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The fado singer as a criminal body. A portrait of the *fadista* in Ramalho Ortigão's "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista" (1878)

Literature offers rich material for the study of music. Novelists have written about music-making and about listening to music in ways that give us precious indications about musical experiences. 19th century Portuguese literature is especially replete with references to music and song, and in particular to fado, an urban popular genre of significant importance for Portuguese culture at that time, particularly in Lisbon. This paper interrogates how fado is represented in the modern imagination, by focusing on the art of the portrait of the fadista, the prototypical figure of the fado singer, in 19th century Portuguese literature, and the ways the body, the voice and the posture of this figure are depicted. Through the example of Ramalho Ortigão's satirical portrait of the Lisbon fadista, in his chronicle "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista," published in the journal *As Farpas* in 1878, it explores how fado becomes indexical to criminality and the city margins through a sensual and organic description of the body of the fadista.

Keywords: fado, fadista, Portuguese literature (19th century), song, body, naturalism, criminality, music and literature

Introduction¹

Literature offers rich material for the study of music.² Novelists and poets have written about music-making, about singing and dancing,

¹ This paper draws on a series of analyses of 19th century fado repertoires and representations made for my doctoral dissertation. See Patrix, *Imaginaire des bas-fonds et poétique "canaille" dans la chanson urbaine. Le tango et le fado, des marges au patrimoine immatériel*. I am grateful to Filippo Bonini Baraldi (INET-md) for the opportunity to discuss these elements more recently in his seminar at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

² On the relationship between literature and music, and more specifically on the place of musical experiences in literature, among the extensive bibliography available,

about playing, watching and listening to music, in ways that give us unique indications about *musical experiences*. These experiences often appeal to various senses, arouse synesthetic pleasures, stimulate memory or desire, making musical experience, reversely, a great catalyst for narrative and fiction.

19th century literature is particularly replete with references to music and song, sometimes even quoting titles, lyrics or melodies. These references often present thorough descriptions of situations of music-making and listening; portraits of musicians, singers and dancers; ballroom scenes, episodes of popular festivities as well as bourgeois gatherings around music and singing. A variety of genres, situations, social occasions and styles are depicted, usually with a strong presence of the narrator, who conveys both personal (idiosyncratic) and social (relative to the collective imagination) perceptions of these activities.

However, if literature is a valuable medium for the study of 19th century music and song, it should be approached with caution, as it is not necessarily a (reliable) source for the knowledge of historical repertoires and musical activities (writers can be inconsistent informants). In contrast, it can be regarded as a (powerful) material for the study of historical subjectivities, social representations and sensibilities.³ Furthermore, analysis of literature should consider the specificity of the medium, considering elements such as literary devices, genre and style. To go even further, one might suggest that literature speaks about literary musical performance – i.e. the act of *literarily performing music* – rather than musical performance as such. However, 19th century literature is still underused to document music, and even more rarely used according to such “medium-based” approaches. When it *is* used to document 19th century music, it is often considered as raw document, a direct source on vernacular musical practices, without much attention

see: Brown, *Music and Literature. A Comparison of the Arts*; Backes, *Musique et Littérature. Essai de Poétique Comparée*; Cannone, *Musique et Littérature au XVIIIe Siècle*; Locatelli, *Littérature et Musique au XXe Siècle*.

³ On the use of literature by cultural and social history, see: Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et Classes Dangereuses à Paris pendant la Première Moitié du XIX^e Siècle*; Kalifa, *Les Bas-Fonds. Histoire d'un Imaginaire; L'Encre et le Sang. Récits de Crimes et Société à la Belle Époque*.

for literary operations, frames, aesthetics and style, or for the social and cultural norms and stereotypes it conveys.⁴

This paper demonstrates how an extended medium-based approach can enrich scholarship investigating references to music and song in 19th century literature, and more specifically, to fado in Portuguese literature, in order to uncover how fado is represented in 19th century Portuguese society and the modern imagination. Fado is a fascinating case-study for the examination of the relationship between music and literature at the time. Fado is an urban genre that emerged in Lisbon at this period (between 1830 and 1850 according to the established historiography)⁵ which became culturally prominent and circulated through different social classes, media and spaces (from the theatre to the streets, from 'aural' improvisation to music scores and songbooks). Writers became interested in this new cultural phenomenon that strongly expressed the capital city's picturesque, mixed, vernacular culture. Fado thus became a recurrent subject – a *leitmotiv* – in the numerous narratives (novels, series and chronicles) published daily in the press and in volumes in Lisbon and Portugal. From Luiz Augusto Palmeirim to Fialho de Almeida, from Eça de Queirós to Camilo Castelo Branco, from Bulhão Pato to Júlio de Castilho, from canonical works to minor and unknown ones, we find multiple 'fado scenes' and references to fado music, lyrics and performance in Portuguese literature of the time.⁶ One could even suggest that the growing passion in literature for fado and *fadistas* was inseparable from the passion toward the new, emerging urban culture, the outskirts and the city margins.⁷

⁴ See Nery, *Para uma História do Fado*.

⁵ See Pimentel, *A Triste Canção do Sul: Subsídios para a História do Fado*; Pinto de Carvalho, *A História do Fado*; and Nery, *Para uma História do Fado*.

⁶ See, for example, Palmeirim, *Galeria de Figuras Portuguezas. A poesia Popular nos Campos* (1879) and *Os Excêntricos do Meu Tempo* (1891); Fialho de Almeida, *A Cidade do Vício* (1882) and *Lisboa Galante* (1890); Eça de Queirós, *Os Maias, Episódios da Vida Romântica...* (1888); Camilo Castelo Branco, *Eusébio Macário* (1879).

⁷ About the obsession of writers and intellectuals of the time for the city margins and the urban outcasts, see Kalifa, *Les Bas-Fonds*; Fatela, "Les mille visages du vadio portugais;" Relvas, *Esmola e Degredo, Mendigos e Vadios em Lisboa (1835-1910)*; Vaz, "Gatunos, vadios e desordeiros. Aspectos da criminalidade em Lisboa no final

Indeed, fado instantly came to epitomise urban industrial culture and the social margins in artistic and cultural representations and in the Portuguese collective imagination of the time. In other words, fado became indexical of modernity, city life and the urban underworlds altogether. In musical theatre for instance, playing a fado was a way of introducing a character from the urban lowlife – a criminal, scoundrel, vagrant, prostitute, sailor – and create an acoustic environment that referred to the world of taverns and brothels of the city’s poor neighbourhoods. As João Silva states, “the urban low-other was a ubiquitous presence in the music theatre, and fado was used to mark it.”⁸ I argue that fado held the same function in literature: a trope of the city margins, but semantically marked through words (i.e. poetic devices) instead of sound (i.e. acoustic devices).

Hence, portraits of the *fadista* – an ambiguous social character, that embodies either, or in some cases both, the prototypical scoundrel of the city margins and the typical fado singer.⁹ This results in an interesting and revealing tension within the portrayal of the *fadista* that is commonplace in realist and naturalist literature, from novels to chronicles published in the press. These portraits constitute an *exercise in style*, giving place to innumerable repetitions and variations, of a strong intertextual nature.¹⁰ They are introduced in compelling and dramatic narratives about social marginality and the Lisbon underworld, that virulently denounce and warn the public against the rise of delinquency in the capital city and the spread of vice and depravation in Portuguese society. At the same time, they display a great attraction for this character. These portraits of *fadistas* almost systematically include references to fado playing,

do século XIX et início do século XX;” Viegas, *Sexo, Ciência, Poder e Exclusão Social: a Tolerância da Prostituição em Portugal*; Pais, *A Prostituição e a Lisboa Boémia do Século XIX aos Inícios do Século XX*; and Patrix, *Imaginaire des Bas-Fonds et Poétique “Canaille.”*

⁸ See Silva, *Music, Theater, and Modern Life in the late 19th Century*.

⁹ On the ambiguities of the term ‘*fadista*’ in the 19th century, referring alternatively or simultaneously to the typified figure of the urban marginal (the scoundrel or the prostitute), and to the typical fado interpreter (singer or musician), see Nery, *Para uma História do Fado*.

¹⁰ For an in-depth study of this topic, see Patrix, *Imaginaire des Bas-Fonds et Poétique “Canaille.”* See also Nery, *Para uma História do Fado*.

making the stereotypical Lisbon criminal the primary *embodiment* of the genre. Fado thus becomes the anthem of the *fadista*, just as the *fadista* becomes the emblematic interpreter of fado.¹¹

In order to contribute to this collective publication, which aims to interrogate the kinds of bodies (the performing bodies) we find in texts about music, I started to track down, within 19th century Portuguese literature, references to fado, and, more specifically, portraits of *fadistas*, in which the musician or singer's body occupies a central position. It so happens that the *fadista*'s body is remarkably present in those descriptions. Musicians and singers, as social characters, are sometimes even *caught in action*, performing fado with all their body, the latter entirely put into motion and engaged in the act of playing and singing. Realist and naturalist novelists appear to be as much phenomenologists as the "entomologists" they claim to be.¹² Consequently, one might ask, when dealing with this *corpus*: what kind of bodies are associated with fado? How does the *fadista*'s body mediate the description – the literary experience and representation – of fado? And how does it articulate both subjective and social representations of fado and *fadistas*? How does the "social body" of the *fadista* illustrate, defy or replicate meanings conveyed by the song as a genre, lyrics, voice and music included?

In this paper, I will focus on one particular portrait, particularly powerful and influent in creating the paradigmatic figure of the *fadista*, that of Ramalho Ortigão's chronicle "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista. Historia genealogica d'esse personagem desde o seculo XVI até a ultima facada no Bairro Alto," published in 1878 in the periodical *As Farpas*.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Gracq refers to "the interposition of the cold gaze and of the entomologist's loupe" ("*l'interposition du regard froid, et de la loupe de l'entomologiste*") about Flaubert's writing style. This can be applied, I believe, to realist and naturalist writers in general. See Gracq, *En Lisant en Écrivain*.

¹³ *As Farpas* is a monthly journal created by Ramalho Ortigão and Eça de Queirós, published between 1871 and 1882. It was probably inspired by Alphonse Karr's *Les Guêpes*. It delivered satirical and critical texts about Portuguese society, often denouncing and mocking the nation's decay and moral decrepitude. Ortigão assembled his texts in 11 volumes under the title *As Farpas* (1887-1890). See Moisés, *A literatura Portuguesa através dos Textos*.

Fixing the prototypical Lisbon criminal

As indicated by the title,¹⁴ the text is a satirical and polemic denunciation of the rise and omnipresence of criminality in Lisbon. It delivers a ferocious and sarcastic portrait of the typical local criminal, the *fadista*, a social character that emerges in the press and in literature at the time, and becomes common in the Portuguese collective imagination.¹⁵ In this text, Ramalho Ortigão appropriates and perpetuates the traditional literary character of the ‘villain’,¹⁶ and solidifies it in its new configuration through the figure of the urban delinquent.¹⁷

For the last two months the newspapers have been reporting the almost daily cases of beatings, injuries and robberies committed in Lisbon and its surrounding areas. From time to time, the police, in order to offer partial satisfaction to society in the face of the frequency of so many crimes, arrests a *fadista*.¹⁸ What we need to ask is: Why not arrest all *fadistas*? No other city of the world has a word with a meaning analogous to this one - the *fadista*. To be a *fadista* means: to be a tolerated criminal, civilly accepted, constituting a class.¹⁹

¹⁴ Which can be translated into: “Criminality in Lisbon and the *fadista*. A genealogical history of this character from the 16th century to the last stab in the Bairro Alto” – the latter being a Lisbon neighbourhood associated with bohemia and crime at the time.

¹⁵ See Machado Pais, *A Prostituição e a Lisboa Boémia*. Pais de Brito also suggests that Ortigão contributes to “fix, that is, invent, the figure of the *fadista*.” See Pais de Brito, “O fado: etnografia na cidade”.

¹⁶ See Geremek, *Truands et Misérables dans l’Europe Moderne (1350-1600)*.

¹⁷ This portrait became a model of the genre. According to Pimentel, Ramalho Ortigão, in this text, “fixes the criminal’s profile with its distinct features.” Pimentel, *A Triste Canção do Sul*, 47.

¹⁸ One might translate by “criminal” or “scoundrel” here, but I am leaving the vernacular word *fadista* to signal the use of the term. See note 8.

¹⁹ “Ha dois mezes que os periodicos annunciam quasi quotidianamente os casos de espancamento, de ferimentos e de roubos commettidos em Lisboa e seu termo. De quando em quando a policia, para o fim de dar uma especie de satisfação á sociedade pela frequencia de tantos crimes, prende um *fadista*. O que temos que perguntar é: Porque se não prendem os *fadistas* todos? / Em cidade nenhuma do mundo existe uma palavra de significação analoga a esta – o *fadista*. / Ser *fadista* quer dizer: ser um criminoso tolerado, agremiado civilmente, constituindo uma classe” (my translation). Here, *fadista* is synonymous of “scoundrel.” Ramalho

This vivid and sensational introduction refers to, and comments on, stories published in the press, initiating a dialogue with the city's current public affairs. The text presents itself as a piece of social critique. The revealing definition of the *fadista* as a "tolerated criminal" ("criminoso tolerado") in this excerpt is soon followed by a series of characteristics: the *fadista*, descended from the "former plebeian braggart" ("antigo valentão plebeu") has kept "the spirit of bravery, of adventure, of illicit love, of gambling and vagrancy" ("o espirito da façanha, da aventura, do amor illicito, da tavolagem e da vadiice").²⁰ Then comes the portrait of this social figure, starting with their social condition:

The *fadista* neither works nor possesses capital gained from a previous accumulation of labour. He lives from the expedients of the exploitation of his fellow. He is usually supported by a whore, whom he systematically beats up. It has no fixed abode. He inhabits successively the tavern, the gambling den, the gaming room, the brothel and the police station.²¹

One important element to observe is that this portrait is generic – it does not emerge from the depiction of a particular character, but from a general conception of the *fadista* as a social type. It reproduces a series of stereotypes attached to this figure: he does not work, he is homeless, making him a marginal, the reverse of the modern bourgeois society's values (work, capital, family home, stability). He earns a living from illegal activities, petty crime and procuring (as 'pimp'). He frequents the city's illicit, dubious places. He is violent: the relationship to his partner is introduced ironically, since instead of gratifying the woman he depends on, he hits her. The term "systematically" ("systematicamente") which qualifies his violence also underlines the systematicity of the portrait

Ortigão, "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista. Historia genealogica d'esse personagem desde o seculo XVI até a ultima facada no Bairro Alto."

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ "O fadista não trabalha nem possui capitães que representem uma acumulação de trabalho anterior. Vive dos expedientes da exploração do seu próximo. Faz-se sustentar de ordinário por uma mulher pública, que elle espanca systematicamente. Não tem domicilio certo. Habita successivamente na taberna, na batota, no chinquillo, no bordel ou na esquadra da policia." *Ibid.*

itself – a standard description, based on a series of clichés, referring to – and conveying – a common, stereotyped representation of the scoundrel in Portuguese society.²² The final situation associated with the lifestyle of the *fadista* is an encounter with the police. This reinforces the irony and sardonic humour associated with this lifestyle for comic effect. The police do not prohibit his lifestyle, but rather become part of his routine in the city’s underworld.

Embodying the Fadista

Very quickly, the portrait drifts from moral and social aspects to physical ones as it turns to a detailed description of the body of the *fadista*:

He is entirely atrophied by idleness, by sleepless nights, by the abuse of tobacco and alcohol. He is anaemic, a coward and a fool. He suffers from coughing and fever; his chest is concave, his arms are weak, his legs crooked, his hands thin and pale like those of a woman, sweaty, with grown nails, those of a vagrant; his fingers burnt and blackened by cigarette; his hair fetid, full of dust and dandruff, glittering with grease. The tool of his office consists of a guitar and a *holy christ*, the technical name they give to a large switchblade. He is inhabited by a secret disease, and by various parasites of the epidermis. A man of normal constitution would be able to dislocate his skeleton, break it down with a punch. He knows this, and is treacherous by an instinct of inferiority. He does not attack head-on like the swordsman or the pugilist, he attacks obliquely, evading, his body fleeing, making feints with an agility due to his sole muscular exercise – *brushing his hair*. (...) ²³

²² According to Pais de Brito, Ortigão was indeed one of the first writers to crystallize this figure, that would circulate and become commonplace in Portuguese culture at large in the following years. See Pais de Brito, “O fado: etnografia na cidade,” 30-31.

²³ “Está inteiramente atrofiado pela ociosidade, pelas noitadas, pelo abuso do tabaco e do alcool. É um anemico, um covarde e um estúpido. Tem tosse e tem febre; o seu peito é concavo, os braços são frageis, as pernas cambadas, as mãos finas e pallidas como as das mulheres, suadas, com as unhas crescidas, de vadio; os dedos queimados e enegrecidos pelo cigarro; a cabelleira fetida, enfarinhada de poeira e de caspa, reluzente de banha. A ferramenta do seu officio consta de uma guitarra e de um *santo christo*, que assim chamam technicamente a grande

As we can see, the language used is medical: the body of the *fadista* is a sick body, full of disturbances, and his disease is physical as much as moral. The portrayal is utterly negative, drawing on the hygienist theories on criminality of the time. It illustrates the moral and medical idea of *perversion*: a physical disease caused by moral depravity. The *fadista's* body and disruptive power is not threatening by its strength, but on the contrary, by its weakness. The sick body of the *fadista* thus becomes a metaphor of the deteriorated social body. Hence, the body is central here, but it is not a particular body, it is a social body.

There is a strong intertextuality at play here: not only because of the engagement with the press and its criminal *fait divers* as stated earlier, but in addition it appropriates medical discourses of the time in the form of a list of symptoms, with the use of a technical vocabulary ("atrophiado", "abuso", "concave", "parasitas"). It also refers to and appropriates other literary descriptions of the *fadista*,²⁴ with a strong sense of dramatization (his disease appears in the way he fights and agitates his body). The language of the *fadista* is even indirectly quoted itself, marked by the use of italics ("a *holy christ*, the technical name they give to a large switchblade," "um *santo christo*, que assim chamam tecnicamente a grande navalha"), in order to display a knowledge of the underworld's vernacular language (interestingly, with a christic reference). All these references to other texts and discourses are accumulated and combined to produce a dialogical and caricatural portrait of the *fadista*, marked by excess and exaggeration (just as the *fadista* is an excessive character), with a strong presence of irony. This irony is evident from the reference to his only muscular exercise (brushing his hair) which is indicative of a common stereotype of the time associated with the pimp as

navalha de ponta e triplice calço na mola. É habitado por uma molestia secreta e por varios parasitas da epiderme. Um homem de constituição normal desconjuntar-lha-ia o esqueleto, arrombal-o-ia com um soco. Elle sente isso e é traiçoeiro pelo instinto de inferioridade. Não ataca de frente como o espadachim ou o pugilista, in veste obliquamente, tergiversando, fugindo com o corpo, fazendo fintas com uma agilidade proveniente do seu único exercicio muscular — as *escovinhas*." *Ibid.*

²⁴ For examples and comparisons, see Patricx, *Imaginaire des Bas-Fonds et Poétique* "Canaille."

an effeminate, superficial character. This is comical and results in the whole description falling into a sense of grotesque. The text thus appears to be an *exercise in style*, a playful variation on the numerous discourses and narratives produced on this figure.

The portrait follows a naturalist logic, following a sequence that goes from the social type's way of life, to his habitat, to his physiology, to his culture and "industry." The *fadista* is constructed as a species, whose social class derives from his nature and the influence of his environment.

The body of fado

The "tools" associated with the *fadista* are a guitar and a knife. Music is thereby subtly introduced in the image, until it becomes the central focus of the portrait.

With him, the guitar under the arm replaces the sword on the belt, by which the braggart, his predecessor from the sixteenth-century, befriended the nobility. It is through his talent as a guitarist that he mingles with the gentlemen, accompanying them still today at the fairs, the bullfights of Alhandra and Aldeia Gallega, and sometimes in the feasts of Mouraria (...). He is dedicated to his guitar, his instrument of industry and of love, with a fearless fervour, cigarette hanging from the corner of his sticky, cracked, crumbling lips; one eye closed by tobacco smoke, the other open but dull, dormant, lost in a vague, imbecile contemplation; the trunk of his body bent limply on the hip; leg curved, with the tip of his foot stretched outwards; his lover's ring glittering in his pallid, dirty hand.²⁵

²⁵ "A guitarra debaixo do braço substitue n'ella a espada á cinta, por meio da qual se acamaravam com a nobreza os pimpões seus ascendentes do seculo XVI. É pela prenda de guitarrista que elle entra de gôrra com os fidalgos, acompanhando-os ainda hoje nas feiras, nas toiradas da Alhandra e da Aldeia Gallega, e uma ou outra vez nas ceias da Mouraria (...). A guitarra, seu instrumento de industria e de amor, dedilha-a elle com um desfastio impavido, deixando pender o cigarro do canto do beijo pegajoso, gretado e descaido; com um olho fechado ao fumo do tabaco e o outro aberto mas apagado, dormente, perdido no vago em uma contemplação imbecil; o tronco do corpo caído mollemente para cima do quadril; a perna encurvada com o bico do pé para fóra; o cachucho da amante reluzindo na mão pallida e suja." – Ramalho Ortigão, "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista."

The figure of the scoundrel becomes a figure of passion for playing and singing, a music lover that prefers the guitar to the sword, appealing to a somewhat romantic conception of marginality, but diverted as a sign of decay and perversion. This passage also brings the idea of a collective, yet integrated, representation of the *fadista*. The *fadista* now interacts with other social groups – more precisely the aristocracy, the “gentlemen” (“fidalgos”) – and his social function among them is to play and sing. The social figure of the *fadista* is therefore turned from that of a sole criminal into that of a singer and a musician.

Where music substitutes fighting, his callousness, passivity and failings are indeed temporally converted into positive traits: when he plays the *fadista* shows “dedication,” “fearless fervour” (“desfastio impavido”). But quickly the weakness of the character contaminates the description of his music-making, with a series of terms referring to his passivity and apathy (“deixando pender,” “descaído,” “fechado,” “apagado,” “dormente,” “vago,” “caído” – see translated quote above) rather than his agency as a performer. His attitude is entirely decadent. Singing and playing are depicted as an extension of the *fadista*'s body, as a degenerate activity.

Again, the description points to other representations of the *fadista*, it is a text written on other texts, of a strong intertextual nature,²⁶ but also on images. Its vivid style can be interpreted as a direct transposition of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's caricatures, published in journals just a few years earlier, which are the first visual representations of the modern figure of the *fadista*, showed a cigarette on the verge of the lips, eyes closed, playing the guitar and singing, bent against a city wall (*see figures 1 and 2*), exactly as Ramalho Ortigão depicts it in words.

²⁶ See examples in Patricx, *Imaginaire des Bas-Fonds et Poétique* “Canaille.”



Figure 1. Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, “O Fadista” (1873), engraving based on a drawing by hand in ink.²⁷

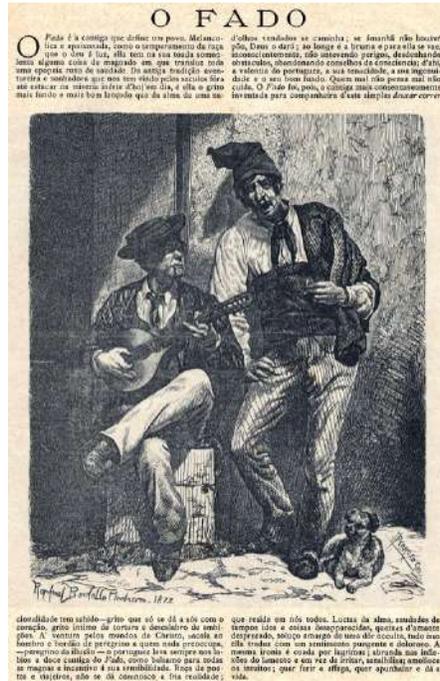


Figure 2. Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, “Typos de Lisboa – Os Fadistas” (1872), lithography.²⁸

Ultimately, the portrait ends with references to the act of singing, and, more specifically, to singing fado:

He also sings sometimes, hand resting on his side, cigarette hanging from his fingers, head raised, stretching the veins of his neck to utter the laments of fado, that depict crimes, bullfights, obscene loves and religious devotions to the Virgin

²⁷ Source: Alberto Souza, *O Trajo Popular em Portugal nos séculos XVIII e XIX*. According to Pais de Brito, the illustration was originally published with a text by Brito Aranha, which was probably a source for Ortigão’s portrait. See the text quoted in Pais de Brito, “O fado: etnografia na cidade,” 30-31.

²⁸ Primarily published in the journal *El Mundo Cómico*, 2.º series, n.º48, 1872. Here published with another text (by unidentified author) in the journal “Branco e Negro,” n.º 79, 1877. It also exists as an engraving (Museu Rafael Bordallo Pinheiro collection / Câmara Municipal de Lisboa).

*Patric: The fado singer as a criminal body. A portrait of the fadista in Ramalho Ortigão's
"A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista" (1878)*

Mary, with a sobbing voice, broken in the larynx, accompanied by the physical expression of a prison cell sentimentality, shabby and miserable.²⁹

Fado seems to spring directly from the *fadista's* throat ("stretching the veins of his neck to utter the laments of fado," "esticando as cordoveias do pescoço e entoando as melopeias do fado"), in an *organic* manifestation of singing (literally deriving from his organs). His voice is "broken," it bursts out as "sobbing" ("voz soluçada, quebrada na larynge"), making it – in its acoustic materiality – a semantic expression of the *fadista's* distress. Its "sentimentality" is in itself an expression of perversion ("a prison cell sentimentality, shabby and miserable," "uma sentimentalidade de enxovia, pelintra e miseravel"). The content of the songs are all of the same nature: obscene, related to crime and depravity ("that depict crimes, bullfights, obscene loves and religious devotions to the Virgin Mary," "em que se descrevem crimes, toiradas, amores obscenos e devoções religiosas á Virgem Maria"). Even religious devotion is contaminated with connotations of corruption. The term "melopeias" (which I translated as "lament") refers to a monotonous, melancholic incantation. Fado is thus depicted as a dissolute song, that contains all of the scoundrel's flaws. Its *melancholy* is represented in its ancient, medical sense, as the expression of a disease, of a morbid state, characterised by physical and moral despondency. Fado song is not, here, an emanation of the spirit – as singing is represented in other ontological traditions – but an emanation of the body, a sick body. If, as suggested earlier, the *fadista's* body is the metaphor of a deteriorated social body, then fado is its extension and can be used to illustrate the Portuguese society's sick culture at this time.

On another level, if we want to extract an "ordinary theory"³⁰ of music from this literary excerpt, then we can suggest not only that singing

²⁹ "Tambem canta, algumas vezes, apoiando a mão na ilharga, suspendendo o cigarro nos dedos, de cabeça alta, esticando as cordoveias do pescoço e entoando as melopeias do fado, em que se descrevem crimes, toiradas, amores obscenos e devoções religiosas á Virgem Maria, com uma voz soluçada, quebrada na larynge, acompanhada da expressão physionomica de uma sentimentalidade de enxovia, pelintra e miseravel." Ramalho Ortigão, "A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista."

³⁰ Cheyronnaud and Pedler, eds., *Théories Ordinaires*.

is approached as a “discipline of the body”³¹ in a phenomenological conception of music, but also that – on an anthropological level – fado as a song is approached in a very “holistic” manner. This is evident from how the text combines poetic aspects (the “themes” of the songs), music, instrumentation, voice, body posture, and social considerations.

Finally,³² in a skilful closure, the *fadista* is brought back to his criminal nature: “It is from the class of *fadistas* that come the incorrigible criminals who end up in tribunals and in jail. (...)”³³ The text then develops a theory on the “right to punish” (“o direito de punir”) that relates to criminal theories of the time, and concludes that certain criminals such as the *fadista* deserve to be banished – or executed.³⁴

The text does not testify about fado as a genre, or as an aesthetic experience: the description of this song is caught up in a social critique of criminality, and the *fadista* is depicted as a prototypical criminal rather than a singular singer or musician. In a way, music escapes the description, vanishes behind general considerations that have more to do with social stereotypes and caricature, than with a concrete, sensual, particular experience. Yet, it is interesting to approach this text as a statement on how fado was represented, and thus experienced, as a *criminal song*. It does, in fact, inform a certain representation of this song as one of the ‘natural’ characteristics of the *fadista*, a trope of the Lisbon criminal, which determines an aesthetic reception of its music, voice and performance, as we have seen. It also shows how elements of the fado tradition, still vivid today, especially in *fado vadio* (“vagrant fado,” amateur practices based on a popular, shared repertoire), such as the ethos of the vagrant, with its codified posture, the transgressive lyrics, the melancholic tonalities,³⁵ originate in a naturalist literary

³¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, An Introduction*.

³² I have excluded from this brief analysis the genealogical aspect of the text, where the *fadista* is aligned with the ancient plebeian swordsman, and compared with the contemporary *fidalgos* – although an interesting analysis is to be done on that aspect of the text.

³³ “É da classe dos fadistas que saem para os tribunaes e para as cadeias os incorrigiveis da criminalidade. (...)” Ramalho Ortigão, “A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista.”

³⁴ See Moisés, *A Literatura Portuguesa através dos Textos*, 378.

³⁵ See Patrix, *Imaginaire des Bas-Fonds et Poétique “Canaille.”*

*Patric: The fado singer as a criminal body. A portrait of the fadista in Ramalho Ortigão's
"A criminalidade em Lisboa e o fadista" (1878)*

tradition associating fado with sickness, depravity and the degeneration of modern industrial culture – elements that the collective memory has omitted or sublimated, to retain only the fascination produced by this marginal figure and its attachment to Lisbon's popular lifestyle and neighbourhoods.³⁶ The *fadista* in this text operates as a system of conventional signs, where every aspect of the figure is indexical. It constructs fado as a trope of the scoundrel and of criminality, an acoustic, vocal, lyrical trope, built through poetic and stylistic devices.

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³⁶ See the references to the fairs, bullfights, the old neighbourhoods of Lisbon such as Mouraria, in the section quoted above – all elements strongly attached to fado's popular mythology.

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