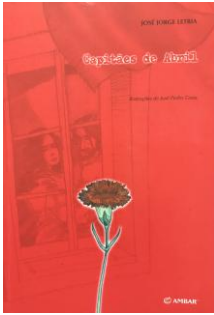
**Figure 2.** *O Tesouro* book covers.

This short narrative has become one of the most widely read in school contexts, first published in 1993 by the April 25th Association, with soft illustrations by Manuela Bacelar. It was reissued with a more dominant and stronger pictorial component by Evelina Oliveira, and then again, in 2013, with artwork by Pedro Proença.

The leitmotif of this work is memory and a crucial moment in recent history, the Carnation Revolution. Manuel António Pina fictionalises the before, during and aftermath of 25 April 1974, ending with an appeal for «Freedom Day» to be forever remembered and for this «Country of Sad People» never to return. This very expressive short story is written in a lively and emotional register, punctuated by metaphor, polysyndetic structures with an enumerative function, and sensory notation, evoking sights and sounds. We can, for example, detect the crossing of a set of binomials with important expressive and symbolic connections, namely: the «grey» state of mind of the people vs. the «blue» scenery that surrounds them; their closed and silent appearance vs. their frank, open and conversational essence; silence vs. song; the past vs. the present; the country of sad people vs. the lands of visitors; fear vs. courage; oppression vs. freedom; and dictatorship vs. democracy.

A final note to underline is the fact that, in 1999, João Botelho directed the film *If Memory Exists*, based on this short story by Manuel António Pina.

*Capitães de Abril* (1999) is one of several other works that José Jorge Letria, a major literary figure and renowned singer-songwriter, has written in the field of children's historiographical fiction and, more specifically, based on 25 April 1974.



**Figure 3.** *Capitães de Abril*, book cover.

In this short narrative, limited to the historical moment of the Carnation Revolution, the focus is on the actions of the young officers in favour of Democracy and Freedom. Thus, in José Jorge Letria's writing, Salgueiro Maia, Vasco Lourenço and Melo Antunes – to name just a few – appear almost as if mythologised.

History is told in an accessible and objective tone, with a clear concern for accuracy, veracity and detail. In fact, in the context of *Capitães de Abril*, factuality, a characteristic of historical novels, appears to be a basic feature of the entire literary construction. The narrator, for example, although situated at an extradiegetic level, seems to have lived what he is telling, with a deep knowledge of the history that serves as a backdrop to the narrative, and his omniscient status is therefore evident. The characters, «fictional figures» who occasionally intervene in the diegesis and seem to have an almost subsidiary status, do not play a central role in the work. Rather, it can be argued that they serve to lend verisimilitude to the presence and discourse of the historical figures.

In five parts, J.J. Letria's book begins with the particular scenario of João and Teresa, a young couple who, on the morning of 25 April 1974, hear on the radio that the Armed Forces Movement has taken over «the military and political situation throughout the country» (Letria, 1999, p. 5). It denounces a series of problems that Portugal was suffering from before the April Revolution, most acutely, the drama of the Colonial War, imprisonment and exile for political reasons.

It is perhaps for this reason that the narration oscillates between the historical present, identified with the «magic hours» (idem, ibidem: 14) of 25 April, and a time evoked or viewed by means of analepsis. Whenever the story moves backwards and the narrator refers to Portugal's isolation, generalised poverty, the issue of emigration, the actions of the PIDE/DGS, the exiles or the soldiers in Africa, there is an almost suffocating bitterness and disenchantment:

Indignation and revolt was what he felt when the police arrested a large number of Catholics who were holding a vigil in the Rato chapel in Lisbon, or when he saw policemen and dogs mistreating hundreds of people at the Congress of the Democratic Opposition in Aveiro, or when one day, at dawn around seven o'clock, they rang his front door and took his brother into

custody, with no definite charges, no right to visitors and no date set for his trial. (idem, ibidem, p. 48).

On the other hand, in the narrative moments coinciding with the Carnation Revolution or with the future possibilities inaugurated by this movement, the discourse becomes clearer, more enthusiastic, more emotional:

Those were (...) the days of euphoria and hope without limits or reservations. (idem, ibidem, p. 38); People were once again proud of their flag and the intense beauty of its colours. (idem, ibidem, p. 39); In the eyes of the soldiers there were signs of deep fatigue, but there were also unmistakable marks of joy. They were living and making history, peacefully realising, without blood or humiliation, the dream of several generations of Portuguese, born and raised in a dictatorship, who knew no other reality than fear, mistrust and terror. (idem, ibidem, p. 53).

As a result, the lens of the narrator of *Capitães de Abril* is attentive and concerned not to omit any fact. That is why the text is dense, in terms of references to the places that were the stage for the April demonstrations (Rossio, Terreiro do Paço and Largo do Carmo), the preparatory meetings for the Revolution, the songs that were decisive at the time (and which are now symbolic) («E depois do Adeus», by Paulo de Carvalho, and «Grândola, Vila Morena», by Zeca Afonso), the names of the journalists who read the first communiqués (Luís Filipe Costa or Joaquim Furtado) or the posters by Vieira da Silva and João Abel Manta.

In short, *Capitães de Abril* is a book full of rigorous notes, but skilfully organised and literarily treated, thus representing an example of how History, Memory and Fiction often go hand in hand.

Released on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the April Revolution, *Vinte Cinco a Sete Vozes* by Alice Vieira (1999/2008/2012) is a narrative with an ambivalent addressee, in that it does not seem to be aimed solely at young readers.



Figure 4. *Vinte Cinco a Sete Vozes* book covers.

This is a volume that is part of the «Caminho de Abril» Collection and which is the result of an initiative by Editorial Caminho to mark the 25th anniversary of 25 April. To make it happen, the publisher invited a group of authors, almost

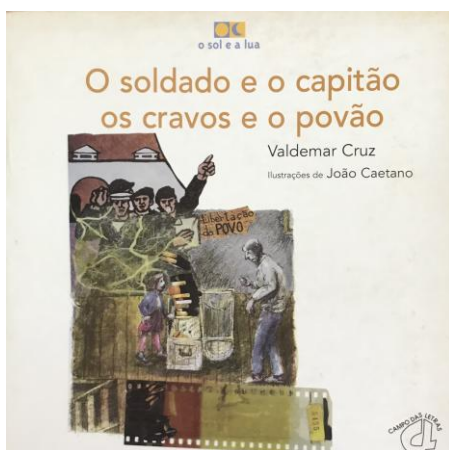
all of them published by Caminho, to write a piece of fiction with the theme, directly or indirectly, of 25 April 1974.

The work presents a set of seven different voices (narrators) – in seven chapters – that make up a very lively account, very much in the style of its author, with assiduous humour and a verisimilar register: «... Then the 25th of April... To be honest, 25 April, 5 October, 1 November, 1 December and 1 May are all the same thing, in other words, it's a holiday and that's what matters...» (Vieira, 2008, p. 11).

The recreation of 25 April is conceived using characters belonging to different age groups and different social classes, a strategy that serves to convey a range of points of view and a plural vision of the historical moment in question. With school and family settings, the action is triggered by a young trainee who is preparing a master's dissertation on the 25th of April. She begins her research by approaching a young man who is completely unaware of the Carnation Revolution and it is from there that, meeting different figures, she discovers what each of them knows, thinks and, indeed, feels.

The outcome is a happy one because, as you can read in the peritext on the back cover of the book, «since freedom can also be celebrated hand in hand in a city shopping centre...».

The narrative *O Soldado e o Capitão os Cravos e o Povão*, by Valdemar Cruz (1999), has a different tenor.



**Figure 5.** *O Soldado e o Capitão os Cravos e o Povão* book cover.

Rereading the fourth edition of this work, published by Campo das Letras, written by Valdemar Cruz and expressively illustrated by João Caetano, we see a story whose central theme is a decisive moment in Portugal's history.

Through the accessible and «close» voice of a father and mother, and through an evocative process based on a set of deeply symbolic «objects», Valdemar Cruz's book tells



us about the political and social state of Portugal before the 25th of April, as well as some episodes relating to the specific moment of the Revolution.

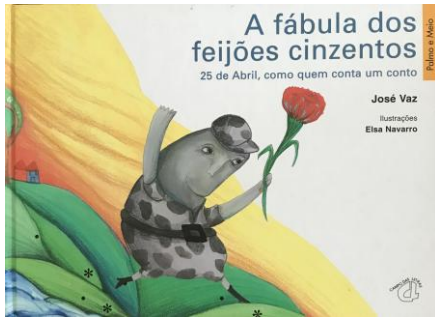
A school request – an exhibition about 25 April 1974 – piques the curiosity of a little girl, Mafalda, who sets off in search of answers that will unravel the mystery of the event. The main key to the enigma lies in a «chest of memories», a «mysterious chest» (Cruz, 1999, p. 8), a kind of memory vault, which allows for a more real contact with the recent past – albeit distant for many, like Mafalda and André, characters perplexed by the stories of history told in the text under analysis. Thus, the retrospective narrative is constructed in dialogue (according to the scheme: question from the child-answer from the adult) and suggesting an inter-generational experience, always based on a variety of iconographic 'documents'/material that are discovered and commented on, such as copies of the *Jornal de Notícias* and *O Século* newspapers, a photograph of an uncle who died in the war in Angola, pamphlets, remnants of flags, cassettes with recordings of songs by Zeca Afonso and Paulo de Carvalho, and even some reels of 8 mm film.

While the references to the Estado Novo [dictatorial government] era are undoubtedly central, we also see a kind of «play of times», consisting of a return to the past and its understanding, facilitated by the constant links to the present, the references and the world known to Mafalda. The relationship with the present – and inevitably with young readers – also takes place at the level of the language, sometimes close to slang: «Damn! You're impossible to put up with. What now?» (idem, *ibid*, p. 13); «– You metallic – shouts Mafalda. – You little Spice – replies André» (idem, *ibidem*, p. 26).

One of the decisive aspects of *O Soldado e o Capitão os Cravos e o Povão*, which also relates to the past-present crossover and the interconnection between historical narration and fictional narration, is undoubtedly the creative illustrations that accompany the writing. Created by João Caetano, these are essentially the result of collages and overlays and include extracts from documents relating to 25 April, combined with representations of the characters and situations told at the level of the diegesis.

Valdemar Cruz's book, disguised as a children's story, therefore offers, in an informal, lively and accessible way, a series of rigorous historical facts that highlight, in an almost moralising tone, the «astonishing» clash with today's reality, such as the actions and persuasive means of PIDE, the secret police, or the fact that there are no free elections. Thus, if the author's main intention in writing *O Soldado e o Capitão os Cravos e o Povão* was educational, with the aim of explaining to readers, preferably children, the background and meaning of one of the crucial periods in our 20th century history, it seems clear that this objective was achieved, offering an appealing and aesthetically pleasing outlook that will certainly capture the attention of the youngest readers.

José Vaz's *A Fábula dos Feijões Cinzentos* (2000) is quite different.



**Figure 5.** *A Fábula dos Feijões Cinzentos* book cover.

In a process typical of fables – a literary genre announced in the title of the work itself – José Vaz's book grows from a set of personifications and metaphors that transport us to a world inhabited only by humanised beans: «a kingdom called “Jardim-à-Beira-Mar-Plantado”» (Vaz, 2000, p. 1). The story is therefore characterised by different types of beans – «the cranberry, the black-eyed peas, the White, the Canary, the Millet, the Green, the Butter, the Red, the Creeping, the Galician, the Black, the Striped and the Tick.» (idem, ibidem, p. 1) – which, from a real perspective, correspond both to different players in the construction of freedom and democracy, and to the totalitarian government of the Estado Novo.

The text is full of reasonably explicit allusions, which are also fairly perceptible to the child reader (who will clearly need adult guidance anyway) to the episodes that preceded and led to the Carnation Revolution.

And so, in the quiet and peaceful world of the beans, one day misfortune struck: «the Tick bean took over the Sun, the Fidalgo bean diverted the Water to its place and the black-eyed peas took over all the Air there was.» (idem, ibidem, p. 2). This is a clear allusion to the Dictatorship, and it is from here that the story of the beans' forty-eight-year-long life begins, without the “freedom to create” (represented by the Sun), without the equal sharing of what there was (symbolised by the Water) and without the right to even think and have different ideas (represented by the Air).

Faced with the oppression that such a state represented, there was a Red Bean (note the intentional choice of colour, testifying to the revolutionary initiative) who brought together comrades and quietly instigated the insurrection. It was then, accompanied by the Canary bean, that he «sowed songs in the wind with words that nobody could use in the very beautiful, small rectangular kingdom» (idem, ibidem, p. 7).

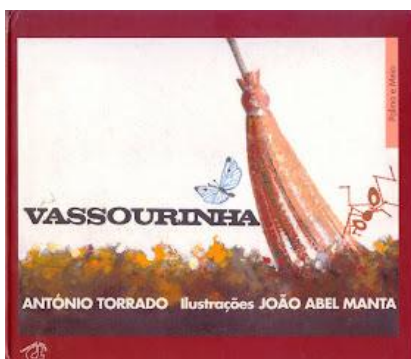
And it was from these and other initiatives that history was made and everything – censorship, unequal rights for men and women, unfounded accusations, war? – everything, we said, after many sacrifices, became Spring again in the «Garden by the Sea».

It's interesting to note that the author respects the paradigms of literary construction linked to the fable, not only because he takes an element of nature and

brings it to life, making it a hero, but also since he recreates the idea of a distant land and, furthermore, does not refer directly to a specific geographical space.

In addition, and by way of conclusion, José Vaz's *A Fábula dos Feijões Cinzentos* emanates a clear moral lesson, in keeping with the socio-political context of the historical moment motivating it: only Freedom, Fraternity and Democracy can colour the world and people. And that – and much more besides – is what the 25th of April brought.

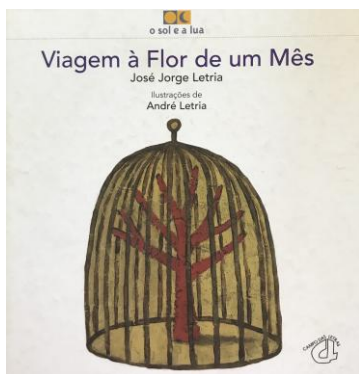
Equally metaphorical and symbolic, the book *Vassourinha, entre Abril e Maio*, by António Torrado (2001), published on 25 April 2001, with expressive illustrations by João Abel Manta, recreates, with special subtlety, two key moments: before and after the Vassourinha revolt, in other words, before and after the Carnation Revolution.



**Figure 6.** *Vassourinha* book cover.

The discourse of this tale is written in rhyming quatrains in an engaging rhythm, which employs successive lexical and phonetic wordplay, involving alliteration and repetitions, sometimes in parallel. In the first part, the narrative suggests the subservience or obedience of the «quiet, well-behaved» little broom (Torrado, 2001, p. 17), the target of dictatorship and the uncompromising vigilance of those in charge, in a «disgusting and vile time» (idem, ibidem: 18) which belongs to «Dona Senhora» (idem, ibidem, p. 21); while, the second part is marked by the dynamism and vitality of the «little broom in the street» that danced in the hands of the wind / and in such contentment / that no one expected it. // She had lost her fear forever.» (idem, ibidem, p. 23).

In a different style, José Jorge Letria's *Viagem à flor de um mês* (2002) also shows originality in the way it revisits the historical moment in question.



**Figure 7.** *Viagem à flor de um mês* book cover.

With the aim of commemorating the 25th of April in 2002, Campo das Letras published *Viagem à Flor de um Mês*, a book written by José Jorge Letria and illustrated by André Letria. Works by the same author include *O 25 de Abril Contado às Crianças... e aos Outros* (1999).

As its title suggests, *Viagem à Flor de um Mês* uses a floral metaphor to discuss the Carnation Revolution of 1974. The narrative uses the symbolism of father and son to shift continually from the repression of the past to the freedom of the present. April is described as the month which «arrived with bees and birds, with the honey of a thousand promises flowing from its wings» (Letria, 2002, p. 22) while the 25th itself is «that day of flowers in the barrels of rifles, of illuminated petals in the mouths of cannons» (idem, ibidem, p. 26).

In a highly enthusiastic and deeply emotional style of discourse, approaching that of poetry, José Jorge Letria makes constant use of metaphor, comparison, hyperbole and expressive adjectives, structuring his text on the basis of a son who calls his father to account. Thus, the tone is consistently intimate and conversational, in keeping with the character of the figures who interact here, with an intervention by the son always being followed by an «answer» from the father. Both alternately address each other directly, as if in a game of question and answer or a dramatic dialogue between just two actors.

In this way, a wide range of emotions and ideas are put forward. They are undoubtedly related to the political and social context before and after the 25th of April Revolution. On the one hand, expressions of disenchantment stand out – such as «a sick and sad city, a time of withered roses in the dry soil of the flower beds» (idem, ibidem, p. 6) or «tired and dry voice (...) sadness of the days, loneliness of the nights» (idem, ibidem: 22) – and, on the other hand, expressions of satisfaction or happiness that this ‘month called April’ (idem, ibidem, p. 43) has come to recall: «a month like this is like a magic book where anything can happen and where the moral of the story is like a rare fruit that can be broken into a thousand pieces of light and shadow.» (idem, ibidem, p. 21).

And since rewriting / recreating history is always worthwhile, *Viagem à Flor de um Mês*, by the father/son partnership of José Jorge Letria and André Letria, thus represents, almost thirty years after the 25th of April, a very special tribute to all those (children)

who, on that day, saw their parents again with a «white smile» on their lips and a «sparkle of stars» (idem, ibidem, p. 9) in their eyes.

Vergílio Alberto Vieira's *A Revolução das Letras* (2004) also fictionalises Freedom Day, celebrating its 30th anniversary.



**Figure 8.** *A Revolução das Letras* book cover.

In a lively and engaging discourse, Vergílio Alberto Vieira metaphorizes the date in question. A short narrative, also marked by simplicity, humour and irony, *A Revolução das Letras* narrates, in the author's distinct style, the events taken by the military, as well as the way in which the captains embodied the will of the Portuguese People. It is, therefore, a story that deviates little from history (reinforced by some illustrative segments) and which, at the end, reveals a certain disenchantment – «Between politician and military there is no spoon to be stuck in. / Because revolution, for the English to see, and the Portuguese – there it went, once upon a time...» (Vieira, 2004, s./p.) – towards the country, three decades after the day, «the great day of the barracks» (idem, ibidem, s./p.), the day when «the people were called to the streets» (idem, ibidem, s./p.) and history was made and when, finally, the «Letters» could live in freedom, after fighting for «Labour, Security, Housing».

Also written and illustrated for the 30th anniversary of 25 April, *O Rapaz da Bicicleta Azul*, by Álvaro Magalhães (2004/2011), is «dedicated to the memory of Captain Salgueiro Maia who, one day, picked the flower of freedom for us», as can be read in the peritextual text (epigraph) that opens the volume.



**Figure 9.** *O Rapaz da Bicicleta Azul* book covers.

Arranged in three parts – «What is freedom?», «Where is freedom?», and «The Flower of Freedom» – this short story, presented from the perspective of a young boy, follows the model of historical narrative and offers a very stimulating, indeed moving read, due to the intersection of history and fiction, of referential figures and other fictional characters, of factual events and others imagined. João, the son of an opposition activist persecuted by the regime's political police, decides to cycle to Lisbon on his blue bicycle (it should be noted that, during the Estado Novo, the man on the bicycle corresponded to the image of the clandestine anti-fascist), and ends up meeting Salgueiro Maia and reuniting with his father:

He cycled harder and through the warm morning air. He didn't know what was pushing him forward. He smelled something, but he did not know what it was. He smelled something he did not know what it was, he tasted something he did not know what it was. And that "I don't know what" was freedom. It was inside him and around him, everywhere. He too was a boy on a blue bicycle and he too carried the flower of freedom on an April morning. With it he could go wherever he wanted. So he cycled even harder and smiled in the direction of the sun. (Magalhães, 2004, p. 32).

Both António Modesto's (2004) and Marta Madureira's (2011) illustrations respond positively to the verbal text and even include certain symbolic details, providing a very engrossing reading experience.

*Abril, Abrilzinho*, by Manuel Freire, Vitorino and José Jorge Letria (2006), on the other hand, is made up of poetry and makes its intention explicit in an open way.



**Figure 10.** *Abril, Abrilzinho* book cover.

*Abril, Abrilzinho* is a CD-book, published in 2006 and written by José Jorge Letria, in co-authorship with Manuel Freire and Vitorino, and with illustrations by André Letria. Essentially through the medium of poetry (it includes 11 poems) and music, it revisits the universe of the April Revolution, its characters and some of its most representative and symbolic motifs.

The poems are set to music and sung by protest singers/writers, which manages to bring the listener closer to the spirit of 25 April 1974. As well as the poetic texts themselves, the way that the work is presented is also interesting, reflecting on the continued relevance of the theme and justifying it in the context of the contemporary panorama – clearly a key aim of this release. By José Jorge Letria, Manuel Freire and Vitorino, the introductory peritext, entitled «Abril x 3», notes the pedagogical function of the cd-book and sees it as a sharing of memories (see also the various photographic segments included) between the authors and the younger generations or, in the authors' words, «the folks who are learning what the world is today». In the same vein, you can read the text by Alice Vieira, an emotional piece of writing that ends in a forceful tone: «It was for you that 25 April 1974 was made. And don't spoil it.». Vasco Lourenço's testimony, which is also included in the volume, is openly historical and factual in nature, while still showing emotion: «Well done for your stubbornness in a struggle for enlightenment, for freedoms.»

With this in mind, *Abril, Abrilzinho* presents itself as being «against the oblivion that empties memories and leaves them dangerously deserted of references and values». Stemming from very strong emotions and a nostalgia which the authors fully acknowledge, the work aims to unite generations around timeless and ageless ideals.

Written by João Pedro Mésseder and with illustrations by Alex Gozblau, *Romance do 25 de Abril* (2007/2023) proposes, through poetry, a return to the past and the history of the Carnation Revolution, especially its antecedents.





Figure 11. *Romance do 25 de Abril* book covers.

In this book, the author uses the character of a boy called Portugal to personify the realities experienced during the Estado Novo, such as child labour and school absenteeism while implicitly embodying others, including illiteracy, oppression, censorship, inequalities, fear, surveillance, persecution and the colonial war. History permeates the entire narrative, which thus seems to be intentionally moving closer to the traditional novel (or epic short story), by highlighting memory and indeed the very rhythm of the writing. In the text, which is very beautiful and engaging, other voices intersect with recognisable poetic phrases, such as «I will not die without knowing the colour of freedom» (Mésseder, 2007, p. 20). The whole story unfolds expressively and also takes shape in Alex Gozblau's illustrations which play with shadows and highlights, as well as proposing suggestive and/or symbolic details, in order to recreate historical figures such as Salazar and Marcelo Caetano and evoke the moment of the victory of Freedom. The ending does not fail to record the desire for April's wishes to be realised: «See him fighting hard / so that one day / all that April promised will be fulfilled.» (idem, *ibidem*, p. 29).

«Freedom Day» is a short text in Luísa Ducla Soares' *O Livro das Datas* (2009), the 100th volume of children's literature by this leading author of Portuguese literature for the youngest readers.



Figure 12. *O Livro das Datas* book cover.



Preceded by a succinct and objective historical explanation, this short narrative involves a dialogue between a mother (who put carnations in the rifles) and her daughter. Based on empirical reality and communicating ideas simply but effectively, the discourse makes us understand what it was like at that event that «seemed like a party.» (Soares, 2009, s./p.), on the day when «(...) the Revolution won.» (Soares, 2009, s./p.). From its peaceful nature and general happiness to Salgueiro Maia and the carnations, the book reinvoques something of the essence of the 25th of April in a very accessible and appropriate way for young readers.

*O 25 de Abril Contado às Crianças... e aos Outros*, by José Jorge Letria (2009), is a complete and lively account, a personal testimony, also with a documentary character and once again with the aim of remembering April: «Every year has a month of April and every month of April has a 25th. But 25 April 1974 was a special day for the Portuguese» (Letria, 1999, p. 5).



**Figure 13.** *25 de Abril Contado às Crianças... e aos Outros* book cover.

This date has indeed become an undeniable milestone in the collective History and many individual stories of the Portuguese and, together with the whole context that preceded and followed it, the 25th of April has taken on particular relevance in children's publishing, as this overview has shown.

*O 25 de Abril Contado às Crianças... e aos Outros* is a book that appeared in print during the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution and features a strong visual component by the artist João Abel Manta (1888-1982).

The work is composed of eight chapters – entitled «I – So that you don't forget April», «II – Once upon a time there was a war», «III – The forbidden words», «IV – The sun beyond the bars», «V – This one goes, that one goes», «VI – “Here we go singing and laughing”», «VII – Power and the way it worked» and «VIII – A day that shook history». The book is aimed, as the title suggests, for either an extratextual children's audience or for another audience whose knowledge of the 25th of April 1974 may be limited. Above all, this story has a clear and very noble educational objective.

It thus comes as no surprise to find a colloquial tone, sometimes touching on the dialogic, in the intimate discourse of the narrator/reader and in the lively account which rings with true emotion, expressing as it does a lived reality. After all, this is an albeit brief repository of memory, a mirror of events, some personal and many others collective, which are the real motivations for writing this work. The narrator himself makes this clear right at the start of the narrative:

I'm sure you've been told about the 25th of April at home or at school, but I don't know what you've been told about its meaning and its importance for the life of Portugal. That's why I'm going to tell you this story. A personal story like all stories, but one that involves a lot of my memories of that day and everything it brought to an end. (Letria, 1999, p. 5).

Therefore, in this book by José Jorge Letria, we are invited to take a journey into the «sad, long and hard» past (idem, ibidem, p. 11) of the Colonial War, censorship, PIDE/DGS, the dictatorial government, political prisoners, Portuguese Youth, emigration and the day of the «turning point in our 20th century history» (idem, ibidem, p. 30).

*25 de Abril Contado às Crianças... e aos Outros* is a very different kind of book with a singular narrative, full of emotion, which discretely offers an original testimony about this crucial event of the 20th century. And given the historical moment it deals with, it never seems to be too late to do so.

*Era uma vez o 25 de Abril*, by José Fanha (2014/2023) also follows a fairly descriptive style.



**Figure 14.** *Era uma vez o 25 de Abril* book cover.

In fact, it is a documentary book, with a first-person account: «For many of my young readers, the 25th of April is something rather old that's already part of history. But I was there.» (Fanha, 2023, p. 11). José Fanha thus retells his own 25th of April, but he adds numerous facts and focuses on a series of events and circumstances prior to the April Revolution and indeed on the «days after the 25th».

Oscillating between a subjective and objective tone, the verbal discourse, spread over twenty-three chapters, is complemented by very topical iconography (photographs, posters, book covers, caricatures, illustrations, etc.), treated and arranged in a noticeably balanced and attractive way. With design by Silvadesigners, the diversity of typefaces (various fonts and letter sizes), the creativity of the layout and the prevalence of the black and red colours – all contribute to the very friendly overall impression of this volume.

Coming out right on the 50th anniversary of 25 April, *O Meu Primeiro 25 de Abril*, by José Jorge Letria (2024) is implicitly and inevitably commemorative. The first person discourse combines authorial memories with factology, evoking typical situations in the daily life of the Estado Novo, such as censorship or repressive action by force. It expresses the unity of the collective – «It was our Revolution» (Letria, 2024, s./p.) – and intervention through music, for example, significant references to José Jorge Letria himself. Many emotions are shared here – «I missed having my father still alive so that I could tell him and share my boundless joy with him. I thought about him a lot in those hours of profound change in our lives.» (Letria, 2024, s./p.). «It was the happiest day of my life» (idem, ibidem: s./p.) is the statement that closes the book, a segment to which is added an illustration that recreates the author himself, José Jorge Letria.

A final note to emphasise the fact that José Jorge Letria can be considered the author who has until now dedicated the most texts on the 25th of April to children's readers. Since literary historiography is one of the most prominent aspects of his work, this is not surprising. In addition, there are several biographical books centred on key figures in the historical and cultural context of 25 April, including Salgueiro Maia and Zeca Afonso, for example.

Before ending this section, it is worth highlighting two titles that are more openly affiliated with history/historiography.

The first is *25 de Abril Outras Maneiras de Contar a Mesma História*, by Maria Manuela Cruzeiro and Augusto José Monteiro (2000).



**Figure 15.** *25 de Abril Outras Maneiras de Contar a Mesma História* book cover.

The book's authors, Maria Manuela Cruzeiro and Augusto José Monteiro, appear to have conceived it as a tribute to the 25th of April aimed at readers of all ages, giving an emotional and firsthand account.

The book *25 de Abril Outras Maneiras de Contar a Mesma História* is written in a very particular way. Flowing in an intimate, colloquial style, it has a seductive quality and seems to be "winking" at the reader. It is notable both for its rigour and for the emotional way in which it evokes the facts, words, gestures and spaces that made up the history of the Carnation Revolution.

What is interesting is that, as José António Gomes points out, «This is not just a book about history. All the research, analysis and interpretative synthesis, based on a credible bibliography, are visible.» (Gomes, 2001, p. 9). Yet the brilliance of the writing, or the literary discourse, to be precise, is by no means overshadowed, since the "historical text" goes hand in hand with various writings by Manuel Alegre (Cruzeiro and Monteiro, 2001, p. 16), José Carlos Ary dos Santos (idem, ibidem, p. 61), Alexandre O'Neill (idem, ibidem, p. 51), Fernando Pessoa (idem, ibidem, p. 51), José Cardoso Pires (idem, ibidem, p. 155), Mário Castrim (idem, ibidem, p. 155), Miguel Torga (idem, ibidem, p. 27), among many others.

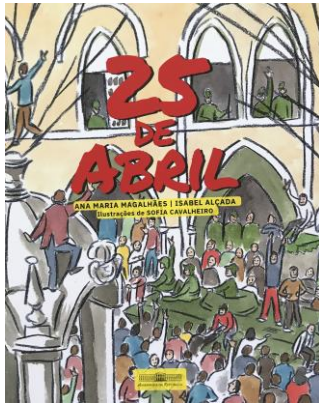
Enriched in this way, the narrative relating the background to the 25th of April, and the Revolution itself, denounces the repression, censorship, impositions and other sociopolitical vicissitudes that slowly led to the fall of the Estado Novo. In a second stage, coinciding with the testimonies of some of the protagonists of 25 April 74, the discourse takes on an almost epic feel, revealing what was experienced «in those liberating, exciting and festive days of April, "the best we have ever lived through"» (Monteiro, 2001, p. 12), always set against «the bitter and suffering daily life of the dictatorship» (idem, ibidem, p. 12). Maria Manuela Cruzeiro and Augusto José Monteiro's book therefore brings the reader face to face with the disenchantment that raged during the Salazar dictatorship and the euphoria that prevailed after the 25th of April Revolution.

The clarity of this book's expression together with its enthusiastic tone and the beauty in its writing and graphics, all succeed in making it a work that can both bring younger people closer to the history of the April Revolution and bring its memories alive to the younger generations.

Indeed, this is essentially what is printed on the back cover of *25 de Abril Outras Maneiras de Contar a Mesma História*:

So close and so far away – for some, the events of 25 April 1974 are a close and warm memory; for others, just a historical haze that almost only belongs to older generations. This is a book designed to counter this "opposition". The aim is to offer younger people an account of the conquest of freedom, but also to give younger people back the facts and emotions of a country in search of its own identity. (2000).

Finally, *25 de Abril*, by Ana Maria Magalhães and Isabel Alçada (2004/2018), a volume published under the auspices of the Assembly of the Republic – Publishing Division.



**Figure 16.** *25 de Abril* book cover.

Specially aimed at the «young generations, born with the privilege of being free citizens of a free country», as the opening note of the first edition states, the book presents a detailed and wide-ranging set of objective facts, spread over 20 short chapters, supported by meaningful iconography – there is a profusion of visual information in the form of various illustrations and photographs, for example. The informative and/or pedagogical-didactic intention is clear. Using a documentary style, the historiographical account is expressed in a very accessible and clear register, with some interpellative segments that serve well to hold the reader's attention: «In certain cases, the PIDE coldly murdered opponents of the regime. Does that sound like a lie? Yes, it does. So how come the Portuguese didn't revolt massively? How did they hold out for so long?» (Magalhães and Alçada, 2018, p. 19).

Due to time constraints, this study has not been able to look at several other texts which, naturally, in another context, would have deserved attention. The present work, which is nonetheless a substantial repertoire, is therefore not exhaustive, but only representative in nature, with the aim of stimulating different readers to read the texts analysed and to arouse curiosity to search for others. In addition, the composition of a list or a critically commented survey, such as the one presented here, could provide an important resource, a basic guideline for informed work to mediate/promote reading in a school context, for example.

Despite being incomplete, the following list of titles is intended to provide further resources to take into account in the same way: *Bichos de Abril*, by Carlos Pinhão (1977), *25 de Abril – Quase como um Conto de Fadas*, by Conceição Lopes and Carlos Barradas (1984), *O Caso da Rua Jau*, by Mário Castrim (1994), *L.A. e C.ª no Meio da Revolução*, by Maria Mata (1996), *Era uma vez um Cravo*, by José Jorge Letria (1999), *25 de Abril como quem conta um conto*, by Valdemar Cruz and Elsa Navarro (Campo das Letras, 2000),

*Lembro-me* (2013), by João Pedro Mésseder, and *25 de Abril sempre*, by Isabel César Anjo and Maria Isabel Pereira (published by Coruche Town Council) (s./d.). To these can be added *Dos abris pequenos ao Abril grande O 25 de Abril contado aos mais novos e lembrado a todos*, by João Pedro Mésseder (2024), a poem based on various key figures from the 25th of April, as well as some emotional events.

This research therefore awaits more in-depth and comprehensive studies that can include these books in their corpus and thus contribute to consolidating historical memory through literary reading.

#### **4. Final considerations**

The survey undertaken for this overview has enabled a considerable number of voices to be heard, brought to readers by several major authors of Portuguese literature for whom children are their preferred extra-textual audience. To conclude, there are around five dozen published titles dealing with the 25th of April, a considerable collection in the Portuguese context. As José António Gomes notes, «It can therefore be said that the before, the during and the after the Revolution were recreated in various and different writings. What cannot be said is that all these works are literary, even when they are produced by writers» (Gomes, 2020, p. 48).

In reality, there is a great deal of textual diversity – as this research has suggested – which makes room for very different readings, adjusted to formal and non-formal contexts, suitable for different reader profiles, and catering to different objectives (whether for information and study, for celebrating the date or simply for enjoyment). The set of works presented here include informative texts and historiographical accounts; biographical texts about prominent citizens and artists who fought for freedom; short narrative texts for first-time readers; narrative texts for average readers, of the short story or illustrated novella type; novels for pre-teens and teenagers, of different types, but with a tendency towards realism; loose poems and 'poemary' (Gomes, 2020).

There is, therefore, a considerable variety of approaches, some more objective, others more revealing of authorial empathy with the episodes narrated. In any case, historical memory seems to be at the heart of these more or less fictional writings, thus favouring an ambivalent reception. José António Gomes advocates that

as historians, disseminators and pedagogues, it is true that they also do so out of a duty of memory, to project the lessons of the past into the present and the future and to affirm that memory in the face of the whitewashers of the Salazarist and Marcelist dictatorships. The authors' aim is noble, because they are doing so with the younger generation in mind (Gomes, 2001, p. 9).

As has been seen, the act of remembrance, the active search for memories or simply the commemoration of the 25th of April have all gained literary expression, especially when it comes to literature aimed at younger readers. This is due to the fact that – and

it cannot be said enough – it is essential to evoke that turning point, the 25th of April 1974, that historic moment that put an end to a long period of dictatorship, and one of the most remarkable times in Portugal's history,

It is opportune to revisit this troubled and exciting period in Portugal's history, too politically and socially rich to be the property of a few, too humanly rich to be forgotten. Not just to remember the facts, not just to evoke its historical necessity and popular acceptance, not just to remember a before that we don't want to repeat and an after made up of the free confrontation of all wills, but perhaps above all to question its spirit made up of all spirits, so that we can get to know each other better today. (Lameiras, 1999, p. 10).

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