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FADO HISTORIOGRAPHY: OLD MYTHS AND NEW FRONTIERS¹

In April of 1999, several well known fadistas traveled from Lisbon to Wales to perform in the Fifth Annual “Giving Voice” Festival organized by Performance Research International in Aberwystwyth. I had been asked to present a historical lecture comparing fado and flamenco as the preamble to a workshop devoted to the two Iberian musics. Preparing to address several hundred Welsh aficionados, I assembled my lecture notes at a small wooden podium as the fadistas settled into nearby chairs, poised to perform live musical excerpts of fado’s twentieth century evolution. I began my presentation by citing a newly published book which challenged select assumptions concerning fado’s origins. Hoping to draw the crowd’s attention, I described José Ramos Tinhorão’s (1994) theory that fado’s roots can be traced to early nineteenth century Brazil, where African traditions inspired a dance form influenced by the seductive Afro-Brazilian “lundu.” The audience members were not as much riveted by my discussion of the latest advances in fado scholarship, as they were by my co-panelists’ impassioned response to it. Rising spontaneously, buoyed by the palpable agitation of his fellow musicians, the guitarist stood up and spoke directly to the audience, “These are the ideas of pseudo-intellectuals. Don’t believe them! They are plain wrong. Fado is Portuguese. Fado was born in Portugal. Fado did not come from Brazil. If it ended up in Brazil, it is because we brought it there. Fado is ours.”

This experience introduced me to the high stakes involved in a debate I had thought was simply an academic one. The origins of fado, widely perceived as Portugal’s “national song,” have been the subject of over a century of scholarly speculation and surmise. Over the last several decades, however, in a complex dance “*a desafio*”-- full of twists, turns and the occasional *umbigada*, fado scholars have challenged certain previously held beliefs making way for what might be perceived as a paradigm shift in the explanation of fado’s cultural genesis. This paper provides a review of the new wave of fado scholarship, paying particular attention to the origins debate and the way in which older notions have been revised according to Portuguese post-colonial theories of the “Brown Atlantic” and its characteristic triangulation between Portugal, Brazil and Africa.

¹ Many thanks to Aaron Fox and António Joel for helping me procure unpublished manuscripts and hard-to-find sources for this paper.

I. Creation Myths: The Collision of Historiography and Nationalism

Attempting to distinguish between two distinct strains of writerly musings on fado's origins, Joaquim Pais de Brito describes a wide range of musicological and historical arguments on the one hand, and a more uniform "impressionistic" strain on the other (1994, 15). Impressionistic accounts of fado's origins often invoke maritime existence and the dynamics of solitude, absence and saudade as the emotional conditions responsible for fado's emergence. The birth narrative contained within the song *Fado Português* provides a lyrical illustration of this mode.

O fado nasceu um dia
Quando o vento mal bulia
E o ceu o mar prolongava
Na amurada dum veleiro
Num peito dum marineiro
Que estando triste cantava
Que estando triste cantava . . .

Fado was born one day
When the wind barely stirred
And the sky extended the sea
On the gunwale of a boat
In the chest of a sailor
Who, full of sorrow, sang
Who, full of sorrow, sang

Ai, que lindeza tamanha
Meu monte, meu chão, meu vale
De folhas, flores, frutos de ouro,
Vê se vês terras de Espanha,
areias de Portugal
Olhar ceginho de choro
(Régio 1971[1941], 35-40)

Oh, what monumental beauty
My mountain, my earth, my valley
Of leaves, flowers and golden fruit
See if you see Spanish lands
Portuguese sands
A look blinded by weeping²

The lyrics, written by mid twentieth-century poet, José Régio, alternate between an omniscient explanation of fado's origins—born one day on a boat on the sea in the chest of a sorrowful sailor—and the sailor's first person lamentation to absent nation, fiancé, and mother. The geographical orientation of the first person narrator is decidedly maritime; while on the gunwale of a boat, the sailor remembers the firmness and beauty of his native land, searching for the Iberian coastline which extends along "Spanish lands" and "Portuguese sands." Singing alone into the salty winds, the sailor promises to return to marry his sweetheart, or, in the event of shipwreck, succumb to a fated aquatic burial where "God's will is served." The tropes present in this fado, allude to the inherent tragedy and loss that come with sea bound departure. Nation, lover and mother are superimposed onto one another, as the discourse of love and longing invokes both place and person.

The "sailor who full of sorrow sings" is an archetype, an everyman of sorts, whose broadly construed identity resonates diachronically throughout Portugal's history of maritime leave-taking, starting with the fifteenth century navigators, the sixteenth and seventeenth century colonists, soldiers, and

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

missionaries, and the nineteenth and twentieth century emigrants.³ Joel Serrão (1977, 22-23) conceives of Portugal's history of outbound travel and its diverse array of wayfaring actors in a temporal sweep characterized by consistency as opposed to disjuncture; he understands this overseas movement as a "persistent phenomenon," a "national drama" and a constitutive feature of Portuguese culture. Further, recent theories contend that this cycle will continue *ad infinitum*, as emigration is "progressively integrated into the mentality of the Portuguese . . . who have developed value systems to support this way of life," (Baganha and Gois 1998, 231). It is these adapted value systems and the "persistent" and "dramatic" four hundred year history of outbound journeying that makes the impressionistic explanation of fado's genesis, predicated as it is on the figure of the sailor and concomitant sense of deterritorialization and melancholy, so powerful. This explanation resonates on multiple national levels facilitating an easy connection between fado and Portugal's era of discovery, its era of colonization, and its era of emigration. A review of a fado concert in Newark, New Jersey demonstrates the way in which fado's creation myth absorbs this dizzying collapse of time and space.

Just as the master of ceremonies . . . mentioned in his introduction to the Comando Concert; when the Portuguese threw themselves into the discovery of fifteenth century oceans, a musical form called fado was born. The navigators brought with them the dazzling excitement of adventure and the homesickness for land which many of them would never see again. They also brought with them musical instruments for the long nights at sea. From fifteenth century caravels plowing through unknown seas, came the nostalgic murmuring of nostalgic men, haunted by the tragic circumstances that united them—it was their fate, it was their destiny: to discover overlooked lands. . . And the Comando Concert . . . was above all else a night of friendship for the veterans of the Portuguese military, many of whom served in the old overseas colonies in service to the Patria. . . The knowledgeable listener is just as much a fadista as the fado singer. (Parente 2001, 30).

This article invokes a series of "keywords" which have become standard discursive features of fado's creation myth, "nostalgia, tragedy, discovery, land, sea, saudade and patria." There is an obvious rhetorical consistency between the lyrics of "Fado Português" and this review. What is amazing, is not only the projection of fado's fifteenth century genesis, an idea now long debunked by fado historians, but also the way in which discovery-era navigators serve as the metonymic extension of twentieth century soldiers who fought in the colonial wars. In this review, the fifteenth century navigators are cast as fado's first performers while the twentieth century soldiers comprise fado's most contemporary auditors. "The knowledgeable listener is just as much a fadista as the fado singer." Staged in a

³ See, for example, Caroline Brettell (1993) article analyzing the figure of the migrant as national symbol.

new world outpost of Portuguese emigration, this concert review portrays fado's historic navigators and present-day war veterans as bookends in a temporal sweep dedicated to overseas expansion, nation-building and expressive incantation, where imperial beginnings and endings coincide with fado's vocal creation and auditory consumption.

After reading this review, written in 2001, one might ask, what explains the persistence of fado's creation myth? Why, in the minds of many, has the fifteenth century caravel endured as the locus of fado's maritime creation, despite scholarship which has shown, unequivocally, that fado appeared as a song form in Lisbon no earlier than 1820? What explains the three-century disconnect between "impressionistic" and "academic" narratives of fado's temporal emergence? The impressionistic explanation of fado's birth on fifteenth century caravels is contingent upon the existence of new national conditions inaugurated during this period--widespread maritime travel, prolonged deterritorialization and the experience of loss and longing among those at sea and those left at home. These conditions provide a convincing logic for the emergence of such a melancholic music during the beginning of Portugal's four-century foray beyond the safety of its borders. Early twentieth century critics even proffer onomatopoeisis as a vehicle for proving fado's maritime birth, underscoring the sonoric parallels between fado's musical cadence and the sound of the ocean's waves (Carvalho 1984 [1903]).

To me, however, it is the logic and rhetoric of saudade which most convincingly accounts for the dogged perseverance of fado's discovery era creation myth. Early fado critics describe the inextricable linking of saudade and fado (Carvalho 1984 [1903]; Pimentel 1989 [1904]; Peixoto 1897). Saudade is the socio-physic glue, the nationalist rhetoric which unifies centuries of melancholic travelers into a diachronic narrative of musical expression which "naturally" begins with the first heroic sea bound impulse off the shores of fifteenth-century Portugal. Saudade is also, according to many fadistas, the same emotional ingredient which enables fado vocality.⁴ In his essay on "the making of saudade," João Leal argues that saudade is one of the "most important rhetorical tools used to assert [Portuguese] national identity" (2000, 269). Indeed, Leal dates the earliest written references to saudade as appearing in a fifteenth century literary text, *Leal Conselheiro*, followed by other references in subsequent centuries in texts written by Luís de Camões, Duarte Nunes de Leão, Almeida Garrett, among others (2000, 269).

It is, however, the nineteenth and twentieth-century nationalist movements which promoted the development of saudade as a centerpiece of Portuguese "ethnic psychology." Although philosophers, anthropologists, political ideologues and poets of this period contributed to the definition of saudade, debating the extent to which it was an "untranslatable" component of the Portuguese soul, Leal

⁴ In conducting fieldwork among fadistas in Lisbon and Newark, I discovered that the experience of saudade was a surprisingly formulaic answer to my often asked question, "What prepares you to perform fado?"

singles out fado as responsible for saudade's widespread dissemination as nationalist discourse

Being one of the main themes of fado, saudade also benefited from its process of transformation into a national song. At the same time that fado was becoming the particular and unique expression of Portuguese musical genius, saudade was slowly becoming—particularly in the urban centers—a wide-spread stereotype for describing the intricacies of the Portuguese soul” (2000, 277-78).

The development of the radio and record industry in the 1930s contributed to fado's rising position as Portugal's “national song” (Brito 1994; Vernon 1998, 59-88), and the concomitant diffusion of saudade as a core concept of national identity, one which was readily articulated through the expressive medium of vocal music and registered by a growing public of radio listeners and consumers of recorded music.

Saudade has been employed by philosophers and poets to link historical events of symbolic national importance. And it is this capacity to unify through the collapse of historic time that makes saudade an important element in the propagation and perseverance of fado's creation myth. In founding the saudosismo movement in 1912, poet Teixeira de Pascoas, for example, defines saudade as a blend of grief and desire, the true essence of the Portuguese soul which is both directed back toward the past and forward toward the future (in Leal 2000, 273-74). According to Pascoas, saudade is also a driving force behind historical events such as the founding of Portugal by King Afonso Henriques, the Discoveries, the *Lusíadas*, Sebastianismo, and independence from Spain in 1640 (in Leal 2000, 274). Saudade's very definition implies an atemporal fluidity; “saudade is characterized by its contradictory duplicity: it is a pain of absence and a pleasure of presence through memory. It is being in two times and two places at the same time.” (Saraiva 1994, 84). Saudade's link to Portuguese ethnic psychology and the blending together of historical events in an anachronistic mix of national essence paves the way for fado's creation myth. Fado, according to this impressionistic strain, is retroactively placed on fifteenth century caravels, despite the historic implausibility of such a placement, by taking advantage of saudade's temporal flexibility as a nationalist discourse and fado's mythic association with sorrowful sailors.⁵ If saudade is a mixture of desire and grief felt by sailors longing for home, it makes perfect sense to cast Portugal's first glorious sailors—the catalysts of the modern Portuguese nation state and the inaugurators of out-migration as an extended national drama—as fado's first vocalists. According to

⁵ Joaquim Pais de Brito also notes the atemporality of narratives concerning fado, employed as a means of establishing group identity and linking people, places and expressive practices. He states, “In this production of society through song, the characters and heroes with which one establishes a narrative stand out as simultaneously historical and atemporal, projecting an effect of anachrony which accompanies the discourse on fado (essence, sentiment, or national soul, saudade, etc.) and the concrete experience one has of fado, induced by the erasure of time's contours in the nocturnal space in which fado is performed” (1999, 29-30).

this narrative, fado, the national song, is intoned by the navigator, the national hero, who is driven to musical expression by saudade, the national essence.

In reviewing the dense bundle of national signification tied up in fado's creation myth, it is not surprising that the fadistas in Wales protested a change in the script, whereby fado's emergence was placed in foreign territory, and foreign colonial territory at that. In one of the newest contributions to fado historiography, Rui Vieira Nery (2004) outlines certain intellectual and social "blockades" which inhibit scholarly progress on the topic. Nery states that one prohibitive force has been the reticence on the part of fadistas, who "suspicious of the arrogant posture that is frequently observed on the part of academics, resist any analytical or historiographical intervention exterior to [their] internal circuit, preferring instead to cultivate the old origin myths that appear more prestigious for the genre" (2004, 16). As Nery suggests, "the cultivation of old origin myths" among fado practitioners runs counter to the academic's drive toward "analytical or historiographic intervention." This is due not only to the off-putting arrogance of some academics and the greater "prestige" found in creation myths, according to Nery's analysis, but also to the inherent poetry, cyclical symmetry and nationalist logic found in the impressionistic narratives of fado's birth at sea in the fifteenth century. Within this lyrical register, fadistas are able to place their art form in a tidy trajectory of national signification, casting the contemporary fado vocalist as an extension of Vasco da Gama and other figures in Portugal's pantheon of historic protagonists, without the messy sidesteps and deviations involved in embracing fado's Afro-Brazilian roots, an unsettling move that reverses the arrow of geographic orientation, outbound motion and of course muddies established power dynamics that are the legacy of colonialism. As the guitarist argued in Wales, "if fado ended up in Brazil, it is because we brought it there."

II. "Fleeing the Devil": Reorienting the Discussion

Until recently, fado has not been the object of rigorous, systematic investigation. This surprising dearth of scholarship is remarked upon in the prefaces of almost all recent studies on fado (Corte-Real 1991; 2001; Carvalho 1994; Brito 1994; Castelo-Branco 2000; Nery 2004). Rui Nery (2004, 16) suggests several reasons for this scholarly inattention: academics have been reluctant to research fado due to its stigmatized association with socio-economic marginality and, more recently, its link to the Salazar regime; some fado musicians and vocalists have tended to resist collaboration with academic researchers; and finally, the disciplines of anthropology and ethnomusicology were developed relatively late within Portuguese universities, and, once established, tended toward investigation of rural phenomena.

It was not until the late 1980s, that scholars turned their attention to fado in a concerted fashion, attempting to dispel the poetic myths which had dominated the discourse in the past. Nery states, for example,

I have tried . . . to flee, like the devil flees the cross, from the semi-lyrical fabulations which isolate abstract concepts ("saudade", "melancholy,"

“fatalism”) from the embodied practices and effective objects which give them their only palpable existence, because I know well that [engaging these concepts] is the most direct path toward the great Pandora’s box of pseudo-Celtic, pseudo-arabizing, pseudo-troubadoresque myths that have cast a gloomy shadow over the rigorous study of fado for more than a century” (2004, 9-10).

Pandora’s box of ideas to which Nery alludes has been developed over the course of the last century, gaining momentum and plasticity as theories build upon one another with each new reiteration. In addition to the creation myths outlined in the previous section, other scholarly forays into the topic have charted a variety of musicological courses for early fado expression. Some scholars (Braga 1905, Alves 1989) made a case for fado’s link to Arabic music. Others such as Gonalo Sampaio (1923) link fado to the rural traditions of Portugal. Still others such as Mascarenhas Barreto (n.d. [1970]) argue that fado evolved from medieval troubadour songs that found their way from Provence to Portugal.

In contrast, the most recent wave of publications which deal with fado’s early incarnation (Tinhoro 1994; Brito 1994; Carvalho 1994; Castelo-Branco 2000; Fryer 2000; Nery 2004) agree on the Afro-Brazilian foundation of fado’s danced form,⁶ underscoring the additional influence of other music and dance traditions to varying degrees. Recent publications also generally agree that the first written mention of fado music/dance appeared in the 1820s.⁷ Many scholars (Tinhoro 1994; Carvalho 1994; Brito 1994; 1999; Nery 2004) also now acknowledge that fado’s early diffusion in Lisbon was catalyzed by the Portuguese Court’s journey back to the capital in 1821, after a 13 year relocation to Rio de Janeiro.⁸ The collective agreement on the Afro-Brazilian roots of fado amounts to

⁶ It is worth noting that Lus Moita (1936) also argued for this connection during the 1930s in several oral presentations aired on the Emissora Nacional. The assertion of fado’s Afro-Brazilian origin was also present in a handful of other publications (see, for example, Pinto 1931; Freitas 1969; Andrade 1989). Writing even earlier, Alberto Pimentel (1989 [1904]) argued against many of his contemporaries by explaining fado’s genesis as the product of Portuguese travels to Africa. He states, “We heard the monotonous, languid song of the blacks in Africa. We brought the lundum back from there, which blended with our melancholy genius and which has certainly been the most similar popular song when compared to the fado of today” (1989 [1904], 29).

⁷ Rui Nery makes a very detailed case, based on the consultation of primary sources and period dictionaries, for the complete absence of reference to fado as a musical form prior to the late eighteenth century, early nineteenth century. He states, “in the Portuguese lexicon until the turn of the nineteenth century, the term “fado” did not designate any reality of a musical nature—be it popular, erudite, urban or rural, religious or profane (2004, 17). Such a statement implicitly responds to the debate concerning the appearance of the word ‘fado’ many centuries earlier. As Nery and others explain, however, sixteenth and seventeenth-century mention of “fado” refers to the word’s Latin root “fatum” meaning fate or destiny and does not indicate that fado music/dance appeared during this period.

⁸ The Portuguese court, led by Queen Dona Maria I, her son the Prince Regent and an estimated 15,000 servants, friends, government officials and noblemen left Lisbon on November 27th, 1807, fleeing Junot’s armies for the safe haven of Rio de Janeiro. The court took up residence in Rio, reluctant to leave even 13 years later, an unorthodox move which amounted to the new world relocation of the Portuguese empire. For more on the transformations of Rio de Janeiro society as

a dramatic shift in scholarly orientation. José Ramos Tinhorão, a pioneer in this line of thought, frames his study as a challenge to earlier scholars such as José Maciel Ribeiro Fortes who doubted the “negroid influence on the [European] Continent,” feeling that a “dense cloud of doubt still awaited dissipation” before fado’s Afro-Brazilian roots could be credibly established (in Tinhorão 1994, 9).

Tinhorão’s book on fado, the first to attempt a systematic investigation of fado’s Brazilian influence--pitting primary sources against fado’s smattering of early secondary sources--serves in some ways as an extension of an earlier book, *Os Negros em Portugal, Uma Presença Silenciosa* (Blacks in Portugal: A Silent Presence) (1988). Tinhorão’s scholarly agenda in both works is to “dissipate the cloudiness of myth” (Tinhorão 1994, 10), by documenting the African presence in Portugal and the concomitant economic and cultural impact this community had on Portuguese society throughout centuries of contact. The temporal scope of his first book begins with the discovery era and extends into the twentieth century. The book on fado, enters the frame in the eighteenth century, building upon foundational arguments in *Os Negros de Portugal*. Tinhorão (1994, 13) states,

In turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth century Portugal, the appearance of Brazilian song and dance forms called “bailes do fado” . . . constituted a culminating moment in a continuing process of exchange of cultural information established between the lowest social classes of the metropole and those of the American colony since the seventeenth century.

As is evident in this excerpt, Tinhorão presents fado’s African roots not in an exceptionalist analytical framework, but as the unsurprising, “natural” product of centuries of contact between the two cultures.⁹ This Luso-African history of continual interchange took place not only in the colonial outposts of the Portuguese empire, but on Portugal’s very own soil, a fact, Tinhorão believes, Portuguese scholars have been hesitant to accept in all of its complexity and importance. He makes a slow careful case for the African influence in Lisbon, charting out the mechanics of cultural transference, starting with the “barefoot slaves,” recently arrived from the colonies, to the urban underclass, to the mulatto theater performers who sanitized music and dance making them morally acceptable for consumption by the upper classes (1994, 19).¹⁰ According to this

a result of the court’s arrival, see Bandeira 1994 and Siqueira 1994. José Tinhorão underscores the importance of this occurrence to the development of fado in Portugal. He states that although fado dance had been known in Lisbon since the late 1700s, “it was the return of King João VI and his court to Lisbon in 1821 which was responsible for the largest surge in [fado’s] diffusion” (1994, 59).

⁹ In his book *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil*, Peter Fryer makes a similar argument, dedicating a chapter to what he terms “Brazil’s Atlantic Dances,” focusing on the triangulation of profound and prolonged contact between Portugal, Brazil and Africa and the expressive traditions inspired by this shared history (2000; 109-33).

¹⁰ Tinhorão argues that the ease of transference was due to the striking similarities in ethnic composition and socio-cultural dynamics between Lisbon’s poor neighborhoods and those in urban Brazil: “This rapid acceptance of the dances and companion songs . . . brought from Brazil is explained precisely by the ethno-cultural similarity between the so-called “lower people” of the

argument, fado is simply one form in a long line of expressive traditions to move from Africa to Brazil to Portugal, or, in some cases, directly from Africa to Portugal. Tinhorão dates the first arrival of African dances in Lisbon, for example, in the late 1600s with the appearance of the gandu, batuque, cumbé and the banzé (1994, 23).

Recent histories detail the evolution of fado, first as dance form in Brazil, then later as a sung form in Lisbon. In its earliest appearances in Brazil at the end of the eighteenth century, fado emerged as a fusion of older dances such as the African-derived fofa and lundu and the Iberian fandango. The lundu, a dance so similar to fado as to be interchangeable in the accounts of foreign travelers (Tinhorão 1994; Nery 2004), often featured a pair of dancers who approached one another seductively, sometimes pressing abdomens together, in what was called an “umbigada”, then backing away. The dancery alternation between approach and retreat was performed to the sounds of vocal and instrumental music structured into choruses and refrains. Fado distinguished itself from the lundu by combining “the ‘castanhulado’ of the fandango with the ‘umbigadas’ of the lundu . . . [amplifying] the role of the song, substituting the refrains marked by clapping for the sung intermezzo . . . accompanied by the guitar” (Tinhorão 1994, 29). This vocal “intermezzo” accompanied by guitar constituted the seeds of what would evolve into the sung fado we know today.

As fado continued to develop in Brazil, the single pair of alternating dancers characteristic of the lundu, was later substituted by a plurality of pairs in danced fado, just as the improvised songs performed during the intermezzo were later substituted by fixed verses sung by soloists—transformations, according to Tinhorão, which indicate the increasing participation of white performers (1994, 49). By 1817-21 fado was an urban dance/song form, increasingly watched and performed by a diverse array of Afro-Brazilians, “pardos” and whites in the poorer quarters of cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. This multi-ethnic urban population found a striking demographic parallel in early nineteenth century Lisbon. The parallel existence of impoverished multi-ethnic communities within major port cities in Portugal and Brazil aided in the facile transfer and proliferation of fado from one national context to another (Tinhorão 1994).¹¹

Even though recent studies provide convincing evidence of fado’s Afro-Brazilian roots, there is still a nagging question which looms over a model of linear evolution from Brazilian danced fado to Portuguese sung fado. How could a Brazilian dance characterized as “joyful, sensual and fun” evolve into a Portuguese song characterized as “sorrowful and heavy” (Carvalho 1994, 23)? What kind of

Portuguese capital and of the principal urban centers of its American colony—Rio de Janeiro and Salvador” (1994, 14).

¹¹ Many of the new studies on fado mention that although fado eventually enjoyed widespread popular appeal across race and social class in both national contexts, that Brazilian fado had a relatively short lifespan compared to Portuguese fado. Tinhorão states, “Curiously, as opposed to what was destined to occur in Portugal, not only would these fado songs disappear without leaving a trace in Brazil . . . but also the dance component, retreating back to small rural centers or city margins, would not live beyond the end of the nineteenth century, in contrast to the earlier lundu, still today danced with its umbigadas in some parts of the Amazon.” (1994, 54).

tidy through-line is possible in linking expressive forms so seemingly opposed in emotional tenor and social appeal?

One approach to this conundrum is to complicate the linearity of fado's evolutionary narrative, allowing for the existence of multiple variations of fado performed simultaneously in different urban communities on both sides of the ocean. In a novel by nineteenth century Brazilian writer Manuel António de Almeida based on the 1817 reports of a military sergeant, for example, fado is described as having "diverse forms, each one more original than the next" (1941, 52). Almeida describes several different types of danced fado performed in early nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro; one where a single performer dances alone, executing difficult steps and lofty poses; and another where a pair of dancers play a seductive game of approach and retreat. And across the ocean in early nineteenth century Lisbon, fado's diverse array of expressions not only replicated the song/dance vocabularies developed in Brazil, but also initiated a new local offshoot called "fado batido," spawned within Lisbon's community of transplanted Africans (Carvalho 1984 [1903], Tinhorão 1994). Fado batido featured an intense balance game where one standing dancer remained grounded with feet firmly planted while the other tried to unbalance him through tricky advances and retreats and kicks or "pernadas" ideally resulting in the standing player's spectacular fall (Tinhorão 1994, 64). Apprehending the formal diversity observed in Rio de Janeiro against the backdrop of fado's early development in Lisbon allows for a more complex historical trajectory replete with side steps, sapateados and other complicating historical choreographies.

In addition to the recognition of diverse trajectories of development, fado's early interface with the song form "modinha" in both Brazil and Portugal, provides a bridge for understanding fado's evolving range of emotional tenor. The modinha constituted the dominant song form in upper and middle class Lisbon salon culture from the last third of the eighteenth century through to the early nineteenth century, and was also performed in more modest peasant milieu on the outskirts of Lisbon. The modinha often featured "sentimental songs with Portuguese lyrics" accompanied by the harpsichord in its elite elaboration, and improvised melancholic verses accompanied by the guitar in its popular manifestations (Nery 2004, 31). The modinha was also performed in Brazil during the same period, widely considered the "national song" until the twentieth century advent of samba (Tinhorão 1994, 54). The influence of the modinha in the evolution of fado's sung form is now convincingly documented, lending its melancholy lyrics and sentimental character to the developing "intermezzo" sections of danced fado on both sides of the Atlantic.¹² It is also important to note that even in the early descriptions of danced fado in Brazil, observers

¹² Several scholars (Carvalho 1984 [1903]; Tinhorão 1994; Fryer 2000; Nery 2004) note the significant influence of musician and poet Domingos Caldas Barbosa (1740-1800) in the modinha's development and proliferation in Lisbon. Born in Rio de Janeiro the son of a Portuguese father and Angolan mother, Barbosa often performed his own compositions (both modinhas and sung lundu) for court soirees in Lisbon throughout the 1770s. "His songs had a lulling, rocking, relaxed, melancholy style, and they enchanted and often surprised his listeners" (Fryer 2000; 142).

remarked upon a captivating “poetic” quality in the vocal music and lyrics which existed alongside the dance component. An early nineteenth century fado performance described in the novel *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias*, for example, featured a vocalist who accompanied himself on guitar, singing “a song, sometimes expressing poetic thoughts” (Almeida 1941, 53).

In answer to a century of debate concerning fado’s origins, recent scholarship argues forcefully that

[Fado’s] original cultivation in the Brazilian colonial context, the first phases of its introduction and implantation in Portugal, and all of its later reprocessing now in the Portuguese context, corresponds to a complex process of intense and continuous change. This fado, danced in colonial Brazilian, is still long from being the Portuguese fado. But it constituted, unequivocally, the firm nucleus of fado’s origin, out of which emerge innumerable facets of a uninterrupted persistence at the heart of Portuguese fado practice (Nery 2004, 23).

Such a confident pronouncement follows a decade of examination of primary sources from the period – not only musical scores, lyrics and iconography, but also travel accounts from foreign visitors to eighteenth and nineteenth century Brazil and Portugal. This new approach combined with information from select early musicological treatises on fado, most notably Pinto de Carvalho’s *História do Fado* (History of Fado) and Alberto Pimentel’s *A Triste Canção do Sul* (The Sad Song of the South) has yielded a dramatic turn in fado historiography.

I would argue, however, that such a shift is not only the result of more intense and systematic evaluation of primary and secondary sources, but is also influenced by nascent Portuguese post-colonial theory, which has cleared an intellectual path for conceptualizing the African contribution to Portuguese expressive culture in new ways. As Tinhorão explains in his introduction, the notion of Africa’s influence on Portugal was not embraced when he participated in a televised panel on the topic in the early 1990s . He writes,

Upon participating in a frustrating debate concerning the origins of fado televised by RTP in May of 1993, it certainly did not surprise the author to discover the total ignorance of this spontaneous culture interchange, leading the Portuguese panelists to situate the origin of fado as myth, when in truth it constitutes one of the most interesting phenomena within cultural history” (1994, 10)

However, in contrast to the attitudes Tinhorão confronted in 1993, recent scholarship begun conceptualizing a specifically Portuguese post-colonialism, theorizing the mutually constituting cultural identities born of the Lusophone circum Atlantic, following Paul Gilroy, whose formulation of “the Black Atlantic” as “one single, complex unit of analysis” challenges nationalist or ethnically absolutist approaches to theorizing Western modernity (1993, 15). Miguel Vale de Almeida (2000; 2004), for example, has proposed the discursive formulation “The

Brown Atlantic” to describe the Lusophone case, nodding ironically to Luso-Tropicalist ideologies of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism predicated on discourses of miscegenation and the inexistence of bipolar racial categories--conceptual baggage his work fights to disassemble. Almeida argues that historians have made great strides in understanding the historical structures of Portuguese colonialism, and literary critics have provided good analyses of post-colonial literary production particularly that of Lusophone Africa. However, he believes that the discipline of anthropology has lagged behind in this area; “the anthropological analysis of the processes of colonial power-knowledge, the ethnographic approach to the former colonial fields, and the consideration of the historical continuum of the mutual constitution of the identities of colonizers and colonized are but beginning” (2004, 113). As a result, post-colonial studies, in Portugal and in general, he believes, relies too heavily on discourse and representation.

The recent reconceptualization of fado’s origins addresses some of Almeida’s critiques. Understanding fado as the product of intense contact between Portuguese, Africans and Brazilians--contact that unfolded throughout geographical nodes along a triangulation of routes connecting Africa, Europe and Latin America--challenges the polarizing binaries of eurocentrism and afrocentrism Almeida and Gilroy attempt to deconstruct. The natural focus on music that fado research demands, offers an alternative to post-colonial scholarship which relies solely on texts; it provides a window into colonial relationships between social agents manifested and produced through performative modes of expression. In is no accident that Paul Gilroy (1993, 72-110) employed an analysis of music as a primary case study for fleshing out his notion of the “two-way” cultural traffic characteristic of the Black Atlantic. As Almeida points out, “the circulation and mutation of music throughout the Black Atlantic shattered the dualist structure that placed Africa, authenticity, purity and origin in crude oppositional relationship to the Americas, hybridity, creolization, and rootlessness” (2004, 109).

According to recent scholarship, fado was a music and dance form which developed in both Portugal and Brazil precisely because of the similarly diverse array of portuary denizens who participated in fado’s production and consumption and because of the intense circum Atlantic traffic which lent these urban environments their socio-cultural character. The struggle in conceiving of a new historical trajectory for fado’s early existence lies not only in embracing the notion of the Brown Atlantic as a single cultural complex where expressive influence did not solely emanate unidirectionally out of Iberia, but also in dismantling the nationalist discourses which attempt to cordon off expressive traditions as if they were material possessions characterized by a fixed and discreet geographical provenance. Recent fado scholarship contributes significantly to the field of post-colonial lusophone studies by constructing a new model of colonial exchange within the “Brown Atlantic”—one which highlights the mutability and portability of expressive forms, all the while challenging the nationalist strain within fado historiography.

III Coda: New Frontiers

It is not only fado's origins that have interested scholars over the last several decades. Lisbon 94, the 10 month celebration of Lisbon's tenure as the Cultural Capital of Europe served as a major catalyst for the investigation of fado.¹³ Taking advantage of the wave of cultural dynamism and funding catalyzed by Lisbon 94 planning, four senior scholars Joaquim Pais de Brito, Salwa Castelo Branco, António Firminio Costa and Rubem de Carvalho formed the "Projecto Fado" with the broad objective of "dignifying" fado through scientific study (Carvalho 1994, 124). This team of academics drawn from the disciplines of ethnomusicology, anthropology and sociology assembled dozens of university students to participate in a two year research project--involving ethnographic field work, recordings of interviews and performances, archival research, musicological analysis, and collection of fado's material artifacts. The fruits of this project were displayed in a major museum exhibit, "Fado: Vozes e Sombras" at the Museu Nacional de Etnologia, and companion catalogue, as well as CD compilations and the reprinting of several historic books on fado.¹⁴

Several new lines of inquiry emerged out of L94's Projecto Fado. Some ethnographers took up the concerns of an earlier pioneering study of fado in the Alfama (Costa and Guerreiro 1984) by foregrounding the spaces of Lisbon's popular neighborhoods not simply as the inert "backdrop" to fado expression, but as the animated socio-cultural locus whose built environments, social networks, clubs, commercial enterprises and cultural venues contribute vitally to the production of fado's musical expression and companion social milieu (Cordeiro 1994; 1997; Brito 1999; Klein and Alves 1994; Nunes 1994). Other research, most notably the work of Joaquim Pais de Brito (1994), Rubem de Carvalho (1994; 1999) and Rui Vieira Nery (2004) has approached fado more globally, charting a panoramic sweep of fado's evolution on Portuguese soil from its initial early nineteenth century dissemination in Lisbon's poor riverside neighborhoods within circles of sailors, prostitutes, criminals and drifters, to its subsequent adoption (and adaptation) by the middle and upper classes, its movement back and forth between city and countryside, its aesthetic fixing by the recording industry, its twentieth century interpolation into the world of radio, theater, television and cinema, its censorship during the Estado Novo and its entrance into Portugal's literary scene where erudite poets collaborated with fado's emerging class of diva vocalists to international acclaim.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, recent studies have defined fado's formal characteristics, analyzed its instrumentation--particularly the guitarra portuguesa (Sucena 1992; Branco 1994; Cabral 1999) and begun cataloguing fado

¹³ For more on this festival, the impact on Lisbon's arts infrastructure and the Museu de Entologia's fado exhibit, see Holton 1998 and 2002.

¹⁴ The primary texts reprinted for L94 were Pinto de Carvalho's *A História do Fado*, Alberto Pimental *A Triste Canção do Sul*, Luís Mota's *O Fado Canção dos Vencidos*, José Maciel Ribeiro Fortes' *O Fado*, and António Osório's *Mitologia Fadista* (Carvalho 1994).

repertoire and typology (Branco 2000; Nery 2004). Studies of typology identify two major categories of song genres. The first, “fado castiço,” an older more traditional type of fado emerging out of the nineteenth century, can be broken down into three sub-groups of melodic nuclei—“Mouraria,” “Corrido” and “Menor” (Branco 2000; 81-84; Nery 2004; 208-212). Fado castiço exists in contrast to a more recent category called “fado-canção,” which emerged during the 1950s as literary figures began composing lyrics for well known fadistas such as Amália Rodrigues. These two larger categories of fado, fado castiço and fado-canção, can be understood as “two extremes along a continuum that extends from a minimum of preestablished elements with great freedom of improvisation (in the case of fado castiço) to an extreme determination of the majority of elements requiring minimal contribution on the part of the artists” (Branco 2000). According to recent scholarship, however, there is still much to uncover with regards to fado repertoire, particularly that which was in circulation prior to the development of the recording industry. Nery believes, for example, that a rigorous examination of early twentieth century fado scores would unearth hundreds of formal poetic/musical variations and implied performance practices—potentially upending today’s “false certainties” which reduce fado castiço’s song types into only three subgroups (2004, 8).

Lisbon 94 also reignited an interest in performer biographies. Studies based on ethnographic interviews, field work and archival research have produced portraits of fadistas—from highly visible figures such as Severa, Alfredo Marceneiro and Amália Rodrigues to relatively unknown amateurs—documenting artistic genealogies, career trajectories, individual performance practices and inculcation within various political and social movements (Costa e Guerreiro 1984; Junqueiro 1994; Sucena 1992; Brito 1994; Cordeiro 1994; Nery 2004; Gray 2005).

With regard to isolated periods and places significant to fado history, a handful of recent works have concentrated on fado’s development during the Estado Novo and its role in cultural policy and the promotion of tourism (Matos 1982; Corte-Real 2001).¹⁵ A new book has ventured beyond 25 de Abril to analyze fado’s current period of renaissance and renovation, examining the new generation of fadistas--practitioners of the so-called “novo fado” (Halpern 2004). Finally, a few isolated studies have investigated present-day fado beyond the borders of Portugal--among select performers of “música popular brasileira” (Perrone 1989) and within the Portuguese immigrant community of New York/New Jersey (Corte-Real 1991).

The veritable explosion of fado scholarship since the early 1990s shows no signs of abating, with new studies of fado’s postcolonial and postmodern discourses underway (Grey forthcoming), as well as an ambitious project for an encyclopedia of Portuguese Music edited by Salwa Castelo Branco (forthcoming)

¹⁵ Corte-Real’s (2001) doctoral dissertation provides a fascinating case study of fado’s development during the Estado Novo, underscoring in particular the way in which António Salazar’s cultural policy and the practice of categorizing music through the forced registration of performers and performances controlled expressive behavior for political purposes.

which will include many entries on fado vocalists, instrumentalists and song types. It is not only fado's intense relationship to Portuguese national identity that makes it a seductive object of inquiry, but also its history of intense change, protean adaptation and expressive longevity that will command public interest and further scholarly attention, no doubt for many years to come.

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