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João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theatre & Modern Life in the Late 19th Century*

New York, Oxford University Press, 2016

María Zozaya-Montes

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João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theatre & Modern Life in the Late 19th Century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, 324 p.

- 1 João Silva was awarded his PhD by the University of Newcastle for his thesis on music and theatre in Portugal. In his book *Entertaining Lisbon*, a captivating work of Cultural History research, he “studies the connections between construction of the modern Portuguese nation-state and popular entertainment between 1867 and 1910, focusing on theatrical music” (p.1). He analyses the creation of realities and social images through music, explaining how cultural construction was related to the idea of modernization and its connection with growing nationalism.
- 2 We consider this study to be highly complementary to sociability studies, like those by Maurice Aguiñon, Mona Ozouf and Laura Mason on the rituals to construct a nation, or the new Cultural History by Jane Fulcher, regarding the nation’s image throughout music. Studies about leisure and sociability greatly benefit from this kind of approach, i.e. one that interprets music from the standpoint of social and cultural history. Moreover, this type of research has more value because, as the author remarks, “Until recently, historical approaches to Portugal’s 19th Century music have concentrated on opera and on concert music, neglecting the popular entertainment market” (p. 6). From a structuralist perspective, Silva makes a profound and brilliant study of Lisbon, showing a new reality socially constructed through newspapers, performances and the music industry. He quotes authors such as Raphael Samuel and Roland Barthes and

theories of the invention of tradition by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Following Carlo Ginzburg and Robert Danton, João Silva reduces the scale of observation to Microhistory. He draws on the work of other recognised authors in the understanding of pleasure, such as Jacques Lacan or Victor Turner, and incorporates Pierre Bourdieu's ideas when explaining how the symbolic behaviour introduces the categories of *cultural capital* and *social habitus*.

- 3 The book starts with the premise that it is complex to consider 19th-century Lisbon as the cultural fabric representative of a heterogeneous Portugal. However, the city's entertainment landscape provides fertile ground for his study of "the role that popular musical theatres played between 1867 and 1910" (p. 3). Focusing on Lisbon's theatrical activity, he studies the symbolical creation of a nation, and "traces the complex relation between a cultural nation-state and popular entertainment" (p. 2). He considers that the modern country was negotiated and acclimatised on stage, where the primary messages were about nationalism and patriotism, and where the vernacular language and popular music incarnated the concepts of cultural motherhood and nation-state. He examines the importance of entertainment in developing and naturalizing the idea of a local nationalism, independent from monarchist symbols. As posited by the author, this was the perfect scenario for kings being replaced—in symbol only—by all the new powers represented by popular music. Through this mechanism, an idea of modern Portugal was shaped during the process of urbanization and industrial automation.
- 4 Popular theatre written in the vernacular began to offer the image of the old and the new, thus naturalizing the idea of modernity within the philosophy of progress. Meanwhile, it began to negotiate the perception of the local and the cosmopolitan. João Silva remarks on the complexity of defining what constitutes the "national" in theatrical genres (p. 94), particularly when the pieces played in Lisbon were based on imported models and operas that shared international conventions. Merely by being performed in the local language, pieces were automatically associated with patriotism and nationalism, even if their Portuguese composers had studied abroad. The author explains how popular music usually is considered to be "local", made by heterogeneous ethnic groups, while "national" implies homogeneity, unifying all Portuguese under the same patterns.
- 5 Silva illustrates his theory in five chapters focusing on individuals, plays and objects. The book approaches essential topics that, in my opinion, can be divided into four subjects. Firstly, he studies the transformations of the period, as related to urban issues, and technical progress as the multiple changes that modelled Lisbon into an urban city and the quotidian images that reflected modernity. On the one hand, Lisbon radically changed, transforming into a modern city from 1867 to 1910. Emulating Hausmann's urban planning, big avenues were built along with major buildings, commercial enterprises and a wide range of industries, with electric transports and public lighting. This transformation was staged in popular dramas. Silva also reveals modernization in the circulation of goods and forms of propaganda, and other ways of distributing music, such as librettos, sheet music, programs, reviews, postcards, posters and photos. These means were connected to technological breakthroughs in mechanical instruments to record and reproduce sound. Technical innovations embedded with the image of modernity were the automated piano, the *phonola*, the *aeolian*, the pianola, the phonograph, and the gramophone, with its piano rolls, hand-

played rolls, cylinders and flat records. New technologies such as photography allowed for the reconstruction of performance itself, mostly with the reviews in the news, and particularly with Joshua Benoliel's backstage and rehearsal photos accompanying the report *O teatro por dentro* written by André Brun in 1908.

- 6 Second, João Silva studies theatres, artistic genres performed in specialized playhouses and their audiences, which were related to the symbolic power of buildings and social classes. Aristocrats and bourgeois attended the opera, which was mainly performed at *Teatro de São Carlos*, a social venue that enhanced symbolic prestige. Italy, France and Germany were the primary sources of the opera's imported repertoires. Opera was considered an art, an intellectual creation written by men, not women; but the operettas from France, Italy, Portugal and Spain (*zarzuela grande* and *género chico*) were viewed not as art but as entertainment. Most operettas were translated into vernacular language, and starting in 1864 there was a tendency to create operettas with "national characteristics" (p. 65). These performances were mostly given at *Teatro da Trindade* and *Príncipe Real* (called *Apolo* after the fall of the monarchy).
- 7 The *revista* genre "consists in a sequence of contrasting and loosely connected sketches, and the internal structure of the *quadros* relies on allegory" (p. 129). Imported from France, the genre took hold in Lisbon at *Teatro do Ginásio* in 1851, with the piece *Lisboa em 1850*, written by Latino Coelho—who became a prominent intellectual—and Francisco Palha, the future manager of *Teatro da Rua dos Condes* and *Teatro da Trindade*. *Revista* was composed of a variety of sketches, including commentary on current events that showed unrealistic and heterogeneous features, relying on allegory, stereotypes and current satire. The structure was a sequence of contrasting oppositions related to everyday life dichotomies: old and new, rich and poor, urban and rural, local and foreign. It was perceived not as literary work, but as light entertainment, and mostly considered "a minor theatrical genre in the reviews" (p. 120). But among its authors were acknowledged writers, such as Guerra Junqueiro or Guilherme de Azevedo, who under the pseudonym of Gil Vaz wrote *Viagem à Roda da Parvónia*, more of a political pamphlet than a theatrical play. João Silva uses diverse caricatures of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro to illustrate the narrative of the coeval circumstances of politics. In 1875, Bordalo Pinheiro created the caricature representing the Portuguese people called *Zé povinho*, which was introduced in the newspaper *A lanterna mágica*. This image was used in newspaper cartoons and ceramic sculptures, and employed as a character in different plays, such as *O fado de Zé povinho* at *revista O tutti-li-mundi*, which everyone sang, revealing the permeability between the stage and the streets. *Revista* was very well suited to different styles and was quickly adopted by new writers and composers. Eduardo Schwalbach was a big success when showing ordinary urban life with *revistas de costumes* (1896–1901). As *revista* merged new fashions in the 1910s and 1920s, it incorporated Anglo-American music like the fox-trot. Occasionally some writers used another genre such as wizard performances or *mágica*, employing plots that "associated with the supernatural, relied on illusionist apparatus, and disregarded veracity" (p. 107). Performances like *revista* or *mágica* helped relieve everyday worries and made people laugh.
- 8 Thirdly, Silva turns his attention to the pieces and the authors themselves. In Lisbon, the operas performed were those by Giacomo Rossini, Charles Gounod, Jules Massenet, Georges Bizet, Giacomo Meyerbeer and Richard Wagner. Among the most distinguished composers of operetta, we can also mention Jacques Offenbach and "Hervé" (Louis

Ronger); and of Spanish Zarzuelas, Federico Chueca, Manuel Caballero, José Rogel, Francisco Barbieri and Joaquín Gaztambide; whose works were translated by Portuguese entrepreneurs and experienced playwrights. Some of the most famous Portuguese operetta pieces were *Intrigas do Bairro* by Luís de Araújo and Eugénio Monteiro de Almeida, and *O fado* by Filipe Duarte, which embodied important messages of nationalism. Iconic authors were Augusto Machado, who wrote *Tiçã Negro*, with a libretto by Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, who regularly worked with Alfredo Keil; or the famous piece *Maria da Fonte*, the popular heroine associated with the revolt against Costa Cabral. In this last piece, as in *A severa* by João Bastos and Bento Faria, the authors used a lot of urban characters, who were considered authentic local people, but in fact, were popular repertoires stylized in plays. During this period, it was also typical for a group of three friends to create an operetta: a composer, a writer and a performance director. For example, the trio Gervásio Lobato, João da Câmara and Ciríaco Cardoso created well-known pieces such as *O solar dos Barrigas* and *O burro do Sr. Alcaide*, considered a “truly Portuguese” operetta that promoted patriotism, inspired by the historical events following the British Ultimatum.

- 9 It was also common for authors and actors to fill multiple roles, finding themselves compelled to write and produce many pieces without prior specialization. Entrepreneurs such as António de Sousa Bastos enabled the development of contemporary theatre, putting on *revista* performances from 1870 onward, writing plays and using periodicals to promote the cultural market, with pieces such as *O Palco*, *A arte dramática* and *Tim tim por tim tim*. When discussing opera pieces and authors, João Silva includes an exciting section on the study of gender roles in music. The personal achievement of bourgeois women was related to domesticity, which “included activities such as collecting, embroidering, reading, and domestic music making” (p. 187). In public opinion, the masculine was viewed as rational and sublime, and the feminine as emotional and beautiful, in binary polarity. In the public sphere, men could be composers, write sublime operas and be seen as intellectuals; they also ran the business of theatre and specialised journals. Meanwhile, the patriarchal discourse associated “femininity with light music” (p. 199). Women were to play on stage, as singing divas in a world where femininity was considered delicate and romantic. Some famous operetta protagonists were Júlia Mendes and Pepa Ruiz, who sang in Portugal, Spain and Brazil. Singer and author Felicia Lacombe Casella is one exception, having both composed *Haydée* and performed it at *Teatro D^a Maria II* in 1853. But the destiny of most women was to have a piano at home to play and sing—a sign of elitism and prestige within the symbolic order of the time. This is why the image of women associated with domesticity was used to promote the piano or the modern *phonola*. When the development of new technologies made the automatic piano affordable, it kept the design of decorative furniture as a symbol of status and domestic entertainment.
- 10 Fourthly, João Silva reveals how the “development of the social sciences contributed to understanding Portugal as a nation-state” (p. 40). During the 1870s and 1880s, the Portuguese dominant ethnological perspective “considered popular culture to be uniform and homogeneous, seeing Portugal as a unified nation”; and in 1890, “with the rise of ethnographic methodologies, the prevailing perspective changed to one that favoured internal diversity” (p. 43). Henceforth, “representing the vernacular became important in Lisbon”, and scholars carried out “the search for an ‘authentic’ culture” (p. 151-152). They found this authenticity in popular songs, oral tradition and rural culture, which they considered to be the real roots of Portugal. These songs were

collected when the nationalist agenda identified popular culture with the soul of the nation, based on a Romantic ethos exalted by ethnology. Between the 1870s and the 1920s, the transcription of traditional music was concentrated in popular collections, classified into three main categories according to: the exact transcriptions of the melodies; the harmonization of collected melodies; and the arrangements of these melodies for choruses, *bandas* or orchestras. Rural song collections were adapted to urban audiences and reflected a nationalist ideology. César das Neves and Geraldinho de Campos began the *Cancioneiro* by including songs from many regions, in which they glossed over the vocal polyphonic practices of several areas (like Alentejo or Minho). Manuel Ramos finished his *Cancioneiro* by focusing on “how traditional music should be used as thematic material for art music”, a cultural outcome which finally “could become an educational tool in which patriotism is embedded” (p. 159-160). All of these collections created an important commercial entertainment market. In 1902, the Council of Musical Art of the Lisbon Conservatory set about trying to “systematize the way folk songs were collected throughout the country” (p. 160). It was then that direct recordings were made to preserve the exact originals, without the intervention of the collectors. Researchers of traditional songs began to use the phonograph, recording music “directly from the people”, as did Leite de Vasconcelos in 1907 when he organized the recordings into four categories: “prelude, lullabies, songs of the cradle, and songs that have distinctive characteristics”. The dynamic approach of Tomás Borba includes “ethnographic photographs and emphasizes the diversity for Portuguese traditional music”. António Arroio made “field recordings” and used the “sound recording as a way to avoid the collector’s intervention on the materials” (p. 163). This kind of scientific approach to the popular background aimed to dissociate Portugal’s genealogy from a ruling dynasty and played an essential role in the creation of the nation-state, by establishing “a competing notion of nationality that emanated from their republican beliefs” (p. 163).

- 11 Another source of authenticity was rooted in one of the most relevant genres in Portuguese popular music, *fado*. The *Revista p’rá frente* mentioned three styles: the old-fashioned *fado velho*, the rigorous (traditional or marginal) and the elegant *fado Liró*. Silva recalls the complex study of *fado*’s origins, led by Teófilo Braga’s theories that looked for Arabic influences, and Ernesto Vieira’s work that denied such influences. Other authors who discussed fatalism were João Chagas and Roxa Peixoto, who considered *fado* as a sign of Portuguese decadence, expressing the substance of the national soul dramatically. Pinto de Carvalho wrote how, in 1840, *fado* was frequently associated with a lifestyle of drinking, smoking, unclean places and troubles. People sang *fado* in taverns, voluntary associations and cheap eateries; it was seen as a vehicle for expressing the ideology of the working class. This form of popular expression entered the city salon performance landscape in 1860, during the “aristocratic and literary phase” (p. 165). *Fado* interpreters such as João Black, Avelino de Sousa, Fortunato Coimbra and José Carlos Rates used songs to spread their political beliefs. Black, Sousa and Carlos Harrington—a champion of so-called “Socialist *fado*”—were associated with the working class and the indoctrination of workers. There was also a branch of “Republican *fado*”, sung by Artur Arriegas. Finally, there were improvised lyrics called *canto a atirar*, where the audience proposed the *mote* (theme), and whose main exponents were João Patusquinho and the comic periodical *O Casmurro*, published by Artur Arriegas. With these, among many other examples, Silva shows how the

nationalization process was not a top-down imposition, since all social classes promoted it.

- 12 Our appraisal is that *Entertaining Lisbon* provides an essential panorama of 19th-century music in Lisbon and in Portugal. It will be a valuable contribution to both musical libraries and Social History research centres because of its cultural approach to politics and nationalism. As the book explores the many musical sources of Portugal, we hope that the next edition will include CDs or links to audio of the old records that João Silva is presenting to his audience.

AUTHORS

MARÍA ZOZAYA-MONTES

Maria Zozaya studied History at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), where she was awarded the BA prize of the Academic year and the PhD Extraordinary Prize for a doctoral dissertation in History. She has received the Real Maestranza de Caballeria de Ronda Prize, the Spanish Social History Society Research Prize, and Villa de Madrid Award Antonio Maura. She obtained several research grants held at the CSIC, and a Juan de la Cierva research contract at Valladolid's University. Since 2013, she has been a researcher at Évora University, CIDEHUS (ORCID: 0000-0003-0737-1843). She has given many conferences about sociability spaces and elites and has published numerous articles and five books. She is the editor of scientific blogs at OpenEdition: Corporativismo y grupos profesionales, <https://corporativo.hypotheses.org/> & Sociabilidad y Elites, <https://sociabilidad.hypotheses.org/>.