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Trindade, Luis (2016) Starting over: singer-songwriters and the rhythm of historical time in post-revolutionary Portugal. In: Marc, I. and Green, S. (eds.) The Singer-Songwriter in Europe: paradigms, politics and place. Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 137-151. ISBN 9781472452108.

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# **Starting Over. Singer-Songwriters and the Rhythm of Historical Time in Post-Revolutionary Portugal**

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## *Introduction*

One of the greatest symbols of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, along with the *carnation* itself (placed in rifle muzzles and on uniforms of soldiers during the relatively peaceful coup), is a song. ‘Grândola, Vila Morena’ (Grândola, Swarthy Town)<sup>1</sup>, by José Afonso, was used as the signal for the troops to advance on 25 April 1974, and not only to topple the forty-eight-year-old authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo (New State), a late survivor of the wave of fascisms in the period between the two Great Wars in Europe; this political development also brought to an end the three-front colonial war the Portuguese had been fighting in Africa since the early 1960s. The song did not just trigger the Revolution symbolically. Right after the coup, ‘Grândola’ became ubiquitous as part of the “soundtrack” to the revolutionary process that lasted until the end of 1975 (when a counter-revolution paved the way for parliamentary democracy). This process was marked by the left-wing radicalization of the army and the emergence of a vast grassroots movement challenging private property and capitalism (Ramos Pinto, 2013). And yet, Afonso’s song’s historical role was more substantial than that of simple accompaniment: the choice to broadcast a banned song suggests that, in spite of censorship, ‘Grândola’ was recognizable as part of the subversive political culture that had led to the Revolution in the first place. The

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of titles, quotes and lyrics are my own.

song was thus “acting” historically even before 1974, in the context of an intense renewal of Portuguese music and politics that had been underway since the early 1960s.

This chapter explores this historicity. More specifically, songs are here seen as complex narrative units that work as both actors in and documents of their historical context. By analyzing them, we can follow the social and political transformation that took place in Portugal between the 1960s and the 1980s. In fact, from the critique of folklore under authoritarianism to post-revolutionary market expansion and the emergence in the 1980s of a new rock scene, popular music in Portugal not only illuminates but in many aspects seems to participate in the process of ‘forging, fostering, solidifying and challenging’ social ‘values and attachments’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p.146). More decisively still, the evolution of songwriting allows us to illustrate internal transformations within the musical field itself. In this sense, to focus on singer-songwriters José Mário Branco and Sérgio Godinho at a particularly key moment in the recent history of Portuguese popular music (henceforth PPM) – the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s – allows us to connect the emergence of a new figure of singer-songwriter in Portugal with the abovementioned changes in society and politics.

Both Branco and Godinho had already been influential figures in the renewal of Portuguese popular music before 1974 and were heavily involved in the revolutionary process. Despite their different relationships to protest song as such,<sup>2</sup> the two were

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<sup>2</sup> The most familiar expression to describe singer-songwriters like Godinho and Branco (and Afonso) in the 1970s would be “cantores de intervenção” (literally “intervention”, or “militant”, singers) which covers both the period when they

radical artists in the sense that music and the questioning of musical creation always mediated their experience of history and politics. This is what makes their work of the late 1970s and early 1980s so decisive: the defeat of the socialist project in which both had been involved in 1974-5 was experienced not only as a dramatic setback with political and artistic consequences, but also as an opportunity to rethink their songwriting practices. In these circumstances, the way in which Branco and Godinho experienced the historical transition in both political and creative terms appears, above all, in their songs' narrative structure. Their songs thus become narrative forms that simultaneously participate in and document the historical context. For what most strikes the listener of their albums of the period, beyond the expression of the everyday life of a society undergoing dramatic transformations through their lyrics, is the way historical temporality is manifest in their narrative structures.

We here seem close to Hayden White's theory of *narrativity*, according to which different historical circumstances entail different narrative structures, and historical breaks change the way we organize historical narratives (White, 1987). The profound impact of the Revolution led to a questioning of history that resulted in a particularly self-reflective moment in songwriting. Accordingly, the questioning of Godinho and Branco marks a shift in the status of Portuguese singer-songwriters towards greater autonomy. In other words, the emergence of a new singer-songwriter is discernible "protested" against the dictatorship and the period when they "intervened" in the Revolution (Côrte-Real, 1996). "Cantautor", the literal translation of singer-songwriter, is a neologism adopted only at a later period and its use in the context of revolutionary and post-revolutionary PPM sounds slightly anachronistic. Singer-songwriter is used throughout this chapter, as the term captures the authorial status of Godinho and Branco in the period analysed.

less in the songs' specific themes or even in the discourses these authors used to describe their work, but rather in the ways in which their experience of the historical moment can be grasped in the increasingly complex narratives of their songs. The argument of this chapter then is as follows. I start with a narrative of the history of PPM from the early 1960s to the late 1970s in the context of Portuguese social and political history. I then focus on the works of the two singer-songwriters from the late 1970s and early 1980s in order to show how historical awareness permeated the structure of the songs. Thirdly, I interpret how the new historical narratives emerging from some of these songs created a true *dramaturgy of time*. The political consequences of this are assessed in a short conclusion by confronting the self-reflexive songwriting of Godinho and Branco with the role of narrative in Paul Ricoeur's and Fredric Jameson's perception of history.

### *Singer-Songwriters and Portuguese Popular Music (1960s-1980s)*

The renovation of PPM before 1974 was somewhat paradoxical. While society modernized, benefiting from the impressive performance of the post-war European economy (Rollo, 1994), anti-fascist culture engaged in ethnographic research to retrieve supposedly authentic forms of popular culture. The paradox was twofold: political resistance tended to ignore contemporary historical phenomena, such as urbanization and industrialization, while simultaneously insisting on the same forms of cultural legitimacy that constituted the core of the dictatorship's rural imaginary. And yet, there was something subversive here. For while fascist propaganda had aestheticized folklore and neutralized any inconvenient aspects of it (Ó, 1999), anti-

fascism focused on precisely those aspects less in tune with an idealized picture of the country and its people.

In this context the research led in Portugal by Corsican ethnomusicologist Michel Giacometti from the late 1950s would constitute a counter-canon to musical nationalism, making a direct impact on many musical forms emerging in the 1960s (Oliveira, 2003). The first experiments of José Afonso in reworking several regional genres shares the impulse from ethnomusicological research that would permeate all forms of popular music. Simultaneously, Branco and Godinho, who had both moved to Paris to escape authoritarianism and the colonial wars, were being exposed to very different traditions. In France, they not only shared the political atmosphere of May '68, but also musical influences as varied as French *chanson*, Anglo-American folk and rock, and the new Brazilian popular music of singer-songwriters such as Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque (Bebiano, 2003).

The latter were decisive in the emergence of Godinho and Branco as singer-songwriters. Given the lack of any strong tradition of urban songwriting in Portugal (the ideological connotations of Fado during the dictatorship could hardly provide a frame of reference (Nery, 2004)), the example of the Brazilian singers confirmed that it was possible to sing about social and political issues in Portuguese (Trindade, 2014). The merger of this Parisian experience in all its political and cultural aspects with the intense reinvention of folk music tropes by the likes of José Afonso back in Portugal triggered a break with nationalist folklore, Fado and the romantic tradition of crooners derogatorily known as *nacional-cançonetismo* (national-crooning). Indeed, all these elements coalesced in 1971, when Godinho's *Sobreviventes*, Branco's *Mudam-se os Tempos, Mudam-se as Vontades* and José Afonso's *Cantigas do Maio* were released almost simultaneously.

Despite their formal and lyrical differences, the three singers present several similarities: Godinho and Branco collaborated on each other's albums and both bore the influence of Afonso's previous work. This proximity was also visible in the way Branco's contribution to *Cantigas do Maio*, recorded in France, broadened both the range of musical references and instrumental options (Côrte-Real 2010). Consequently, a hybrid fusion of musical influences and historical references resonates in the three: the mediation of a strong commitment to the present – fractured by sarcasm and irony – was combined with a return to the sources of Portuguese folk. Moreover, better recording facilities than those previously found in Portugal enhanced 'the descriptive character of musical composition' (Tilly and Roxo, 2010, p.170), which reinforced the ability of popular music to participate in the political radicalization that paved the way for the Revolution. Contemporary Portuguese society, in the throes of the end of Empire and Dictatorship, seemed to have found its musical voice here. As in other areas of Portuguese culture, it can be said that a revolution occurred in the realm of popular music before 1974.

This explains why 'Grândola' and other songs pervaded the everyday life of the Revolution. And yet, while their persistence in the social memory of the period is easily understandable, it is perhaps less obvious how these authors also stood for musical modernity at the time: the combination of the renewal of folk forms with revolutionary politics gave these singer-songwriters an aura of "progressivism" that was both political and musical. Accordingly, they were all soon engulfed in political events, and the eighteen months from April 1974 until the end of 1975 were taken over by activism. The presence of these songs on the radio at demonstrations and at militant concerts was to a large extent a celebration of a political culture shared by

artists and the public. Again, this helps explain the strong symbolic status of singer-songwriters and their music.

With the development of the revolutionary process, political polarization forced artists to rally to specific parties and ideologies. This was apparent in the breaking up of the Colectivo de Acção Cultural (Cultural Action Collective), which had brought singer-songwriters together in the initial months of the revolutionary process. Different singers declared allegiance to different groups such as the Canto Livre (Free Chant), which was closer to the Communist Party; the more Maoist Grupo de Acção Cultural (Cultural Action Group) (GAC), whose leading figure was Branco; and cooperatives, such as the Toma Lá Disco, Cantabril and Era Nova. Still, it would be a simplification to reduce these groups to partisanship, for they were also collective responses to lack of resources and attempts to improve the technical conditions available to musicians. Some worked as true ‘centers for the production of records and the organization of shows’ (Côrte-Real 1996, p.160). With the end of the revolutionary process and the demobilization of many activists after November 1975, musicians continued to collaborate with these groups and cooperatives. And although their proximity to political movements was still visible, their specific role in the professionalization of the music business became more relevant.

In the second half of the 1970s, singer-songwriters had to readjust to new circumstances. Whilst the frantic rhythm of revolutionary politics stabilized with parliamentary democracy, society underwent an ambivalent transformation. Towards the end of the decade, the country’s economy was on the verge of collapse and the International Monetary Fund intervened in a context of severe austerity (Franco, 1994). Simultaneously, political freedom and negotiations with the European Economic Community created a new demand for foreign cultural goods that could



respond to the rising aspirations of more sophisticated lifestyles (Almeida, 2011). This latter development was clearly visible in the intense drive towards Anglo-American culture, in particular rock music, by a younger generation eager to erase the memory of authoritarianism and revolution (Dionísio, 1993).

The emergence of a wave of Portuguese rock bands in the early 1980s with less political lyrics, expressing rather a tension between social dissatisfaction and new forms of personal desire, bears witness to this (Trindade, 2013). Branco and Godinho experienced these changes as a challenge, but also as an opportunity. The defeat of the socialist projects in which they had been involved during the Revolution (especially Branco with his Maoist activism) forced both to rethink their artistic practice. This was noticeable firstly in a thematic shift in their songs from the overtly ideological lyrics of the revolutionary period to new forms of social agency and personal subjectivity in tune with what was happening in Portuguese rock. But it could also be seen in the loss of protagonism of protest song and the figure of the *cantor de intervenção*. After an intense period of research into folk music, Branco left GAC, frustrated with the group's lack of political impact (Macedo, 1980). Godinho, on the other hand, expressed his fatigue at the constant lack of technical resources for all aspects of his work (Galopim, 2006). His involvement with the cooperative Era Nova, along with José Afonso and others, aimed to improve the quality of their concerts and recordings and thus reach wider audiences. This process would have formal consequences, which will be analysed in greater detail in the following sections.

In these circumstances, the transition between the 1970s and the 1980s is arguably one of the most creative and experimental periods in the careers of Godinho and Branco. Both were still seen as two of the most innovative singer-songwriters in the

recent history of PPM, combining impeccable political credentials with high cultural status. In 1978, Godinho performed ‘Sete Anos de Canções’ (Seven Years of Songs), produced by the Era Nova collective and probably the first tour by a single artist with his own band after 1974. The tour, as the title suggests, was also an opportunity to reflect upon his work since *Sobreviventes* and was later seen by Godinho as the beginning of a new concert culture in Portugal (Galopim, 2006). In a 1979 interview, Branco remarked how Godinho’s tour epitomized the technical improvements of musical productions in Portugal and displayed a higher level of professionalism at all levels of performance.

The main topic of this interview, however, was the show ‘Ser Solidário’ (Being Solidary), Branco’s own post-revolutionary moment of self-reflection. According to Branco, ‘Ser Solidário’ came out of the need to explain his ‘political, ideological, moral and cultural choices’, now that he felt ‘confronted by new problems’ and a need to ‘go deeper and find more solid foundations’ (Martins, 1979, p.5). It took three years for the songs in the show to be released in the double LP *Ser Solidário* (Branco, 1982). Despite all the album’s formal innovations – the influence of jazz, the reconciliation with the accursed tradition of Fado – Branco still had a reputation as a left-wing activist, which sometimes made his relations with labels difficult. As for Godinho, the four records he released between the late 1970s and early 1980s enjoyed both critical and commercial success. Despite the differences in the public reception of their work, both Branco and Godinho seemed to have felt a common need to engage more deeply with their approach to musical creation. A decade after their debuts, they still appeared at the forefront of the main changes in PPM. Yet, whereas in 1971 popular music had to be reinvented to fight cultural isolation and political authoritarianism, in 1980 the challenge was to rethink the political questions of the

revolutionary period without falling into depoliticization (like so many other sectors in Portuguese society and culture) and to continue composing complex compositions at a moment saturated with punk and post-punk rock music (a moment quite distant and distinct from the 1960s rock traditions that Godinho was close to).

In short, both Godinho and Branco came to musical and political maturity during the Revolution and their decade-long careers, and both became singer-songwriters with distinctively recognizable styles. This is what makes the albums they both released between the late 1970s and the early 1980s so decisive in their careers and so important in our understanding of the shifts in PPM during that period: a moment when for political, biographical and musical reasons, Godinho and Branco were dramatically forced to face history and their role as musicians within it.

## *2 – The Rhythm of History*

Critics have noticed that Godinho's work from 1978 onwards became more 'musical' than before (Duarte and Costa, 1981), that is, that the meaning of his songs was now more dependent on musical composition than on lyrics. Different musicians were becoming increasingly influential in these compositions, something Godinho himself was happy to admit. In fact, the singer would collaborate with a wide range of musicians and composers, such as violinist Carlos Zíngaro (by then very close to free improvisation) and João Paulo Esteves da Silva, a young pianist influenced by Keith Jarrett. The impact of these collaborators was perceptible in the formation of a musical atmosphere combining aspects ever-present in Godinho's work – folk music, guitar ballads – with jazz and other genres. Godinho never really reached a settled

musical idiom, and his albums must be heard as a constant search for new solutions to problems posed by his narrative structures. As for the lyrics, Godinho seemed to produce a much more consistent imaginary. And yet, the two aspects cannot be simply separated, not only because there is a clear effort to work with the words in musical composition, but also because his writing, with all its syntactical and metaphorical resources, allows his songs to reach a ‘singular aesthetic unity in which music also goes through the making of the word (...)’ (Sardo, 2010, p.572), something to which we will return later in this chapter.

The same could, to a large extent, be said of Branco who, referring to the composition of *Ser Solidário* (the 1982 album based on the show with the same name) defined the song as an autonomous form:

For me, the most important thing in this work is the way the song is treated as a specific art form (...). This is the “message”: the song is a specific art, maybe a minor one and, also because of that, essentially popular. It is not music with a “little help” from words, nor the other way around (Macedo, 1980, p.14).

*Ser Solidário*’s opening theme, ‘Travessia do Deserto’ (Crossing the Desert) is a good example of this form of composition. The song initially sounds like a lament: ‘que caminho tão longo / que viagem tão comprida’ (what a long way / what a long journey). Branco’s voice is at a very low pitch, accompanied by a lone guitar. In the second verse, backing vocals join the singer while his own voice seems to gain dramatic expressivity. The lament becomes a hymn. And yet, nothing prepares us for what comes next: half way through, with all the lyrics seemingly already sung and the song apparently heading to its conclusion, electric guitar, drums and saxophone make

their entrance. The singer and the backing vocals repeat the lyrics but their pitch is now higher. What initially sounded like a lament, now gains the strength of a celebration. By the end, the song is unrecognizable and its energy, rather than turned towards the past, sounds as if it is heading decisively towards the future.

Dramatic as this sudden shift of rhythm and expression may be, it is not particularly subtle. The song is explicitly divided in two, the electric guitar and drums only emerge after the initial part had already faded out. The feeling one has is of hearing two songs rather than one divided into two parts. I insist on this point in order to suggest this was deliberately intended to convey a specific experience of time. In fact, there is a pattern here, with the use of similar breaks in other songs. One particularly clear example is found in ‘Ser Solidário’, the song that closes the album. Here too, Branco follows the same initial structure – voice and instrument – only this time with an accordion (a common instrument in Portuguese folk music), rather than guitar. As before, half way through, the song is filled with drums, electric guitar and piano. For four long minutes we hear a lively jazz beat with a female choir. The singer returns near the end, to repeat the first stanza: ‘Ser solidário assim pr’além da vida / Por dentro da distância percorrida / Fazer de cada perda uma raiz / E improvavelmente ser feliz’ (To join hands, like this, till the far side of life / Within the distance travelled/ Turn each defeat into a root / And be improbably happy).

Some tropes of ‘Ser Solidário’ are already present in ‘Travessia do Deserto’ – life as a path, the end of something as the beginning of something else – but what should be noticed, not only in these two songs but in *Ser Solidário* as a whole, is how Branco engaged in his own definition of the song as a composite form to convey meaning through composition. These songs are about a temporal break between two different moments that can be both read historically and biographically, but this is achieved

within the song, which shows how important rhythm is to historical narrative. In other words, the link between the two moments within the song is achieved not only by making elements unfold over time, like in every narrative, but also, and more decisively, through the way in which the development of rhythm accelerates the perception of time.

The affinities between the two singer-songwriters are here apparent, as the same structure can also be found in Godinho. Two of his songs – ‘Os Conquistadores’ (The Conquerors) and ‘Mudemos de Assunto’ (Let’s Change the Subject) from *Campolide* (Godinho 1979) – are particularly interesting as each addresses the two aspects, the historical and the biographical, that were entangled in Branco. ‘Os Conquistadores’, like ‘Travessia do Deserto’, starts with a very simple structure of voice and guitar. Here too, the melancholy tone also evokes a journey, but this time the historical reference is more explicit: ‘Lá vais, caravela, lá vais / E a mão que me acena do cais / Dará a esta mão a coragem / de em frente, em frente seguir viagem (There you go, caravel, there you go / And the hand that still waves from the quay / Will give courage to this hand / In order to continue, to continue its journey).

Godinho’s critical stance towards the national imaginary of maritime discoveries starts in the title, where he replaces the auspicious ‘discovery’ with a reference to the bellicose ‘conquerors’. This distinction between a romantic picture of the past and a post-colonial re-interpretation of the *discoveries* as *conquest* (Ribeiro and Ferreira, 2003) is further enhanced by the same kind of break that we have already seen in Branco, with the sudden appearance of a much faster rhythm, in which both the guitar and the drums accelerate the nostalgic ballad. However, whereas Branco uses this to give the same words a different musical atmosphere, music and words in Godinho “sing” the shift together. There is a moment when the song stops and just before

restarting with a new rhythm, the lyrics confirm the tune's dramatic change: 'Mas paraí, trago notícias horríveis / Paraí com tudo / Já avisto os conquistadores' (Stop, I bring terrible news / Stop everything / I already see our conquerors). From that moment on, the song engages in a new narrative of violence, exploitation and, eventually, indigenous rebellion – a reference to the colonial wars and decolonization in the 1960s and the 1970s.

This ability to narrate through rhythm reaches a peak with 'Mudemos de Assunto'. This song is more personal than the others as it seems to deal with a romantic break-up. However, it never becomes melancholic, as each verse ends with an optimistic line hinting at an open future. The real shift between the two moments, however, occurs once again through both melody and lyrics. Here, the music practically stops before resuming with a line that announces, along with the drums, a new rhythm that supposedly corresponds to a new phase in life: 'Mas isto é um canto / e não um lamento / já disse o que sinto / agora façamos o ponto / e mudemos de assunto / sim?' (But this is a chant / not a lament / I already said what I feel / now let's give it a rest / and change the subject / OK?).

This pattern reinforces the proximity we have been analysing between the two singer-songwriters in relation to a particularly important aspect of their work. More than a thematic or melodic insistence on the same tropes, there seems to be a structure articulating past and present through both music and lyrics. Here, a set of issues related to their work, but also to the historical moment and their lives in it, is being negotiated. In this sense, it can be suggested that a new historical narrative emerges from the way the structure of these songs enacts a tension between different social and individual temporalities.

### 3 – *Musical Narratives*

My insistence on the meaning of these narrative shifts and rhythmic breaks in the post-revolutionary work of Branco and Godinho does not require much insight, as both clearly assumed a relation between their work and their own personal and historical situations. Branco in particular was very clear about the meaning of *Ser Solidário* as an evaluation of the cycle that started with the revolution, whose defeat ‘forced us, into not exactly inactivity, but into a much more serious inquiry into how one transforms life’ (Duarte, 1982, p.14). In 1980, a twenty-minute live performance titled ‘FMI’ (I.M.F.) – a reference to the intervention of the International Monetary Fund in the Portuguese economy in the late 1970s – can be seen as a good example of what such an inquiry would look like. ‘FMI’ is a long satire on post-revolutionary Portugal, presenting a gallery of revolutionary figures, the depoliticization of those who had once been committed to social transformation, and the first signs of consumerism. The text unfolds in a dramatic crescendo. At its climax, Branco undergoes an emotional collapse on stage. Subsequently he completely changes his mood from irony to lament. From this moment on, the monotonous guitar chords are replaced by a much more melodic flute, and the text re-enacts exactly the same tension of death and rebirth we have seen in other works: ‘Assim te quero cantar, mar antigo a que regresso (...). Neste cais eu encontrei a margem do outro lado, ‘Grândola Vila Morena’. Diz lá, valeu a pena a travessia? Valeu pois.’ (this is how I want to sing you, old sea to where I return. (...)) On this quay I found the other shore, ‘Grândola, Vila Morena’. Tell me, now, was it worth the crossing? Of course it was.) (Branco,



1982) Right at the beginning, Branco explains to his audience that ‘FMI’ had been written on a February night in 1979. It is, it seems, his effort to come to terms with history. This is a good way to see *Ser Solidário* (based on the aforementioned 1979 concert) as an album that intervenes (as per the *cantores de intervenção*),<sup>3</sup> not so much in politics but in history and in the perception of historical time as such.

‘Eu Vim de Longe, Eu Vou para Longe’ (I Came a Long Way, I’ll Go Far Away), one of the most popular songs on the album, uses the repetitive rhythm of a northern folk dance, the Chula (whose popular origins reinforce the legitimacy of the song’s political message) to narrate in eight verses the history of the revolution and its defeat up to the moment when the song was written and sung. The story is told in the first person and starts with the singer’s arrival from exile to be part, with his ‘hymns’, of the intense celebration. Afterwards, when ‘November took revenge’ (a reference to 25 November 1975, the date of the counter-revolution) he saw the weapons turning against him and his revolutionary ideals. The narrative, however, does not stop here (the end of the revolution) and continues to yet another moment of rebirth with Branco’s promise to continue to participate with his songs in ‘what my people are going to do’.

To bring the narrative of the recent past all the way to the moment of composition does not only situate his work in the present. By situating himself in the historical continuum, he also opens it up to the future. Such a temporal structure is consonant with Marxism’s philosophy of history as a progression towards communism. Branco’s engagement in Maoist movements matches the way he conceived the narrative of history. Yet the consonance between political ideology and musical narrative is not

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<sup>3</sup> See note 2.

enough to materialize the communist utopia, for that historical progression depended on a specific “intervention” – history as the history of class struggle – in order to move forward. This is why it was so decisive to end ‘FMI’ and ‘Eu Vim de Longe, Eu Vou para Longe’ with interpellations to the audience and reiterations of the singers’s public commitment to continue the struggle. It is also why it was so important to engage in formal experimentation. At a moment when PPM was suffering another internal revolution with the emergence of a new rock scene, singer-songwriters had to open their compositions to formal solutions that allowed them a purchase on the present.

The combination of historical awareness and formal experimentation was even more urgent in Godinho, who was never as committed an activist as Branco.<sup>4</sup> In interviews, he insisted on the need to permanently question his work. When asked whether such self-reflexivity would not risk becoming a form of individualism, he replied that the better he managed to express his own subjectivity, the better his music would reach other people. This entailed, he added, a focus on the everyday and a particular sensitivity to social change. Accordingly, by the early 1980s Godinho was able to reassess his work and argue that the reason why his recent albums seemed less political was because society itself had experienced a process of depoliticization. He had always focused on the everyday, but while the quotidian in 1974 and 1975 was filled with collective politics, by the later period, people had turned towards new forms of subjectivity (Macedo, 1978; see also Duarte, 1981).

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<sup>4</sup> Despite his collaboration with various political movements, Godinho was never a member of a political organization (Trindade, 2014).

In an interview about *Coincidências* (Godinho, 1983), the album that closes my chronological frame, Godinho reiterated how this perception of change and a new focus on the individual worked as a guiding principle in both his life and work: ‘I’m a very restless guy who permanently tries to redefine my daily relation with politics, the present, the future’ (Teles, 1983, p.16). In this sense, his definition of *Coincidências* as ‘the contradiction between (...) the desire for peace and the desire for struggle’ can be read as a statement about the need to transfuse his songs with that personal experience of historical transition. The opposition between anti-fascism and dictatorship in this context undergoes a shift towards more intimate conflicts. Godinho’s commitment to using his songs to ‘develop a specific form to express [his] (...) everyday relation to politics’ (Teles 1983, p.16) exemplifies his way of coming to terms with history and of responding to a transitional period in the history of Portugal. This experience of transition impacted on his songwriting, particularly the dynamic relation between music and lyrics. As the expression of such a temporal intersection, it could be argued that the song’s specific politics lies in this dynamic.

It is impossible to give a comprehensive picture of the most decisive aspects of Godinho’s songwriting. As we have already seen, the music in his songs often played a key role in the constitution of meaning. ‘The musical character of his language’ was noticed as early as 1977 in its ‘repetitions’, ‘rhymes’, ‘dialogues’, ‘colloquialisms’, ‘everything that facilitates the suggestion of orality and the intervention of the musical instrument’ (Saraiva, 1977, p.31). In other words, his lyrics are filled with literary and linguistic resources: some are true short stories with plot and characters; rhetorical devices and the presence of the narrator interpellate the listener; the popular and the banal intersect in constant wordplay and syntactical turns. Moreover, these narratives are particularly suited to the structure of the lyrics, not only in his skilful

use of rhyme and metre, but above all in the dialogue (explicit repetitions or more subtle semantic and rhythmic connections) between verses.

This narrative structure formed by the dynamic relation between different verses and lines is particularly important, as it often becomes what I would like to call a *dramaturgy of time*. The number of songs evolving along the temporality of transition I have been insisting on – a dramatic crescendo towards a climax followed by a retreat that prepares a peaceful outcome – is truly remarkable. A particularly relevant example is ‘Primeiro Dia’ (First Day), from *Pano-Cru* (Godinho, 1978) – probably Godinho’s most emblematic song. ‘Primeiro Dia’ can be read as a short *Bildungsroman*, starting with the protagonist’s coming of age and progressing to the moment when, after all sorts of journeys and struggles, there is finally time to stop and start all over again.<sup>5</sup> The song is composed of six verses of six lines. The two last lines in each are identical, working as a short chorus of sorts: ‘E vem-nos à memória uma frase batida: / “Hoje é o primeiro dia do resto da tua vida”’ (And a banal sentence comes to mind: / “Today is the first day of the rest of your life”). The casual detachment of the first line contrasts with the way the second pauses and punctuates the narrative with temporal self-reflexivity, by situating that particular day in a broader biographical narrative. Such repetition slows down the pace of the narrative

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<sup>5</sup> ‘This is a song that speaks about the regeneration of affections and strength in a situation of break. It could be the end of love, or have a wider interpretation, the end of any cycle. There’s a break, (...) a new challenge and then a sense of peace that brings a new, clearer, consciousness’. (Sérgio Godinho in Galopim 2006, p.76).

and reinforces the tension between progression and repetition. This tension, however, is already at work in a certain affinity between the roles played by each line in the different verses within the song.

In this sense, it is possible to identify an affinity between the following: how each first line defines the temporal pace, how each second line situates the narrative, how the third line designates the situation, and finally how the fourth uses different drinking situations in order to create a metaphorical image of each stage of life. For example, whereas enthusiasm is drunk from a bottomless glass in the second verse (when the narrator is still full of youthful energy), in the fifth, courage has already to be drunk from an empty glass:

Pouco a pouco o passo faz-se vagabundo / dá-se a volta ao medo, dá-se a volta ao mundo / diz-se do passado, que está moribundo / bebe-se o alento num copo sem fundo (...) // Enfim dum escolha faz-se um desafio / enfrenta-se a vida de fio a pavio / navega-se sem mar, sem vela ou navio / bebe-se a coragem até dum copo vazio (Godinho, 1978)

(Step by step, the pace begins to drift / you go around fear, you go around the world / you say the past is at death's door / you drink your spirit from a bottomless glass (...) // You turn your choice into a challenge / you face your life end to end/ you sail without sea, or sail or ship / you drink your courage from an empty glass.)

While these lines are sung, the rhythm of the piano and the tone of the choir grow louder and gather pace, thus reinforcing the song's mounting tension towards a climax in the fifth verse. But this is not where the song ends; Godinho employs one last verse

to conclude with the guarantee that things inevitably will start all over again: ‘E entretanto o tempo fez cinza da brasa / e outra maré cheia virá da maré vaza / nasce um outro dia e no braço outra asa / brinda-se aos amores com o vinho da casa’ (Meanwhile time turned embers into ashes / Another high tide will come from the low tide / Another day is born, and in the arm another wing / We toast to love with the house wine). Godinho’s voice, by now, sings rather melancholically, but the new ‘wing’ and the new ‘tide’ are there to reassure the listener that time will keep going. Rather than the object of a statement, the flow of time is *enacted* throughout the narrative: the listener is not told, but invited to verify that history, grim as it might look at times, will continue, and that Godinho, just like Branco promised at the end of ‘FMI’, will also keep on singing.

### *Conclusion*

‘Primeiro Dia’ is just one of the many examples one could present to illustrate Godinho’s experience of the late 1970s and the early 1980s as a historical transition, when different “times” intersected and the game between change and continuity, end and rebirth, seemed tense and permanent. Yet what is decisive here is how such historicity not only entails a political stance (‘Viva quem muda / sem ter medo do escuro / o desconhecido é o irmão do futuro’ (Long live those who change / Fearless of darkness / The unknown is the brother of the future), in ‘O Rei vai Nu’ (Godinho, 1981). It is also one that involves the singer himself: ‘Como o pano-cru eu ainda estou por acabar / (...) Estou entre aquilo que já fiz e aquilo que fizer’ (Like a raw fabric I’m yet unfinished / (...) I’m between what I’ve done and what I’ll do) (Godinho

1978). We have seen as much in the songs of Branco, in the way the singer-songwriter's temporal awareness is reflected in both the lyrics of his songs and in his political commitment.

Such an insistent repetition of the same temporality is of course no coincidence, but a discursive formation (Foucault 2002) where individual creation simultaneously becomes an aspect of biography and a generational trace. And the fact that, as we have seen, this historical continuum pervades the structure of so many songs also suggests we may have touched here on a key element of the period's *political unconscious*, which, according to Fredric Jameson, reveals itself precisely through the work's formal procedures, rather than through the content as such (Jameson, 1982). In this sense, more than a group of singers acting in a specific historical context, it could almost be said that it is the period's political unconscious that was really "acting" on them.

This chapter's thesis is thus rather simple: after a major historical break such as the Carnation Revolution – an event in which songwriters like Branco and Godinho were deeply involved – came the need to stop, reflect and start over. But what is interesting here, as we have seen, is the way in which the constant references with time and with a dialectic of the past, present and future crystallized in the songs' musical and narrative structures, and not in just the themes and plots. When these songs take us through their own temporality, they establish a perception of time through narrative, which, for Paul Ricoeur, is exactly where any sense of history lies in the first place. In other words, historical time can only be perceived through the time of the narrative (Ricoeur 1990).

But these songs do more than just give us a historical perception of the flow of time. With their intersection of different temporalities and the complex narrative structure from which they emerge, they also evoke still another historical role ascribed to narratives: what Fredric Jameson, taking Ricoeur's thesis further, defined as the ability of narrative to *make history appear* by disclosing its contradictions (Jameson 2009).<sup>6</sup> The internal dynamics of the songs of Branco and Godinho (their specific politics), with their rhythmic contrasts, melodic discontinuities and the tension between music and lyrics, were thus political by refusing the closure of history at a moment when any horizon of transformation seemed unthinkable.

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<sup>6</sup> 'We must therefore retain this violence and negativity in any concept of intersection, in order for this dissonant conjunction to count as an Event, and in particular as that Event which is the ephemeral rising up and coming to appearance of Time and History as such. Nor is this a purely textual or philosophical matter: for *it is the same* discordant conjuncture that constitutes the emergence of time and of history in the real world.' (Jameson, 2009, p.544).



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