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## Portuguese Rock or Rock in Portuguese?

*Controversies Concerning the  
“Portugueseness” of Rock Music Made  
in Portugal in the Early 1980s*

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### Introduction

1980 was a turning point for rock music in Portugal. The commercial success of two songs released that year—“Chico Fininho” (“Thin Chico”) by Rui Veloso and “Cavalos de Corrida” (“Racing Horses”) by the band UHF<sup>1</sup>—triggered what the media referred to as the “boom of Portuguese rock.” This phenomenon was characterized by the sudden rise in the recording, publication, and dissemination of Portuguese rock groups and repertoire. Up until this point, record labels were generally disinterested in recording original repertoire by local rock groups. The use of Portuguese was also often characterized by several musicians in the local press as being difficult to match with the sonic specificities of rock music.

The success of Rui Veloso (b. 1957) and UHF (founded in 1978) triggered a new demand for “Portuguese rock” by record labels, which was accompanied by intense media promotion of rock made in Portugal, the development of artistic management and live sound businesses, and a greater acceptance of rock music sung in the Portuguese language, in tune with the need for “direct” and “unmediated” expressions popularized by the new punk and new wave styles. The unprecedented success of Portuguese rock groups in the early 1980s

stimulated debates among musicians, record industry agents, and journalists about the creation and promotion of “Portuguese rock” and the possibility of contemplating rock music as “Portuguese.” There were several controversies around issues such as the presumed “origins” of the genre and its geographical location (that is, rock music as a “universal expression” or as an “imported practice”); the use of the native language as a defining characteristic of the “Portugueseness” of rock; the suitability of rock music for articulating Portuguese phonetics; and the commercial interests inherent in the constitution of the category of “Portuguese rock.”

This chapter focuses on the “boom” of Portuguese rock in the 1980s. Following a brief political and socio-cultural contextualization, I address the discursive constructions of “Portuguese rock” (*rock português*) articulated by musicians, journalists, and other agents, the controversies regarding the use of the Portuguese language in rock lyrics, and the relationship between these processes and the musical, socio-cultural, and political changes in the country.

## **The Setting**

The 1970s was a decade of profound political and social transformation in Portugal. The country was ruled by an authoritarian right-wing regime (*Estado Novo*) from 1933<sup>2</sup> up until the *coup d'état* on April 25, 1974, which led to the formation of a democratic regime and the end of colonial rule. The final years of the authoritarian regime were marked by widespread poverty and illiteracy, intense emigration, and a war in Portugal's African colonies that had begun in 1961. A revolutionary process followed the 1974 *coup d'état*, leading to the gradual democratization of political and social life through the institution of free elections and the end of state censorship. This was followed by the consolidation of a multi-party regime of parliamentary representation and the institutionalization of the social state. This period was also strongly marked by deep social changes that included the increase of migratory flows from the countryside to the city, the tertiarization of society, the increasing professionalization of women, and an increase in the education levels of the population.

The opening of the Portuguese economy to European and American markets during this period facilitated access to foreign cultural goods, including sound recordings and films, parallel to an increase in the purchase power of the emerging middle class. An increasingly cosmopolitan Portuguese society aspired to reproduce lifestyles regarded as “modern” and to acquire cultural capital through new consumer habits and expressive modes such as music and an emerging audiovisual culture (Trindade 2015). At the same time, the younger generation

became increasingly “depoliticized,” especially when compared to the involvement of the youth in opposition to the regime in the 1960s and early 1970s and during the revolutionary process in the mid-1970s (2015). This decrease in youth engagement with politics was substituted by the development of an imaginary “modernity” in the discourse of musicians and listeners, in which rock music played a central role. These changes were seen as an approximation to the values and lifestyles found in Western Europe and the United States that were regarded as more “developed” and “modern.”

### Rock in Portuguese

During the final decades of the authoritarian regime, several musicians considered rock music to be a viable aesthetic alternative to the hegemonic genres and styles promoted by the Portuguese media, in particular fado and *música ligeira*<sup>3</sup> (literally, “light music”). This hegemony was commonly referred to as *nacional-cançonetismo* (“national-songerism,” a play on national-socialism), an expression that denoted repertoires of popular music usually associated with the production systems of state radio (Emissora Nacional) and the televised Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (RTP) Song Festival.<sup>4</sup> The 1960s and 1970s were marked by a slow process of change in which several rock musicians in Portugal sought to assimilate or emulate what they understood to be the main characteristics of the rock universe of the “distant” Anglo-American world. The international dissemination of rock and roll’s “modern rhythms” throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the subsequent construction of rock music as an “art form” from the late 1960s, and the popularization of the rock concert as a model of performance, inspired the configuration of new groups (*conjuntos*). During the 1960s and 1970s, the repertoire of Portuguese rock groups consisted mostly of covers of international pop-rock hits,<sup>5</sup> rarely including original compositions. Most rock bands considered the performance of original songs unfeasible because of the audiences’ unfamiliarity with this repertoire, which was because Portuguese record labels and radio stations had little interest in recording Portuguese rock groups, usually justified by the availability of recordings of British and American bands.

The involvement of musicians and audiences in rock music in the 1970s was inseparable from their interest in cultural and political modernization. Portuguese rock musicians strove to create music that was clearly distinguished from fado and *nacional cançonetismo* and from the emphasis of these genres on themes such as loss, longing, religiosity, and patriotic sentiment, underlying values that many associated with the authoritarian regime. While a few records included

original repertoire sung in Portuguese, most rock groups chose to sing in English, which they considered to be a distinctive characteristic of rock. During the last years of the dictatorship, there was a prominent shift from French to Anglo-American external cultural influences, and this change further contributed to an increase in rock lyrics being written in English.

For rock musicians at the time, the notion of “Portuguese music” was closely linked to fado and other Portuguese-language musical genres regularly broadcast on the radio during their early youth. This was one of the motivations that led to the general rejection of the use of Portuguese in rock lyrics. In an interview published in January 1981, António Manuel Ribeiro, UHF’s lead singer, stated that during his adolescence his conception of “Portuguese music” was limited to “decadent fado<sup>6</sup> and *songerism*” (Macedo 1981). Rock guitarist Jorge Trindade associated these two genres with “banal lyrics” and characterized fado as the “son of a minor god.”<sup>7</sup> Tozé Brito, member of the rock groups Pop Five Music Incorporated and Quarteto 1111, states that during his adolescence in the northern city of Porto, “you didn’t sing in Portuguese” in rock bands and “whoever did it had bad taste and was considered corny” (Castel-Branco 1981).

The rejection of native languages in pop-rock lyrics was common in other non-English speaking countries, even those that had not experienced dictatorships. In an article on the first decades of rock music in Japan, Katsuya Minamida explores debates in the press at the turn of the 1960s to the 1970s about the validity of the use of Japanese within rock music and the concept of “Japanese rock,” a debate that finds a parallel within the context of the Portuguese boom (2014). According to sociologist Michael Spanu, musicians in France regarded the use of English in pop-rock music as a way of distinguishing from “mainstream music” in French and conferred to rock a certain sense of desired otherness (2015, 519). As the ethnomusicologist Harris Berger points out, the choice of a certain foreign language over the local one, or the belief that the foreign language holds higher status, may constitute ways of performing a distinct social identity (2003, xv-xvi). In the Portuguese case, these choices helped construct an imagined identity of what it is to be a rock musician in North America and Britain, an identity that was of pivotal importance in Portugal during the late 1970s and early 1980s for marking a generational rupture with both the *Estado Novo* and the revolutionary period.

Throughout the 1970s, the supposed “corniness” or inadequacy of Portuguese for rock lyrics was also justified on the grounds of an alleged lack of articulation between the phonetics of the Portuguese language and rock music. According to António Garcez, lead singer of the 1970s and 1980s rock groups *Pentágono*, *Psico*, *Arte & Ofício*, and *Roxigénio*:

[People ask me in the USA]: how do you say “I love you” in Portuguese?” “It’s horrible, man: *amo-te!*” [ . . . ] But then I say: “Brazilian is very beautiful.” “How is it?” “*Te amo*” [ . . . ] Brazilian Portuguese has musicality, like Italian. [ . . . ] [Portuguese from Portugal has] many consonants, it is a very hard language, not flexible.<sup>8</sup>

The preference for English was also sometimes justified by downgrading the importance of the communicative function of lyrical content. For António Garcez, what was essential was the specific “musicality” of the English language:

I don’t care about the lyrics! [ . . . ] A guy listens to lyrics of super-famous songs where the lyrics are nothing. [ . . . ] Even in the Beatles. [ . . . ] I was interested in the sound of the voice! [ . . . ] My English was not very good, but I would take the microphone and just scream—no one had my voice, man!<sup>9</sup>

For several Portuguese rock musicians, English was considered a kind of *lingua franca* of rock that was linked to its very genesis. Some musicians frequently compared the use of Portuguese lyrics in rock music and the hypothetical use of English in musical genres considered typically “Portuguese” such as fado. António Garcez argued the following:

I insist, rock is an English word, it does not exist in our dictionary. So it doesn’t make sense for me to sing rock music in Portuguese. It is just like someone who wants to sing fado in English. It loses its interest. (Dias 1981)

Finally, the use of English was also seen by some rock groups such as Arte & Ofício and Tantra as offering the potential for developing an international career, which was never fully realized.

## Protest Music

Despite the general rejection of rock being sung in Portuguese, there were contexts in which the language was actively embraced by some musicians. The creation of a protest-song repertoire by new singer-songwriters during the 1960s and 1970s<sup>10</sup> led to a greater acceptance of the Portuguese language by rock musicians in the early 1980s. The early records by José Afonso and Adriano Correia de Oliveira, published in the first half of the 1960s, inaugurated the protest song movement. By the late 1960s, this movement had some media coverage in the press and on television, namely through the TV show *Zip-Zip*, one of the main promotional stages for protest singers. Within this musical movement, the first LPs by José Mário Branco and Sérgio Godinho—recorded in 1971 at the Château d’Hérouville studios near Paris (famous for several recordings by major British pop-rock artists)—were considered by musicians and the press as remarkable examples of the creative ways in which the Portuguese language

could be set to music influenced by new Anglo-American musical styles. José Mário Branco's first LP, *Mudam-se os Tempos, Mudam-se as Vontades*, and Sérgio Godinho's first EP, *Romance de Um Dia na Estrada*, were both published in the same year.

According to some of the protagonists of the “boom of Portuguese rock” in the early 1980s, these records exemplified the possibility of creating new musical styles with Portuguese lyrics. Although the press did not characterize Branco's and Godinho's songs as “rock” music per se, several rock musicians were inspired by the metaphorical and jovial language of Godinho's Portuguese lyrics, which denounced the political and social situation in Portugal. They also drew inspiration from the new musical sounds derived from the technological capabilities of multitrack recording and the use of drums, electric guitars, and organs. In the words of journalist and rock musician, António Duarte:

[T]he great master of singing in Portuguese was Sérgio Godinho. [. . .] He was the bridge between [politically] interventive music [. . .] rock music, and pop music. [. . .] José Mário Branco [was also responsible for this].<sup>11</sup>

The change in political regime had a direct impact on the content of the lyrics. During the dictatorship, the intended meanings of lyrics were veiled by metaphors and other figures of speech in order to escape censorship. However, during the revolutionary process of 1974–1975, the identification of protest singers with different political parties motivated new thematic content directly expressing their alignment with the party lines of new political organizations (Castro 2019). During the revolutionary years, political song was omnipresent in the media. For rock musician António Manuel Ribeiro (member of the group UHF), despite the social and political importance of protest singers, their ubiquity brought “a huge qualitative lowering” in the musical landscape of the revolutionary period,<sup>12</sup> given the general simplicity of the songs and the agitprop quality of the lyrics. Although Rui Veloso had claimed to have enjoyed Sérgio Godinho's and José Mário Branco's pre-1974 LPs, he made a similar critique:

[F]ollowing April 25, 1974, due to the concern with more direct lyrics, musicians became less concerned with musical quality and therefore the panorama declined a lot (Cabrita 1980).

However, the more straightforward lyrical content of some of the repertoire written in Portuguese during the second half of the 1970s reflected a broader valorization of directly exposing the vicissitudes of marginalized social groups that was characteristic of new rock styles such as punk. During a period in which rock sung in Portuguese was not generally accepted, the main precursors of punk in Portugal—the groups Os Fúscas, Aqui d'el-Rock, UHF, and Minas & Armadil-

has—made the point of singing in their native language for greater effectiveness in communicating their message. Their lyrics differed greatly from the mystical and “fantastical” inclination of the repertoire of groups such as Tantra, which were inspired by English progressive rock groups such as Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Genesis. In the view of Paulo Borges, lead singer of the punk group Minas & Armadilhas, the contrast between punk and progressive rock was also based on the opposition between greater social and political awareness and an “alienated” stance towards negative aspects of society:

It was a breath of fresh air in the midst of a population that consumed music, in a way that seemed a bit too much like a numbing of consciousness. [ . . . ] Most of my friends were like that. Freaks, hippies. A lot of progressive rock. [ . . . ] But suddenly it [punk] sounded to me as something new, different, and it corresponded to my revolutionary impulse, a bit nihilistic [ . . . ] with a bit of social commitment.<sup>13</sup>

According to Borges, this commitment involved the need for “direct” communication, unmediated by a foreign language, in order to portray the specifics of the “real.” This idea of “realism” in Portugal’s punk in the late 1970s was often associated with the vicissitudes of “disgruntled and marginal” residents in increasingly industrialized areas and with issues such as prostitution, delinquency, police brutality, labor exploitation, and social alienation, which, according to UHF’s António Manuel Ribeiro, constituted the “natural product of urban societies” (Macedo 1981). The expression of this realism by early punk musicians and fans, and the possibility of “having a voice” through music, was also linked to their desire to discard the complexity and technical ostentation that they saw as characteristic of progressive rock and that could only be afforded by those musicians with greater financial capacity. According to Paulo Borges, these social concerns were reflected both in the musical materials—the aggressive simplicity of his group’s sound—and the use of the vernacular.

### ***Ar de Rock***

The latter years of the 1970s in Portugal were marked by a political, cultural, and economic turn towards the rest of Western Europe that was often compared in the press with the values of modernity and democracy. This new momentum had repercussions for the production and publication policies of the main Portuguese record labels. In 1978, Rui Valentim de Carvalho was administrator of one of the largest and most active record labels in the country, Valentim de Carvalho. He hired Nuno Rodrigues and António Pinho, members of the Banda do Casaco,<sup>14</sup> as producers and subsequently A&R (Artists and Repertoire), in response to

the widespread belief that the company's staff and catalog were unattuned to new currents in popular music.<sup>15</sup> The company also hired Carvalho's nephews Francisco Vasconcelos and David Ferreira, both of whom played an important role in signing new Portuguese rock groups. Rock groups were also promoted by radio presenters dedicated to rock music such as António Sérgio and Luís Filipe Barros and by new periodicals such as *Rock Week*, *Música & Som*, and, most important, the weekly *Seze*. The above-mentioned record publishers contended that their interest in recording rock sung in Portuguese was a way of differentiating "national" from "international" records on the local market and a means of avoiding poorly written and sung English lyrics. Here, António Pinho is categorical:

For me, even today it makes no sense to record in another language if I am recording in Portugal. And it is not a matter of patriotism, it is a matter of principle. [ . . . ] We are usually bad in writing [lyrics] in another language. [ . . . ] And the market was needing this kind of music to be sung in Portuguese.<sup>16</sup>

António Pinho demanded that singer Rui Veloso and lyricist Carlos Tê write lyrics in Portuguese and discard their English texts. Tê wrote lyrics that Veloso set to new music featuring urban and rural characters and social realities in language often qualified by the press as "youthful" and as being filled with new urban jargon. The resulting album, *Ar de Rock* (1980), was promoted by Valentim de Carvalho as an example of the artistic success of rock music sung in Portuguese and in an attempt to counteract the then-popular opinion that the use of Portuguese was corny. Although the musical characteristics of the song "Chico Fininho" (the main single from the LP) are distinct from the then-recent trends of punk and new wave—the song took melodic and harmonic influence from blues—its direct, jovial, and irreverent language, dealing with the vicissitudes of a drug addict in Porto, contributed to the song's great commercial and media success. For David Ferreira, Carlos Tê's texts had a lyrical quality that was aligned with the "direct" character of the new punk and new wave styles, which contributed to the popularity of the album *Ar de Rock*:

Rui himself, without being a punk artist . . . there is a direct communication there that has nothing to do with what existed before, such as what happened with Tantra. [ . . . ] *Ar de Rock* is an immediate album. It is an album that . . . despite being a blues album, it has a new wave feel to it in its simple message.<sup>17</sup>

When Francisco Vasconcelos, David Ferreira's editorial partner, first contacted Porto's rock group GNR, he also put as a condition for recording their music that the group replace its English lyrics with Portuguese ones. Vasconcelos associated Portuguese language with an idea of "hardness," which "had something to do



with punk,” “an edge similar to the other edges that were also out there” in new rock styles.<sup>18</sup> The need expressed by punk bands to communicate directly with the public meant that the use of the Portuguese language, and its respective explicitness when compared to English, was understood by some musicians and publishers as a novelty.

The publication of Rui Veloso’s landmark album *Ar de Rock* was widely regarded by musicians and the press as a pivotal moment for the widespread acceptance of the use of Portuguese in rock music and for engaging in themes that reflected the experiences and social concerns of musicians. Weeks after the album’s release, radio and television presenter Julio Isidro consecrated Veloso’s and Tê’s efforts as an example of “a new idiom” of “healthy extroversion” that “dusted off” the idea that rock music “could only be sung in English” (1980). One year following its publication, the newspaper *Se7e* published the following description:

This Portuguese-speaking Rock begins to have common denominators. Through it, situations are denounced and hopes are expressed. You can argue for integration in the EEC (European Economic Community) or you can say that TV sucks. All this is expressed in words that everyone now understands, speaking of things that everyone knows, that everyone feels. [ . . . ] This is the great revolution. (“Rock Português,” 1981)

The success of songs such as “Chico Fininho” and “Cavalos de Corrida” was followed by an intense investment by record labels in rock music sung in Portuguese. However, some musicians regarded composing in Portuguese as an added difficulty, because they considered the language to be “less musical.” For example, Luís Ventura, lead singer of the rock group Street Kids, stated that if the use of the English language “limits understanding,” singing in Portuguese “greatly limits the framing of the music” (Dias 1981). A general lack of habit in listening to rock music sung in Portuguese motivated several discussions about the difficulties of writing lyrics in this language. A point that was often made was that the frequency of sibilant phonemes and consonants in European Portuguese, in contrast to the supposed more regular use of vowels in English (and Brazilian Portuguese), constituted an obstacle to setting Portuguese lyrics to rock music. Even Rui Veloso, the main protagonist of the “boom” of Portuguese rock, seemed to agree with this point, arguing that the record label’s imposition of singing in Portuguese ended up influencing the repertoire’s musical style, which became closer to the music sung in Portuguese that he was used to listening to:

[C]omposing in English is a lot easier. The English language has much softer sounds. The Portuguese language has hard sounds. The “rr,” the “ã,” the very open “aas.” It

is sometimes difficult to get them into music. [ . . . ] I always end up writing ballads, man! (Cabrita 1980)

The unprecedented investment in rock music sung in Portuguese was also seen by some musicians—especially those who were active before the “boom”—as an opportunistic approach by record labels that started investing heavily in rock music after the success of Valentim de Carvalho and by those groups that converted (or even translated) their lyrics. Drummer Flash Gordon (Emanuel Ramalho) of the group Street Kids referred to the pressure that musicians felt: “This story of singing in Portuguese was almost a weapon aimed at musicians. Most bands have cowered, others not. We sing in English and go on” (Dias 1981).

Another important factor was the parliamentary approval of a law stipulating that 50 percent of music broadcast on radio and television must be by Portuguese authors and sung in Portuguese, a regulation that reinforced the promotion of Portuguese rock groups (*Diário da República*, no. 165, 1981). Despite a general lack of compliance with this law, its approval led some radio broadcasters to air more music sung in Portuguese, influencing new groups to abandon English lyrics. This also led some influential radio broadcasters like Luís Filipe Barros to encourage record labels to record rock sung in Portuguese, given the necessity of having Portuguese vocal repertoire on his radio show.

## **Portuguese Rock**

The legitimacy of the term “Portuguese rock” was intensely debated in the press during the rock “boom” of the early 1980s. The main issue was whether there could be a Portuguese rock music or whether such a label constituted a misconception. As discussed below, for some musicians and journalists, given its Anglo-American origin, rock could never be qualified as “Portuguese” but only as a music sung in Portuguese. Some musicians understood the popularity of the category “Portuguese rock” as a commercial ploy engineered by record labels and the media as a way of enhancing the commercial viability of the recordings of new rock groups. This concern even extended to the music of bands that, in the opinion of some musicians, were not “authentic” because they started out accompanying dance parties before turning into rock bands (as was the case with Grupo de Baile and CTT). The argument used by the majority of those who defended the nonexistence of “Portuguese rock” was based on the musical and linguistic aspects seen as structural elements of the genre. This argument is clearly expressed by rock musician Aníbal Miranda:

I think that there isn't any "Portuguese rock" but just rock sung in Portuguese. I think rock music is essentially English. [...] In fact, I very much doubt that English people would ever sing "Chico Fininho" in Portuguese. (Marques 1981)

Those who thought that rock music could also be "Portuguese" based their argument on the supposed "universality" of the genre as well as it being internationally used to portray modern societies, of which they considered Portugal to be one. The widely spread idea that rock is "universal" was also connected to the rise of the youth as a distinct social category in the 1950s (particularly in the US). The articulation of rock music, clothing, and lifestyles by the youth was internationally disseminated through movies, magazines, and other media (Bennett 2001, 16–17; Longhurst and Bogdanović 2014; Shuker 2008). The influence of rock music and associated lifestyles was also materialized in the constitution of local "scenes" and "movements" around the world. The very adoption of national languages other than English by these movements and scenes was a significant change that allowed for greater communication between musicians and audiences and attracted investments from various industries (Wallis and Malm 1984, 302–11). In Portugal, the acceptance of the "universality" of rock also reflected the social and economic aspirations of musicians toward what they understood to be the cultural practices of western "modernity"; it was aligned as well with the idea that the individual and social concerns of the "youth" were internationally shared and articulated through their musical practices. Finally, in Portugal the supposed universality of rock was also based on a presumed evolutionary genealogy of the practice as multi-situated and not merely North American and British. According to the members of the group Rocktrote:

[R]ock was not born in England as many claim. Rock was born in America and Africa in the clubs, where it was sung by workers and exported to England where it gained greater acceptance, namely through The Beatles. But that does not mean that rock is English, it can now be considered universal. (Lopes 1981)

Musicians and critics who argued that it was inconsistent to label much of the rock music made in Portugal as "Portuguese" based their judgment on the idea that "Portugueseness" in rock could only result from the close relationship between the structural elements of rock and those of the repertoires understood to be typically Portuguese, particularly traditional music. *Trabalhadores do Comércio* was one of the groups particularly concerned with this issue. For Sérgio Castro, the group's founder, the use of the Portuguese language in "rock music with strictly Anglo-American characteristics" is a "mistake" (Dias 1982). In order to articulate a humorous critique of the concept of "Portuguese rock," the Trab-

alhadores do Comércio exaggerated elements associated with Portugueseness in their music, using the distinct northern Portuguese accent, emphasizing their regional identity, and occasionally including references to Portuguese traditional music. The emphasis on the northern accent was anchored on Castro's idea that this accent is closer to the Portuguese presumably spoken in the nation-state's cradle (northern Portugal) and, therefore, is more "authentically" Portuguese (Castro 2011, 151–52).

During the 1980s, Heróis do Mar was one of the most popular examples of asserting "Portugueseness" in pop-rock music. Their name derives from the first verse of the national anthem. The group's ideology, militaristic attire, and lyrics were inspired by Portugal's history, especially the maritime expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The emergence of the group was a source of huge controversy in the press, given the strong association established by some journalists between the symbols adopted by the group and the glorification of Portugal's "heroic" past promoted by the recently ended authoritarian regimes of Salazar and Caetano. Although the group emerged in 1981 during the height of "Portuguese rock," it refused to be included in this category. In doing so, it distanced itself from the other groups that became popular in this period, whose repertoire was closer to hard rock and heavy metal styles. However, the group claimed that their music was "truly Portuguese," despite also being influenced by British groups such as Spandau Ballet and the Human League. According to Pedro Ayres Magalhães, the group's bassist and main ideologue, the group created "musical structures that could be spoken in Portuguese," adding that "the Portuguese language has a certain musicality, a certain articulation."<sup>19</sup> The notion of a "Portuguese musicality" intersected with an image of Portugal—more specifically of Lisbon—as a "mulatto" and "multicultural" city. This idea resonated with the controversial romanticization of the colonial past as one that had facilitated the encounter between different cultures during the maritime expansion. In Heróis do Mar's first album, this idea was musically materialized in songs such as "Salmo" and "Bailai," characterized by Magalhães' inspiration from "African" rhythms.

The debate over the "Portugueseness" of rock music culminated in a sequence of articles published in the music journal *Se7e* toward the end of 1982. This was a moment when the decline in the number of "Portuguese rock" groups and the economic crisis of Portuguese record labels, which paralleled the country's financial crisis, were frequently debated in the press. In the article that inaugurated this debate, António Duarte argued that rock music could be considered Portuguese, given that even musical genres usually regarded as being "typically" Portuguese, such as fado, had remote and diverse origins:

It is rock. It is made by Portuguese: Portuguese Rock. Don't come to me saying that rock can't be "Portuguese." [...] And also do not come to me saying that Portuguese music is just fado or folk music . . . Because, fado has remote origins in the Cape Verdean *mornas*; Portuguese folk music is more Celtic than Portuguese, and it also branches on northeastern Brazil's *modas*. [...] And Rock 'n' Roll comes from the Rhythm 'n' Blues, which is black; and the Rhythm 'n' Blues comes from the blues of African slaves. (Duarte 1982)

Such statements triggered an intense debate between musicians and journalists that dragged on in this periodical for months. In particular, this debate involved António Duarte and Miguel Esteves Cardoso, an emerging pop-rock critic and one of the main promoters of new British pop groups in Portugal such as Joy Division, New Order, and The Durutti Column. In response to Duarte, Cardoso reiterated that "Portuguese Rock is no different from Anglo-American Rock. Not only is it not different, it cannot also be equal: it is worse!" (Esteves Cardoso 1982). However, he emphasized that Heróis do Mar were a representative case of "Portugueseness" within pop music, not so much because they evoked specific musical characteristics, but because they framed them within the "Portuguese poetic tradition" (1982). This argument was also connected to Cardoso's ideological identification with the group, given his conservative and even monarchist inclinations. Despite some confusion and conceptual divergence, the exchange of comments between Duarte and Cardoso motivated a "shower of letters" ("Há ou não há Rock Português?" 1982) addressed to *Se7e*, by fans and musicians representing the opposing positions of the two journalists. This intense correspondence culminated with the newspaper pleading readers not to communicate further on the subject:

*Se7e* and its readers contributed to reduce the army of unemployed people in this country [...] the CTT [Mail, Telephone, and Telegraph Company] [...] had to hire staff in order to handle the avalanche of letters and postcards that arrived at our [...] newsroom [...]. Do not send further contributions to the discussion: we would not know what to do with them. ("No fim do debate" 1982)

## Conclusion

The changes triggered by the "boom of Portuguese rock" were fundamental for the long-term consolidation of pop-rock practices in Portugal. The music and debates that constituted the "boom" helped to solidify the practice of singing rock music in Portuguese and to turn it into both an important commercial factor and a pivotal identifying element in locally produced rock music, in line with other musical genres. If before 1980 the use of the Portuguese language in

rock music was uncommon, years later the use of the English language became a cause of media frenzy, exemplified by the debate during the 1990s concerning the huge success of some rock groups that sang almost exclusively in English.

In the early 1980s, “Portuguese rock” contributed notably to the consolidation of a “modern” cosmopolitan youth identity. However, although the use of the Portuguese language allowed for more direct communication between rock bands and their audiences, this was also considered an opportunistic move, even by some of the record labels that needed to promote rock sung in Portuguese. In short, the “boom of Portuguese rock” was marked by several debates concerning the (supposed) contradiction inherent in the promotion of rock’s perceived “subversiveness” through the national record industry. Above all, “Portuguese rock” in the early 1980s constituted different ways of reimagining the country and what it meant to be “Portuguese” and “modern.”

### Notes

This chapter is the outcome of research I carried out for my doctoral dissertation on the “boom of Portuguese rock” in the early 1980s (Andrade 2020), in which I examined the dynamics of creating and performing this repertoire in Portugal, considering the social, institutional, and technical specificities and constraints of that period. This research was based on field and archival work, including over 50 interviews with musicians and other agents, and content analysis of relevant periodicals published between 1976 and 1985. It draws on the pioneering work on popular music in Portugal carried out within the framework of the Instituto de Etnomusicologia—Centro de Estudos em Música e Dança of the NOVA University of Lisbon during the past 25 years. Some of the results of this research were published in the *Enciclopédia da música em Portugal no século XX* (Castelo-Branco 2010).

1. “UHF” stands for Ultra High Frequency. However, the group only uses the acronym as their designation.

2. After seven years of military dictatorship, which would end the first Portuguese Republic after the coup of May 28, 1926.

3. The songs usually identified with this genre were promoted by the National Radio (Emissora Nacional) and regularly performed by formally trained singers, often with orchestral accompaniment (Moreira, Cidra, and Castelo-Branco 2010). The lyrics were characterized by their detractors as being futile, superficial, and reminiscent of values promoted by the authoritarian regime such as romantic love, patriotism, and religious devotion (César 2010). The uses of *música ligeira* in Portugal are similar to those of *musica leggera* in Italy, as explained by Fabbri and Plastino (2014, 2).

4. The RTP Song Festival is an annual competition initiated in 1964. Every year the winner represents Portugal in the Eurovision Song Contest (César, Tilly, and Cidra 2010).

5. Some rock lyrics of original compositions in the Portuguese language that addressed political issues were subject to state censorship. However, as I discuss, censorship was not the major motivation prompting musicians to sing in English.

6. According to extant research, up to the end of World War II, the dictatorship held

an ambivalent and sometimes hostile stance towards fado. However, from the 1950s up to its fall in 1974, realizing its potential for creating a populist image and promoting tourism, this regime promoted fado as the “national song” in Portugal and abroad (Castelo-Branco and Moreno Fernández 2019, 83; Nery 2012, 333).

7. Interview with the author, October 14, 2015.
8. Interview with the author, July 25, 2015.
9. Interview with the author, July 25, 2015.
10. For more on protest song in Portugal, see the chapter by Hugo Castro in this volume.
11. Interview with the author, September 27, 2015.
12. Interview with the author, September 27, 2015.
13. Interview with the author, May 18, 2018.
14. Formed in 1973, the Banda do Casaco was pivotal in combining pop music with local traditional repertoires, promoting a somewhat “experimental” trend within popular music in Portugal (Tilly 2010).
15. Rodrigues and Pinho became responsible for hiring and selecting artists for composing, arranging, and recording new repertoire.
16. Interview with the author and Miguel Almeida, June 26, 2014.
17. Interview with the author and Miguel Almeida, January 20, 2015.
18. Interview with the author, Miguel Almeida, and António Tilly, February 2, 2015.
19. Interview with the author, February 7, 2016.

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