

# Pyrostories

## *New historical insights from Portuguese Literature*

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The Mediterranean region has been hit by large fires, which have had considerable social, environmental, economic and political consequences. Scientists working in ecology and forestry have mainly explained wildfires as a result of land use modifications and climate change. The FIREUSES project frames the study of wildfires by addressing burning landscapes as a specific historical field and by combining it with the study of social and environmental factors.

This paper looks at the uses of fire in 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese literature. The analysis was based on the identification of *pyrostories*. They correspond to a section (or sections) found in or mentioned in less explicit ways, like uses of fire, consequences of fire, social and ecological main pieces of fiction in which fire is either central to the narrative dimensions of fire. Each of the *pyrostories* was analyzed according to their spatial and temporal literary scope, following a set of analytical categories: the fire circumstances, the biophysical, historical, social and political contexts in which fire appears in the text, and the adjective and subjective elements that constitute a particular representation of fire.

From a comprehensive characterization of the corpus, the paper reflects on science, policies and aesthetics. Results show *pyrostories* as memory repositories, valuing their integration together with other historical and anthropological sources. We not only revisit rural fire practices and the historical grounds of contemporary fire regime but also report fire as an actant in protest and sabotage against hard living conditions and State afforestation policies in common lands.