

“THE PEOPLE TURN IT OFF AND GO OUT LOOKING FOR FADO” — RADIO AND THE FADO RESISTANCE TO THE ESTADO NOVO IN THE 1930s

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ABSTRACT

Far from its current consecration and even before its domestication by Salazarism, fado went through dilemmatic phases throughout its existence. Among them are the early times of its mediatization, particularly the complex relationship with radio in the 1930s, with the Estado Novo and class prejudices attempting to ostracize fado or, at least, to stop the national legitimization of urban popular culture. The tensions that already surrounded fado were renewed and sharpened in the simultaneous context of the stabilization of the dictatorship and the implementation of radio in Portugal, placing the new means of sound diffusion in the centre of symbolic struggles around the “national song”. Involving dilemmas between stigma and fado legitimation, between its origin and propagation, between public diffusion and aesthetic or moral control, a connection between radio and fado was made, where several social actors positioned themselves, with different goals and strategies, and in which questions of programming, discursiveness and social status were tackled. This article aims to identify this set of interactions throughout the 1930s. It tries to understand how the establishment of the radio industry, with its various stations and nuances, became a stage and participant in a cultural process that, in some aspects, already preceded it. The research is based on contemporary press publications, specifically fado newspapers (*Guitarra de Portugal*, *Canção do Sul*) and magazines focused on radio (*Rádio Semanal*, *Rádio Revista*, *Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, *Rádio Nacional*).

KEYWORDS

radio history, fado, Estado Novo, 1930s, press

“O POVO DESLIGA, VAI À PROCURA DO FADO” — A RÁDIO E A RESISTÊNCIA FADISTA AO ESTADO NOVO NA DÉCADA DE 1930

RESUMO

Muito longe da consagração atual e mesmo antes da sua domesticação pelo salazarismo, o fado atravessou fases dilemáticas da sua existência. Entre elas, estão os tempos iniciais da sua mediatização, em particular, as complexas articulações com a rádio na década de 1930, com o Estado Novo e os preconceitos de classe a tentarem ostracizar o fado ou, pelo menos, travar a legitimação nacional da cultura popular urbana. As tensões que já antes rodeavam o fado renovaram-se e agudizaram-se face ao contexto simultâneo de estabilização da ditadura e de implantação da rádio em Portugal, colocando o novo meio de difusão sonora no centro das lutas simbólicas em torno da “canção nacional”. Envolvendo dilemas entre o estigma e a legitimação fadista, entre a sua origem e a propagação, entre a difusão pública e o controlo estético ou moral, constituiu-se uma zona de articulação da rádio com o fado onde diversos atores sociais se posicionaram, com diferentes objetivos e estratégias, e em que se jogaram questões de

programação, discursividade e status social. O objetivo deste artigo é identificar esse conjunto de articulações ao longo dos anos 30, tentando perceber de que maneira a formação do campo radiofónico, com as suas várias estações e matizes, se tornou palco e participante num processo cultural que, em alguns aspetos, já o precedia. A pesquisa baseia-se na imprensa coeva, especificamente nos jornais de fado (*Guitarra de Portugal*; *Canção do Sul*) e nos periódicos dedicados à rádio (*Rádio Semanal*; *Rádio Revista*; *Boletim da Emissora Nacional*; *Rádio Nacional*).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

história da rádio, fado, Estado Novo, década de 1930, imprensa

Unlike the deference with which fado is treated today as part of the Portuguese cultural heritage, this musical genre went through periods of intense symbolic struggle in the public space, navigating through social tensions and political projects.

An especially significant period was the one that corresponded to the first stages of the implementation of radio, from the beginning of the 1920s, but particularly focused on the 1930s — with the creation and consolidation of broadcasting stations, the popularization of radio listening, and the press’ attention on the new medium.

Crucial studies for the history of fado in the 20th century (Brito, 1999; Carvalho, 1994; Nery, 2012; Sucena, 1993) mention in a prominent manner the appearance of radio, underlining its character as a divulging and diffusing mechanism, which changed the framework of music’s activity, provided a wider audience for fado and contributing to the professionalization of fado singers (Carvalho, 1994, pp. 84, 94).

In these works, it is pointed out that many broadcasting stations used fado as a strategy to capture the popular audience, as well as the ambivalence of the official radio of the Estado Novo (Nery, 2012, pp. 254, 257). In historical studies about radio, there are also mentions of fado, especially in the relationship with small stations in Lisbon (R. Santos, 2005), but also with the state radio (Ribeiro, 2005).

It is our understanding that the link between fado and radio in its implementation phase deserves a degree of detail in which three axes are highlighted: the variety of modalities that serve the diffusion of fado through radio; radio as a platform for conversations on fado; and the development of radio itself as a propeller of discussion about fado and the symbolic struggles around it.

These allow us to perceive the radio of the 1930s as an apex where two contradictory forces from previous decades converge: on one hand, the gradual expansion of fado beyond the original limits of Lisbon’s neighbourhoods and popular classes, along with its conversion into a spectacle and a consumer product; on the other hand, the non-acceptance, by important sectors of the dominant classes, that a phenomenon coming from the impoverished urban culture, and with links to social marginality, could become a musical expression recognized in the public space and legitimized at a national level.

To delve into the intersections between fado and radio, we focus on two segments of the 1930s press — fado and the radio — compiling the references to radio in fado newspapers and the allusions to fado in radio newspapers. In the first case, we focus on

the fortnightly *Canção do Sul* and *Guitarra de Portugal*, which cover the whole period. In the radio segment, we used the *Boletim da Emissora Nacional* (1935–36), the magazine *Rádio Nacional*, which succeeded it as the state radio entity from 1937 on, and the independent publications *Rádio Semanal* (1934–40) and *Rádio Revista* (1935–36).

THE INITIAL MEDIATIZATION

In Portugal, radio was born almost simultaneously with the dictatorship that would lead to the Estado Novo, and it is fair to consider that its implementation period lasted until the 1940s, a decade in which the domestic possession of a radio device is massified (only then exceeding 100,000 devices across the country). This period can, in turn, be divided into four stages, taking into account some milestones in radio history that emerge in its relationship with fado:

1. 1924 to around 1930 corresponds to the first generation of small stations, where broadcasting follows the concert logic;
2. around 1930 to 1935, new stations truly began the structuring of the radio field, with regular broadcasts, creation of programs and diversification of genres;
3. 1935–1941, the field is redesigned with the definitive functioning of a state actor, Emissora Nacional;
4. 1941–1950 Emissora is headed by the director of the Secretariat of National Propaganda, António Ferro, a direct instrument for the “politics of the spirit” (a stage that cannot be developed in this text due to space constraints).

Before radio, fado was already a musical practice with a certain number of mediations that fed its expansion. This was the case of the recordings that, between 1904 and 1915, targeted a middle-class audience, as well as other beginnings of a cultural industry around fado, which translated into scores for piano and singing, as well as the sale of brochures with lyrics — products aimed at educated consumers and for the recreation of fado songs at home. It should also be noted the intermediary role that, for this public, was played by the *teatro de revista*. Since the end of the 19th century, this theatrical genre included fados, lightening their forms and having them accompanied by orchestras, to bring them closer to the Lisbon middle classes and to integrate them in their cultural consumption. Joaquim Pais de Brito (1999) highlights this social stratum that, although “imprecise in its outlines”, becomes relevant in the relationship with fado and is composed of a small and middle bourgeoisie with the means to attend shows and to acquire successive technical apparatus, such as the earlier record players (*grafonola*; p. 28).

But, when the radio first appeared, beyond taverns and bars — located in poor neighbourhoods and the natural home of the fado practice for decades — the intermediate social strata of Lisbon only had contact with fado in halls and theatres. For this public, since the beginning of the century, a network of cafes and beer houses had been forming, offering fado performances. Those to whom social status and respectability concerns prevented them from going to the taverns of Alfama or Mouraria, could now enjoy fado in environments where composure was maintained (Nery, 2012, p. 219), some of them in more reputable parts of the city.

Since the turn of the century, the capital was marked by accelerated growth and thus social differentiation intensified. The working population attracted by the expansion of the port and living in precarious areas increasingly contrasted with the orderly well-being of the avenues and new parts of the city, but also crossed paths with the petty bourgeoisie and service employees, shopkeepers and cashiers, who in some neighbourhoods coexisted with the lower classes, but aspired to distinguish themselves from them and professed other moral standards (Rosas, 2018).

It is in the light of these social contrasts and symbolic conflicts that we should read the stigmatizing classifications that António Arroio or Albino Forjaz Sampaio made of fado in the 1910s; and who in the mid-1920s frequently and controversially returned to the pages of the fortnightly *Guitarra de Portugal*, directed by the fado poet Linhares Barbosa. The citation of articles published by “detractors” in other newspapers (some of them “provincial”) and the responses by fado hosts live on many editions from 1925. The divergences could also concern those within the fado community, as happened in December 1926 regarding the operetta *Mouraria*, making it clear in the articles in *Canção do Sul* that a crucial concern for the genre and its practitioners at the time was the search for respectability, for which they often invoked old historical contacts with the aristocracy.

A compilation of external criticism of fado would appear in the volume published, days before the military coup that established the dictatorship, by the Porto intellectual José Maciel Fortes (1926), for whom fado is the “favourite song of harlots and (...) of the lowest social classes” (p. 99) and “is nothing but a vagabonds’ song, a hymn to crime, an ode to vice” (p. 71). This discourse, which disqualifies fado in terms that are simultaneously moral, classist and artistic, points to the kind of hostility that existed at the time when broadcasting took its first steps.

But the refusal to accept fado as the “national song” is at that moment also based on historical-racial reasons — pointing out fado as derived from a “negroid song form” (Fortes, 1926, p. 45) in an attempt to delegitimize it in line with emerging fascist theses. Fortes’ (1926) criticism is directed at the reception of the genre in the classes seen as respectable, as well as at the publishing houses’ trade as a means of propagation. As a Lisbon trend that spread progressively throughout the country, fado would not yet live, however, in the soul of the people of all the provinces, argued the author.

It was precisely in the middle of that decade that the first generation of radio began with regular broadcasts from small stations. According to Rogério Santos (2005), in this period, the prevalence was on the transmission of classical music concerts, with singers and instrumentalists in the studio or with “*grafonola* concerts”, sometimes combining classical music with moments of poetry, humour, or other musical genres. It was a model that tended towards erudition, put into practice by stations whose owners belonged to business or military circles (R. Santos, 2005, pp. 95–96). Its beginning happened under a concept that saw radio also as a “powerful educational factor”¹ (Neves, 1925, as cited in R. Santos, 2005, p. 67).

In this phase, fado appears sporadically in the middle of some transmissions. One of the first was a performance by Alfredo Marceneiro, accompanied by guitar and viola,

¹ Hermano Neves, president of the TSF (*Telefonia Sem Fios*) Portuguese Society, in 1925, for *Rádio Lisboa Magazine*.

in March 1925, at the P1AB station, within a concert program dominated by classical music² (R. Santos, 2005, pp. 229–230). Through the daily press, Rogério Santos identified several occasions when fado sessions were broadcasted in the following years: a night of fados organized by *Diário de Notícias* in April 1927 and broadcast by the CT1AA station; the broadcast of fados and *guitarradas* from the Café Mondego, in 1928, by the CT1BM station; a concert organized, in January 1929, by the violist Mário Marques and the guitarist João Fernandes, with fados of his and Armandinho’s authorship, sung by Ercília Costa, also broadcast by the CT1AA (R. Santos, 2005, pp. 242–243).

Although fado was very much a minority in the intermittent radio broadcasting of this phase, it seems that several forms of connection between fado and radio then began to emerge. However, on its eve, this connection was just like radio itself. This is suggested by issue 44 of *Notícias Ilustrado*, on April 14, 1929, entirely dedicated to a “great inquiry on fado”, where the mediation of the record and of “gramophony” is much more present than TSF. In the fado newspapers, references to radio are practically inexistent until the end of the 1920s.

What stands out, however, in this phase is the participation, small but apparently odd, of a popular musical form within an erudite and educational concept of radio, which complicates a linear reading of the relationship at the time between questions of status and social class with fado.

1930–1935: FADO AND THE STRUCTURING PROCESS OF THE RADIO CIRCUIT

The early 1930s is pointed out as the period when a second generation of radio stations was born and where there is a transition from the musical season model to a radio structure of programmes and items, with more regular broadcasts and a diversification of genres (R. Santos, 2005). Several of these small broadcasting stations are created through the initiative of Lisbon traders, who are, therefore, closer to popular classes, accumulating directive and technical functions in the radios and trying to establish a more permanent link with collaborators.

It is also in the first half of this decade that fado claims a more frequent presence in radio, examples of which are Rádio Colonial (CT1AA, coming from the previous phase), in which broadcasts led by the violist Amadeu Ramin were promoted “on an experimental basis”, as early as 1930 (Sucena, 1993, p. 201), and Rádio Luso, which since 1932 is characterized by the diffusion of fado and by expressing positions favourable to fado (Neves, 2017, p. 20).

The contemporary press indicates that also at Rádio Graça, created in 1932, there were fado broadcasts, at least since the beginning of 1933³. Also, in relation to Rádio Condes, there are references to fado performances, whose initial date is not possible to specify, but prior to 1935 (*Canção do Sul*, June 16, 1935). There is, therefore, a set of small broadcasting stations in Lisbon, with a restricted geographical scope of diffusion,

² Referred to in the *TSF* magazine in Portugal.

³ The first reference to fado broadcasts in Rádio Graça is seen in *Canção do Sul*, on February 1, 1933.

where fado was heard in the first half of the 1930s. But it also reaches a station with other means and closely associated with the regime, Rádio Club Português (RCP), whose fado broadcasts were first found in the press in 1934 (*Guitarra de Portugal*, May 31, 1934).

It is difficult to understand, in the consulted sources, what the actual frequency of fado was in the stations mentioned, but what there is no doubt that the relationship between the two was close, this being a sign of the pluralization of forms through which radio appears to articulate with fado. These include several ways of diffusion besides the record. On the one hand, there are the transmissions from places where fado is shown, which can, in fact, integrate the radio trump card in its promotion to the public (as in the advertisements in which the Café dos Anjos boasts of “irradiating through TSF”; *Guitarra de Portugal*, November 14, 1933). On the other hand, there is the development of fado studio performances, some of which end up being part of agreements established with the fado newspapers, but which in general seem to be part of a professionalization of fado artists (which started in 1927 with the decree that obliged them to have an artist card to perform in public)⁴, who try to incorporate the radio stations in their performance circuits and as a means of dissemination.

There are other signs of a developing connection, such as fado lyrics with allusions to radio, rare but curious, of which some of Álvaro Fialho’s verses that use radio as a metaphor are an example:

tender radio, I have broadcasted/ From my heart to yours/ (...)/ An hertzian wave/ It ran across all the space/ In a mindless rush/ From my heart to yours/ (...)/ If the reception was good/ If the connection was not lost/ Why has your heart/ Still not responded? (*Guitarra de Portugal*, November 30, 1930)

And then there are the advertising campaigns with which the device brands appealed to the fado-loving audience and which included the use of faces like those of Berta Cardoso and Ercília Costa, fundamental names in the fado scene at the time. These ads proliferated in 1934 and are another indication that fado lovers were not restricted to the lower classes, for whom the acquisition of a radio device was at that time unaffordable. The state radio, which in that same year started the experimental broadcasts, would launch in 1935 a campaign to support the purchase of devices at reduced prices, but without managing to massify, in the short term, access to the radio idealized as a propaganda instrument of the regime⁵.

What the new radio context seems to have provoked, simultaneously with the stabilization of the dictatorship in its Estado Novo form from 1933 onwards, was a renewed and virulent impetus in the discourses against fado, where its broadcasting as a problem emerges very clearly. The year 1934 also stands out in this aspect, when several articles

⁴ This regulation of fado by the new dictatorial regime, which was intended to control performances and moralize its practices and contexts, ended up working as another incentive for fado singers to seek a professional path, as pointed out by Rui Vieira Nery (2012, p. 239).

⁵ In 1933, there were only 16,000 devices registered across the country. In 1935, there were 40,000. In 1937, the figure rose to 69,000.

in *Diário de Notícias* are well-received, thus this reaction in the fado press, which does not fail to identify the motivation for criticism: “the Gordian knot revolves around TSF (...) it was a pity that only fado hurt his eardrums”⁶ (*Canção do Sul*, August 20, 1934, p. 1). It was not by chance that the attacks intensified after April, when Emissora Nacional started broadcasting, still in an experimental manner.

In this “campaign” against fado, the daily *Revolução Nacional* also takes on a prominent role, where it laments “hearing on several Portuguese stations (even the national one) Maria dos Quintalinhos and Micas singing the fado of the shameless” (“Relice Nacional”, *Guitarra de Portugal*, September 15, 1934, p. 11). The action of this publication, a newspaper close to national syndicalism, a movement of fascist nature that Salazar had just neutralized as an internal opposition to the regime, suggests that various factions of the game of balances that Salazarism had turned into were also distancing their own ideologies from fado⁷. In this stage, one of the main discursive lines is still the insistence on associating fado with prostitution and the marginality of the Lisbon milieus, as a way to delegitimize its broadcasting and oppose its national expansion.

The politicization of the connection between radio and fado is, therefore, another axis of their articulations that deepen in the first half of the 1930s. But an additional aspect of this same articulation lies in the fact that radio also became a platform for political combat around fado.

Naturally, the discourses against fado tried to use radio as a means to criticize it, but the small stations that dedicated themselves to the diffusion of this musical genre were of no use. Therefore, RCP is taken as a possible base for the condemnation of fado, through that radio genre, then notable, that was the lecture (*palestra*). This is what happens in May 1934, when the RCP broadcasts a *palestra* characterized as “insulting and offensive to fado” by *Guitarra de Portugal*, which in turn reacts through RCP itself, organizing, in association with the daily newspaper *O Século* and a brand of appliances, two “response” hearings in June, where Maria Albertina, Maria do Carmo and Filipe Pinto perform (*Guitarra de Portugal*, May 31, 1934, p. 7, and July 30, 1934, p. 2). One of the lyrics sung by Maria Albertina was an advertisement for the sponsoring brand, another sign of the paths that the fado professionalism was testing in cooperation with the radio industry. The ambivalent position of RCP, between its commitments to the regime and the commercial nature that aimed to expand the audience, would have provided it with a stage for this dispute.

We can see, therefore, that another of the connections that develop in this phase between fado and radio is the fact that the fado reaction also uses broadcasting stations, in actions understood by fado artists themselves as a policy of “propaganda” in favour of fado. This disposition doesn’t start with the RCP contention because, before that, the radio industry was already being seen by fado sectors as a space of affirmation in a context of a symbolic struggle. An example of this is a news item from *Canção do Sul* in early 1933:

⁶ Referring to a piece from *Diário de Notícias* titled “Triste Fado” (Sad Fado), anonymous but attributed to that publication’s director.

⁷ With Manuel Múrias as director, *Revolução Nacional* was published between March and August 1934.

new players are coming in, with which fado feels refreshed and ready to confront the insane wave [of hate attacks]. Now it was the group Leais Fadistas (...) holding a fado session at *Rádio Graça*, so well received by the listeners that telephone requests were constant. (*Canção do Sul*, February 1, 1933, p. 1)

The defence and promotion of fado within radio itself also involved the broadcasting of lectures, such as those that the journalist and poet Armando Neves gave on Rádio Luso in 1932 (Neves, 2017, p. 20). But it is in 1934 that this relationship was structured in a more institutional way, not only with the multiple initiatives of the fado press itself in promoting radio auditions⁸, but also with the establishment of privileged links between newspapers and broadcasting stations, namely of *Canção do Sul* with Rádio Graça and Rádio Condes, and of *Guitarra de Portugal* with Rádio Luso, where Linhares Barbosa was invited to direct the fado section (*Guitarra de Portugal*, December 8, 1934, p. 3).

Regardless of the sympathy that fado might have gained in the middle classes, what united the fado singers to the small local radios and their audience from the popular districts was, to a great extent, a socially coincidental world. The owner of *Rádio Graça*, Américo Santos, who was in charge of the technical aspect, programs, and voiceovers, was a modest bookkeeper, therefore close to the original professions of the *Ídolos do Fado* (Fado Idols) listed by Victor A. Machado (1937): clerk, typographer, upholsterer, mechanical locksmith, railroad worker, electrician, shop clerk and bricklayer. Among women fado artists, there were seamstresses and factory workers, but most were not even assigned a profession. This social context is frequently associated by the fadophile discourse to the disregard of the genre: if fado is not artistically recognized, it is “because it is poor, generally disseminated among the children of the people” (*Canção do Sul*, June 16, 1934, p. 3).

In this sense, the broadcasting of fado corresponds to the projection of the popular urban classes in the public space. It is not only about the spreading to other regions of the country, a movement in which radio is part of a wider diffusion system⁹. What was also at stake with the access of fado singers to radio stations was a symbolic dignification of figures “of the people”, and of urban popular culture, a dignification that was all the more widespread, the more prestigious was the radio’s status and the scope of its diffusion.

AFTER 1935: EMISSORA AND THE NATIONAL SONG

When, in August 1935, Emissora Nacional began its regular broadcasts under the direction of Henrique Galvão, there was an ideological program that included the education of “good taste” in music aimed to “exert a profound action” especially on the “working and popular classes”¹⁰. This strategy — constrained by reduced financial means —

⁸ Just like *Guitarra Portugal*, so did *Canção do Sul* does it on several occasions.

⁹ The radio came to participate in the geographical expansion of fado that the critical discourses already identified in the previous decade and that is also fed by “fado embassies” to the province, noted in the newspapers between 1930 and 1934.

¹⁰ Henrique Galvão’s interview in *Rádio Semanal*, published in *Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, no. 1, August 1935, p. 100.

provoked, however, frictions in Emissora and led to accusations of cultural vulgarization directed at the director (Ribeiro, 2005, p. 119), tensions that referred, after all, to "the central issue of the binomial between high culture and popular culture" (Moreira, 2012, p. 64) that was at the heart of the Estado Novo's ideology.

Harassed by sectors of the regime and excluded by the Secretariat of National Propaganda from the Portuguese "soul", fado was ideologically conditioned on official radio. But it began to have a regular space as of November, when 20-minute broadcasts were made live from Retiro da Severa on Sunday and Thursday nights (*Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, no. 4, November 1935). In that month, fado occupied 2.6% of the musical broadcasting time (1 hour and 37 minutes in total) against 6 hours of regional music (data published by *Boletim da Emissora Nacional*). The Emissora's programming concentrated on high culture (more than 80% of the music). It showed that the strategy to "approach the popular classes with good elements of musical culture" (*Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, August 1935, p. 100) consisted mainly in offering them cultured forms, sometimes in more accessible guises.

The predominance of these cultural forms made Emissora a markedly symbolic space for the upper classes. Female participation, for example, was led by erudite theatre actresses, poets, lyric singers and instrumentalists (in addition to speakers who addressed "feminine themes"), resembling, in fact, a similar classist character of the pre-1930 generation of stations.

In this scenario, fado broadcasts are understood above all as a pragmatic attempt to co-opt the popular classes, with Henrique Galvão intuiting a dialogic character of radio and the possible reactions of the public. For the director of Emissora, the popular public would not accept

exclusively erudite programs whose subject matter is beyond the reach of their sensibility (...) and even less will they accept them broadcasted having the possibility to turn the knob of their apparatus and search in the private stations for the light music they like."¹¹ (Galvão, as cited in Moreira, 2012, p. 64)

But the introduction of fado can also be understood as an awareness that its audience already touched the middle classes, as Galvão alluded to device owners who would ask a fee of 6 *escudos* to listen to it (*Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, August 1, 1935, p. 98).

In any case, the Emissora broadcasts provided a new radio context where two aspects are worth noting. Firstly, giving fado singers a regular space on the official radio, and even more so within a radio model of legitimate culture, could only be seen as a form of legitimization of fado and therefore contained considerable symbolic potential. Secondly, and as a refusal of that same legitimization, the hostile interventions to fado from the intellectual nuclei of the Estado Novo were exacerbated, and, once again, the radio space became the stage for its own struggles in this regard.

¹¹ Letter to the minister Duarte Pacheco.

Faced with the new circumstance that is the existence of a state broadcasting station, the discourse of the intellectuals of the regime is not totally homogeneous, namely in what concerns the solution to the problem of fado radio broadcasting. One current, of which the journalist Augusto da Costa (1936), a native of Lusitanian Integralism¹², is a member, simply defends its prohibition:

we are convinced that it won't be long before all broadcasting stations, state or private, are entirely at the service of the Nation, being able to transmit, both in words and music, only that which truly serves the Nation. Will fado disappear from radio broadcasts? This is the way it must be. (*Boletim da Emissora Nacional*, no. 7, p. 90)

It was a matter of defending the imposition of state power to all radio stations in the name of a national authoritarian policy, and not only to Emissora Nacional, but one cannot dissociate such a position, in early 1936, from the role that official radio had assumed in the diffusion of fado. It was not the first time, by the way, that integralist voices proposed to simply extirpate fado from Portuguese cultural practices¹³.

Another current can be identified in the series of eight lectures given by Luiz Moita on fado, between April and August 1936, at Emissora Nacional. An intellectual of António Ferro's circle and, therefore, a supporter of the construction of a certain canon of popular music of rural inspiration as part of the Estado Novo “politics of the spirit”, Moita dedicates the lecture of July 7 to the radio. After describing the mixture of shouts, smoke and fado (“there's the little device on”; Moita, 1936, p. 165) that in Lisbon comes from the taverns to the streets, he thus concludes his thesis:

I am not going to affirm, because it would seem crazy to many, that we promote, in the broadcasting stations, the abrupt suppression of fado. (...) I agree that we should give the idolaters - the last blessings of a pagan cult with no tomorrow, the faculty of dividing their “broth of culture” (...) But we should stop there... In no case should we allow, I repeat, that the broth be “spilt”. (...) Don't the people of Lisbon deserve to be helped out of their psychic stagnation, instead of putting the radio in the service of their own stagnation? (Moita, 1936, pp. 168–171)

This is, in this case, a case of defending a cantonment of fado, the containment of the “virus” (Moita's 1936 own term), a strategy that admits some tolerance towards radio, but whose purpose would naturally be a pedagogical restriction of its broadcasts.

Beyond the “moralist” obsession of the censors¹⁴ and beyond the differences between these two currents, what is revealed is that both saw as insufficient the political

¹² During the First Republic, Augusto da Costa had been the main writer for the daily publication *A Monarquia*, one of the organizations of the Lusitanian Integralism movement.

¹³ In 1929, and in a context where radio broadcasting was not yet in question, another individual associated with the Lusitanian Integralism movement, Silva Gaio, defended the mere preservation of some “pathological examples” of fado.

¹⁴ Fado newspapers are also targeted in advance by the Censorship Commission, as evidenced by their editions during the 1930s.

neutralization of fado that since the beginning of the dictatorship had been done through the ideological censorship of the lyrics of the “subversive” and revolutionary line that existed before and during the First Republic (Nery, 2012, p. 231) and in which fado had been a vehicle of expression of the emerging proletariat and of denunciation of social inequalities (Brito, 1999, p. 34). What was at stake now were not politico-ideological issues that the censorship of lyrics could solve, but the cultural genre itself, in a classist repulsion that emanates from descriptions such as Moita’s (1936) and that addresses fado as a symbolic form of the popular urban classes.

At that moment, however, fado was present in the entire Lisbon radio spectrum and, as we have seen, the fado hosts had already incorporated radio as a means of diffusion and propaganda, with their own series of lectures, organization of broadcasts and allegiances between the press and broadcasting stations. Thus, the great impact that Luiz Moita’s lectures had in the field of fado was reflected not only in the newspapers, nor only in the small “popular” stations, but also through Emissora Nacional itself in the space of interpellation from the fado audience that were the broadcasts from Retiro da Severa.

In the May 6 broadcast, the fado singers responded to Luiz Moita’s first lectures with their own weapons in broadcasted fado verses. Among them was a fado entitled “Oito Conferências” (Eight Conferences), sung by Rosa Maria, with authorship by Francisco Radamanto, which also glossed the limits of Moita’s own erudite persuasion over the popular audience: “maybe it can’t even/ be listened to by the people.../ Because listening to it turns you off/ and you go looking for fado!” (*Guitarra de Portugal*, 1936, p. 5).

To say that fado was implanted in radio does not mean, however, to affirm that it had reached a respectable status since its stigmatization would still be brandished for a long time in conversations against the genre, and the stigma was sometimes even incorporated by the popular classes¹⁵.

The conquest of respectability would be a slow process, but there is no doubt that the presence of fado singers in radio stations was seen simultaneously as a factor and a sign of a road already travelled in the mid-1930s. In a balance of its 13 years of existence, *Guitarra de Portugal* traced its evolution: “women were not allowed, for reasons of decency, to sing the fado. (...) And today? the fado singers are artists, they go everywhere (...), and even TSF (Radio Station) looks for them” (*Guitarra de Portugal*, 1935, p. 2). Signs of the gradual legitimization of fado in the radio field can also be seen in *Rádio Semanal*, a supplement of *Jornal do Comércio e das Colónias* that in its editions privileges erudite culture and begins by completely ignoring fado, but that in 1936 announces Luiz Moita’s lectures without echoing his positions and, on the contrary, publishes a photo of Maria do Carmo on the cover, “the well-known and appreciated singer” responsible for the broadcasts of Rádio Peninsular (*Rádio Semanal*, 1936, p. 1).

The legitimization process felt by the fado artists themselves appears increasingly linked to their broadcasting and the support of the public opinion, as expressed by the singer Alcídia Rodrigues in an interview:

¹⁵ Amália Rodrigues states, in the biography written by Vítor Pavão dos Santos (2005), how in 1939 she did not return to Retiro da Severa after a first rehearsal because of the opposition of her family, for whom “singing fado was doom” (pp. 53–55).

[question] If one day they forbid, as the detractors want, the Fado on the radio, would you agree? [Answer] That would be the death of the broadcasting stations and the National Broadcasting Station itself. From one day to the next, 90% of the radio owners would put away their devices. (*Guitarra de Portugal*, December 8, 1935, p. 2)

It is difficult, however, to have a precise idea today of the quantitative presence that fado had in radios throughout that decade. Luiz Moita, in 1936, talks about “radio stations, in Lisbon, where almost nothing else is done but successive broadcasts of fados” (p. 163), but it must be taken into account that such a description is part of a discourse intended to fight against the proclaimed excesses of fado. We know, however, that the total duration of radio broadcasts that year was only 2 hours a day in each of the small stations¹⁶. In the first months of 1936, only one of these radio stations had a periodic program of fados in its programming: Rádio Peninsular, which directly transmitted, on Sunday afternoons, the mentioned broadcast organized by the fado singer Maria do Carmo, in what may have been the first regular in-studio fado show¹⁷. The remaining stations advertised, almost exclusively, programs of “varied music”, about which we can only speculate on which part was occupied by fado. We know, on the other hand, that in Emissora Nacional, the time occupied by fado transmissions throughout 1935 and 1936 never exceeded 6% of the musical sections, and that the direct broadcasts of Retiro da Severa corresponded to 40 minutes per week.

But, regardless of the periodicity and broadcasting time, it is very clear that the presence of fado in radios was consolidated in the second half of the 1930s, because, besides those already mentioned, we find later allusions to other regular broadcasts, usually organized or directed by fado singers: Rádio Graça broadcast sessions organized by António Montoia (*Coração do Sul*, August 16, 1936); Rádio Sonora had broadcasts directed by the singer Raquel de Sousa (Machado, 1937, p. 188); Margarida Pereira was in charge of the program “Fados e Guitarradas” launched by RCP in September 1937¹⁸; and finally Maria Teresa de Noronha inaugurated in 1938 a fortnightly program of fados from the studios of Emissora Nacional, which coexisted with the broadcasts of Retiro da Severa until 1939¹⁹. Thus, the radio structuring process (which in the first half of the 1930s had multiplied the fado broadcasts on an occasional basis) started, after 1935, to additionally structure the fado presence with regular programs and broadcasts in the generality of the radio spectrum.

On the reception side, it is not possible to have an accurate picture of the reality of fado listening, but there are indications that the search for the genre was effectively an

¹⁶ According to the programming published in *Rádio Revista*.

¹⁷ The show was on for, at least, the first half of 1936, marking its presence in the radio programming published in *Rádio Revista*.

¹⁸ This show is sometimes considered as the first aired from a studio in which fado had a regular presence, but in fact it was preceded in local radio stations, at least, by the alluded Sunday program from Rádio Peninsular, led by Maria do Carmo in 1936. The premiere of the RCP show in 1937 is mentioned in the magazine *Antena* of RCP from October 1, 1965.

¹⁹ Shows broadcast from Retiro da Severa cease to be mentioned by the end of 1939 in the Emissora’s show published in *Rádio Nacional*.

ingrained practice in popular circles. A *Rádio Revista* report relates a visit to three taverns to inquire about radio preferences:

for the tavernkeeper (all tavernkeepers, after all), if there is a transmitter station transmitting fados, he doesn't want another option (...). In a tavern, it is not possible to talk to only one person (...). All, or almost all, vote for fado (...). Most of them know the names of almost all the singers and discuss their merits heatedly. (*Rádio Revista*, January 1, 1936, p. 7)

In a series of life stories collected in Alfama, there are also memories of intensive listening to fado on the radio: “when radio started here in Portugal, we used to listen to Manuel Monteiro and Hermínia Silva all day long – we played it five hundred times”²⁰ (Costa & Guerreiro, 1984, p. 110). From a different class position, however, one finds an audience that reproduces criticisms analogous to those of the regime's intellectuals: “the Retiro's *desgarradas* is inadmissible on a classy radio station”²¹ (*Rádio Revista*, January 1, 1936, p. 6).

CONCLUSION — TOWARDS THE 1940s

The 1st decade and a half of radio broadcasting in Portugal (from 1924 to 1940) represented for fado a dilemma in its history because it aggravated the cultural tensions around this popular urban genre and the unprecedented possibilities for its public legitimization that were put forward by the first social communication media not contained by the limits of illiteracy and that lent itself to a sound experience close to popular forms in its diffusion and daily practice.

It is noteworthy, however, that in a dictatorial context, fado ended up resisting an ideological offensive from notable sectors of the regime and imposed and affirmed itself in the public space. This affirmation, also made against the backdrop of bourgeois morality, which besides trying to prevent a symbolic recognition of the “culture of the poor”, also fought the very fado ethos in what it presented as contrary to either the Estado Novo ideological project of vigorous regeneration of the nation or the values of merit and individual entrepreneurial initiative on which the hegemony of the bourgeoisie is based, absolutely adverse to the taste for melodrama that filled much of fado with the misadventures and misfortunes of the underprivileged classes.

The then emerging radio was the stage, at the same time, of the offensive against fado and of the fado resistance. However, this was not an ideological resistance to the regime, but a cultural one, linked to forms of popular expression, but also to dynamics of professional affirmation of an artistic medium that increasingly follows the paths of spectacle and mediatization.

The process of the consolidation of the fado artist on the radio ended up being done in three phases, roughly corresponding to:

²⁰ Testimony of amateur fado singer Armando Santos.

²¹ Office worker surveyed in the aforementioned *Rádio Revista* report, January 1 1936, p. 6.

1. the second half of the 1920s, with an occasional inclusion of fado in radio concert programs and first sporadic broadcasts of fado sessions;
2. the early 1930s, with the emergence of studio broadcasts and widening of diffusion through records, in a conjuncture favoured by small stations close to the Lisbon popular milieus;
3. from the mid-1930s to the end of the decade, with a regular radio presence and structured fado programs in national broadcasting stations.

Not by chance, the 1920s and 1930s are the period in which the “defining leap” of fado as an autonomous genre in its musical characteristics based on a harmonic base on which the voice can “sing with good style” (Carvalho, 1994, p. 96). In other words, fado fixes the improvisational character of its performance at the level of vocal tempos and ornaments, abandoning the improvisation of the lyrics that was typical of the common *desgarradas* until the first quarter of the 20th century and that censorship now represses (Brito, 1999, pp. 34–35), which also responds to a growing context of the music industry and professional regulation, but keeps a performative dimension enough for the radio, especially with direct broadcasts, to also mediate a certain fado originality.

All this indicates that the crucial process of artistic definition that fado goes through in this stage is being done in articulation with the radio field. But, as we saw, the articulation between radio and fado didn’t happen simply through musical spaces and had an important element in the discourses about fado, many of them developed on the radio and/or about radio. This extends and deepens the discussion that already came from the press, but the radio itself is now the motivation and object of symbolic struggles around fado, with the fadophile community using public opinion as a legitimizing element that is sustained on radio listening itself.

Despite the radio consolidation that fado achieved, the continued attempts to delegitimize it and to stop its expansion, both territorial and class-based, did not stop at the end of the 1930s. With the inauguration of António Ferro as director of the Emissora Nacional in 1941, a decade was dedicated by the Secretariat of National Propaganda to the simultaneous containment and toning down of fado, essentially giving institutional continuity to the critical discourse that argued for its cantonment.

The 1940s deserve their own specific analysis, but some of its traces derive from the will of the regime already evident in the previous stage, which led to a retreat of the radio presence of fado in favour of “light music” and other genres to the training of fado singers by the state radio within a “sanitized” logic of the national song, the entrance of the public itself in the heated debates about the broadcasting of fado and, lastly, the inflexion, by the end of the decade, of the official attitude towards fado after the emergence of a new internationalizing potential with Amália Rodrigues.

Translation: Susana Valdez

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