

Fado in Diaspora

*Online Internships and Self Display among YouTube
Generation Performers in the U.S.*

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O objectivo deste ensaio é examinar um grupo de fadistas luso-americanos de segunda geração, residentes de New Jersey, pesquisando as maneiras em que as dinâmicas de performance do fado na diáspora se mudaram/alteraram através do uso intenso de tecnologia. Estes fadistas jovens têm utilizado portais e plataformas online para se auto-ensinarem como cantar e tocar fado no estado de isolamento, e para “bloguearem” sobre as suas experiências nos portais pessoais e no facebook. Na ausência de casas de fado em New Jersey, estágios de internet, informais e auto-guiados, tornaram-se estratégias fundamentais para a aprendizagem de cantar fado em diáspora. Tais “estágios de internet” também levaram à combinação mais fácil de géneros musicais de origem norte americana com o fado. O uso intenso de tecnologia entre os fadistas da segunda geração nos EUA não só mudou as normas pedagógicas na aprendizagem do fado, como também facilitou uma alteração no etos tradicional do fado. O sistema de valor performativo que, durante a maior parte do século XX em Portugal, enfatizou o mistério, o sigilo, o amortalhamento, tem sido desafiado pelos fadistas jovens da diáspora que participam num etos mais direto e desvendado de auto-revelação e auto-promoção. Este ensaio propõe que a dinâmica de exposição não só se relaciona com a nova tecnologia, mas também é condicionada pelo contexto da migração e pela necessidade de afirmar uma identidade étnica num contexto norte americano de ambiguidade e confusão. Os fadistas da segunda geração utilizam o fado enquanto moeda, uma estenografia por afiliação geográfica e herança cultural.¹

There was something about her. The way she stepped toward the makeshift stage with a youthful energy and candor. People in the audience whispered to one another. This was to be her official fado “estreia” or inaugural performance. She wore the requisite black dress and shawl, her shiny dark hair catching the light as she approached the emcee of Newark, New Jersey’s “Segunda Grande Noite do Fado.” On cue, the emcee announced, “Representing the Portuguese Club of Perth Amboy, we have a youngster who was recommended to us . . . We are all very curious to hear her voice. . . . Here is Kimberleeeeeeeee Gomes!”²

Lots of palpable uncertainty and anticipation surrounded this American-born fadista, as she conferred nervously with her guitarists and cleared her throat. Poised on the edge of their seats, large groups of seasoned fado aficionados, most of them Portuguese natives, waited for the first sung notes to fill the capacious banquet hall of the Sport Club Português, a space which would constitute an important proving ground for this nineteen-year-old stranger to Newark’s insular fado scene.

Dwarfed by a backdrop of traditional tiled frescoes depicting Portugal’s New World discoveries, Kimberly Gomes belted out her first fado verse with a disarmingly frontal, no-nonsense delivery.

Within seconds of opening her mouth, it was clear that she had the chops to handle “Asas” the Katia Guerreiro favorite she had chosen for her estreia. But there was something odd, almost jarring, about her performance. I was captivated, as were others, all the while trying to figure out what kind of vocal or cultural or emotional dissonance made Kimberly’s fado performance so startling. As she continued, I thought my ears were playing tricks on me. Was there a hint of a Texas accent to her Portuguese pronunciation? But this was impossible from a girl born and bred in New Jersey. No, there it was again. It wasn’t just the accent which had a brightness about the drawn-out vowel sounds. There was something about the way she began and ended melodic phrases, with almost twangy vocal slides into small ruptures that were pronounced and purposeful. It seemed that she moved from her chest voice to her upper register with a slight hint of a yodel. Yes, that was it, the near-yodel! Her heavy use of glissando and this southern yodel-like ornamentation, along with her delivery which had a direct, fresh-faced, and at times, almost cheerful quality to it, made you want to break out into a two-step. The country-and-western flavor she brought to her fado performance completely wowed the audience. She was irresistibly charming in a young, U.S., down-home kind of way, and she had a beautiful, throaty, alto voice. As one of twelve fadistas who performed that night, Kimberly Gomes stood out as the fan favorite, for her oddly syncretic, country-and-western-infused rendition of a traditional fado that sounded like it had landed in New Jersey, not by way of Lisbon, but by way of Dallas or Fort Worth (Holton Fieldnotes, 2011).³

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My article examines what happens to *fado* when it crosses the ocean from Portugal to the U.S. Not a crossing in the suitcases and expressive nervous systems of Portuguese immigrants who grew up listening to *fado* in native towns, bringing homegrown traditions with them to distant shores. Not a crossing by world music *fado* divas imported from Portugal as headline acts on marquis stages. And not solely a crossing of recorded sound, *fado* tracks bloating online shopping carts and coming to rest in New World cd stacks, ipod playlists and pandora genome profiles. The ocean crossing which inflects this inquiry takes a more circuitous, oblique and indirect path. It involves a group of second-generation Portuguese-Americans who have stumbled into a taste for *fado* from a satellite location, learned to sing aided by internet technology, and made the most of U.S. performance situations which unsettle *fado* orthodoxy.

Fado has long been defined by an ethos of travel and border crossing. Recent scholarship has turned its attention to *fado* wayfaring of various geographical, aesthetic and sociological stripes. Rui Vieira Nery (2004) and Joaquim Pais de Brito (1994) document *fado*'s historical travel from street to jail to salon to concert hall. José Tinhorão (1994) tracks *fado*'s early triangulation between port cities in Brazil, Portugal and Africa. Daniel Gouveia (2002) marks *fado*'s journey to the front lines of the colonial wars in Angola. Lila Ellen Gray (2013) considers the mimetic and transcendental travel involved in fandom among "Amalianos," devotees of *fado* diva Amália Rodrigues. Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco (1994), Manuel Morais and Rui Vieira Nery (2010) document the early trajectory of *fado*'s *guitarra portuguesa* from England to Porto to Lisbon. And Richard Elliot (2010) follows *fado*'s dissemination as world music export and the "memory communities" these recordings create, both near and far.

Given all of the important recent work devoted to *fado* as "traveling culture," it is surprising that so few studies have focused on *fado* performance within Portuguese migrant communities.⁴ In fact, there are New Jersey *fado* performers who argue that only in immigrant enclaves can you find "true" *fado* (Chuva 2008). According to this line of thinking, *fado* is most authentically performed from a position of deterritorialization, given the ubiquity of the emigrant archetype in *fado* lyrics since its inception, and the importance of *saudade*, or nostalgia for absent people and places, as the form's emotional fuel and inspiration. Based on six years of ethnographic fieldwork (2008–present), ethnographic interviews with *fado* performers, aficionados and producers, and participant-observation of *fado* concerts and rehearsals in Northern New Jersey and New York City, my essay does indeed focus on *fado* and deterritorialization, but deterritorialization once removed.

This essay explores how the twenty-something generation of American-born *fadistas* forge a relationship to Portugal's "national song." How and why does this genre, so steeped in expressions of loss, longing and absence, speak to them, given that they are once removed from the emotional rupture of leaving a native country behind?⁵ How does their *fado* practice differ from the older first-generation *fadistas*? Does the younger generation's bilingualism, technological expertise, upward socio-economic mobility and greater degree of exposure to diverse musical genres effect the way in which *fado* is understood and performed? How is *fado*, a genre known in this community as a "music for older people," reformed or altered to suit the tastes and lifestyles of the younger generation? How and why are other distinctly U.S. genres of music, like country and western, integrated into their *fado* performances? How do second-generation singers enter the insular community of established older *fadistas*; how do they learn repertoire, secure performance engagements and team up with the limited number of instrumentalists? Finally, how does *fado* participate in processes of assimilation and the expression of ethnic identity, particularly complex projects in the second-generation sometimes known for assimilative segmentation (Rumbaut and Portes 2001), duality and doubling (Feldman-Bianco and Huse 1996) and identificatory ambivalence (Bulger 1987; Teixeira 1999)?

Learning to Sing Virtually: *Fado's* YouTube Generation

New Jersey is home to more than 60,000 Portuguese. New Jersey is the state with the fourth largest Portuguese population in the U.S. following California, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in descending order. New Jersey distinguishes itself from Portuguese populations in other states, by being predominantly continental (as opposed to Azorean), being mostly newly arrived and, in large part, being Portuguese-language-dominant in the domestic sphere (Vicente 1999). The majority of Portuguese immigrants who settled in New Jersey came between 1960 and 1980. The Ironbound neighborhood of Newark constitutes the epicenter of Portuguese settlement in New Jersey, both in terms of populational density and in terms of its role as the "emotional and cultural heart" of the community.⁶ Newark's Ironbound neighborhood, while still known as "Little Portugal," is now also home to increasing numbers of Brazilians and Central Americans who began arriving in large numbers in the 1990s.

The Ironbound is considered the "Cathedral" of *fado* performance in the U.S. (Pires 2010). The neighborhood features many Portuguese clubs and associations, scores of Portuguese restaurants and small businesses, and a large Portuguese Catholic parish. Many of these spaces have been graced with a *fado* performance at one time or another, and until its closing several years

ago, the Ironbound even had its own dedicated *casa do fado*.⁷ *Fado* performance in Northern New Jersey is used to mark all sorts of occasions, from holidays to wine tastings to club anniversaries to Portugal Day. Until recently, these *fado* engagements most often featured a rotating group of 10–15 local Portuguese-born *fadistas* and instrumentalists, most in their fifties and sixties. Approximately eight years ago, with the first public performances of the then teenage Nathalie Pires, a group of young second-generation *fadistas* began to emerge on the scene.

This article focuses on five young *fado* performers, Michael da Silva, Nathalie Pires, Kimberly Gomes, Pedro Botas and David Couto, all of whom live in New Jersey and perform *fado* regularly.⁸ They are known in New Jersey as the “young” generation of *fadistas*. With the exception of Pedro, all were born in the U.S. to Portuguese parents, and all have geographical trajectories which begin with residence in or near the main hub of Portuguese settlement in New Jersey—the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark—later radiating out toward the suburbs.⁹ All are fluent in Portuguese and English, but only a few spent any time in the Portuguese language schools that serve immigrant families in Northern New Jersey. For all, Portuguese was the dominant language spoken in the home growing up. No one but Michael received any formal musical instruction.¹⁰ In terms of educational attainment, Michael and Nathalie have finished college degrees and are working. Pedro, Kimberly and David are either in the midst of attending or applying to colleges or technical schools. All are in their late teens or twenties and two are married to other Portuguese-Americans involved in Portuguese expressive culture.

There is a striking throughline in the ways in which these young *fadistas* initially learned to sing *fado*. Even though Newark is the purported Cathedral of *fado*, most in this group did not grow up attending live *fado* performances. In fact, in the cases of Kimberly and David, they really weren’t much aware of *fado* until they stumbled upon it, surfing the web. Kimberly Gomes (2011) describes this moment:

I’ve been singing American music since I was eight years old, so it was Whitney Houston and Celine Dion . . . then [later] I started to transition and I heard *fado* on YouTube when I was just browsing one day. And I was like “Wow, this is so powerful!” . . . I always knew who Mariza was, and I was looking through her music because she doesn’t always sing *fado*, so at some point I tried looking into that *fado* music and I heard “Loucura” . . . and I just couldn’t stop from then on. And I tried looking up other *fadistas* and started learning other *fados*. But Mariza introduced this all to me because on YouTube she’s huge, and she has so many views that it just came up as “most viewed” and that’s how I got into *fado*.

If it were not for the “most viewed” function on YouTube and the algorithm which links demonstrated preference to new probable “likes”—online features which she happened to engage—Kimberly may never have discovered *fado*, the music which is now her “obsession.”

Not only was Internet technology and sites such as YouTube crucial to their initial discovery of *fado*, later self-directed tutorials in singing, language acquisition and repertoire building were also web dependent for second-generation *fadistas* in NJ. David Couto explains how his online discovery of Mariza, and of *fado* more generally, led him to want to improve his Portuguese so as to sound more authentic when singing. After rehearsing alone with “Uma casa portuguesa” and Mariza’s “Minha alma,” David decided he needed to build his Portuguese vocabulary in order to better understand the lyrics and improve his pronunciation to disguise his American accent. He states:

I was about 15. I just started practicing [Portuguese], always watching Portuguese television and soap operas, picking up as much as I could. The big words, I needed. I even started taking Portuguese courses online for free . . . I just wanted to learn some words I never knew before. I learned “*matricula*,” I learned so much. I learned how to spell . . . Just picking up all these words. I try to use them in sentences and talk to myself. Just a complete rush. So I picked up the accent . . . and just tried to progress as much as possible without going to school (Couto 2012).

As David describes it, *fado* was the inspiration which jumpstarted other sorts of cultural and linguistic auto-didaction. Perfecting the native language of his parents was viewed as supplemental instruction, making up for gaps in the transference of knowledge, practices and customs from the first-generation to the second. Improving his Portuguese was not so much about family (being able to talk to older relatives, etc) but about musical performance. David’s hunger for online language instruction was always in service to the larger goal of learning to sing *fado* like a native. Learning *fado* meant first acquiring foundational building blocks already in place for native Portuguese-speakers. David’s first stab at expressive authenticity was focused on second-language diction and lexical breadth. And it was online technology which enabled David to learn *fado* in diaspora in the absence of native-language access to song lyrics and the usual support systems and musical mentoring which would be available to him in Portugal. Online programs, YouTube clips and satellite TV facilitated a process of surrogation, whereby digital instruction and archived performance recordings compensated for the difficulty in gaining regular hands-on exposure to a live *fado* community as well as gaps in cultural retention as an immigrant community moves into the second generation.

Make-Do Mentoring and Online Repertoire-Building

In their study documenting the history of Lisbon's *casas do fado*, Klein and Alves state: "Throughout its entire history, *fado* seems to have always been linked to concrete city spaces, which highlighted *fado*'s presence as a feature of the space: live singing, you leave your house to hear it" (1994, 37).¹¹ These bricks and mortar venues, literally "*fado* houses" served many social and aesthetic purposes. One of the most important, as of late, is the training of young inexperienced *fadistas* who learn the ropes from seasoned performers. José Manuel Osório states that the *casa do fado* is, "the only school that *fado* has" (cited in Gray, 2007: 124). Maria da Fé (2008), *fadista* and manager of the well-known *casa do fado* "Senhor Vinho," explains that managing the young *fadistas* and helping them develop as musical artists is a hefty responsibility and takes a lot of commitment and energy. *Casas do fado* typically contract a handful of seasoned *fadistas* who sometimes maintain multi-year associations with the same *casa*. New talent often "make the rounds" to various *casas*, learning through listening.¹² Networking sometimes lands a new *fadista* an opportunity to sing *fado* at the invitation of an older singer, instrumentalist or *casa* manager. If all goes well, an older *fadista* may take an interest in a younger singer and invite him/her to sing again, giving feedback and eventually acting as an informal "*madrinha*" or "*padrinho*."¹³ Young *fadistas* can also gain performance experience at amateur *fado* venues, which function somewhat like U.S. open mic nights, where performers show up and get added to the list of singers based on presence and reputation.¹⁴

In the New Jersey/New York area, young *fadistas* typically do not have this same mentorship circuitry available to them. As of now, there are no dedicated *casas do fado* in the region. The restaurants in New Jersey and New York City that currently offer regular *fado* performance have a history of instability and flux due to changing market demand for *fado* and the general volatility of the restaurant industry in this region. A dearth of bricks and mortar options for reliable opportunities to listen to and perform *fado*, is somewhat offset by the preponderance of "special event" *fado* performances in the Portuguese immigrant communities of Northern New Jersey. However, special event *fado* performances, such as those celebrating wine tastings, new business openings, holidays and club anniversaries, often spring up with little advanced warning or publicity and are, therefore, not reliable outlets for those seeking regular performance and learning opportunities.

In response to these conditions, the five young NJ *fadistas* have developed innovative and make-do responses to gaining *fado* practice, seeking out mentorship and building repertoire. All tell stories of a grab-bag of early supporters who helped them on their way to their first singing engagement. All mention the group of older-generation *fadistas* as important sources of

ongoing information and advice, albeit doled out on a sporadic basis, mostly during joint *fado* concerts. For Kimberly Gomes, her first opportunity to sing *fado* came through fellow second-generation *fadista* and peer Nathalie Pires. Kimberly had found Nathalie online and had sent her an email hoping to start a correspondence. The two traded many messages about *fado*, discovering that they were from the same hometown in central New Jersey; they finally met months later. According to Kimberly, Nathalie was an important font of early encouragement and practical advice. For David Couto, Gloria de Melo—poet, co-founder of Proverbo (the cultural arm of the Sport Club Português) and public relations specialist for TransAir Portugal—was his first early supporter. Noting Gloria's frequent involvement in cultural events through seeing her photograph in the Portuguese-language newspaper *Luso-Americano*, David made a cold call to her. Within days, Gloria had put him in touch with other *fadistas* and instrumentalists. She also told him where to go to hear *fado* and facilitated meetings and introductions. In both of these examples, young *fadistas* had to circumvent the lack of *casas do fado* by networking with peers online or contacting important community figures who could be considered “cultural brokers,” for their connectedness within the immigrant enclave, but who were not necessarily *fado* practitioners themselves. These make-do strategies are adaptive to the diaspora context.

Once launched as *fadistas*, second-generation performers have to continue being creative in their search for ongoing mentorship and repertoire building. Nathalie Pires (2010) states, for example:

I know this is kind of strange to say, but being in the U.S., I don't have a *casa do fado* to go to, [so] I kind of do my own little internship. Like, all the *fadistas* serve you, and I am really lucky to have it. I go to YouTube and I pretty much see what is going on over there. I can type in *fado* and I can see what has been added, what's new. Actually, I am pretty caught up with new albums that are coming out, with new artists that are emerging, and I do all my research through there.

Nathalie's statement that “all the [online] *fadistas* serve [her]” is provocative because her distance from the heart of *fado* practice in Lisbon is spun almost as an advantage, i.e. “I'm not limited to just one *fado* mentor, I can have them all online.”¹⁵ Her comment also resonates with Appadurai's concept of “communities of sentiment,” where people who are geographically far from one another begin to “imagine and feel things together” through technologically-enabled conduits and networks (1996, 8). In this case, there is an online constellation of disembodied voices and sound recordings emanating out of Portugal which facilitate *fado* role-modeling and imagined advice-giving sessions for young *fadistas* across the ocean—a dynamic which, as Appadurai argues, relies on social imagination in new and perhaps more intense

ways. However, in this example, the virtual *fado* community exists not only in the affective realm of sentiment; it is also plugged into more pragmatic and goal-driven processes of career development, aesthetic influence and musical mentorship. And this connection to people and sounds accessed online, described as “research” and “internships,” is overtly purposeful in its bald pursuit of the shortest, most time-efficient path toward an objective, an ethos which may be in tension with Portuguese traditions of process-focused *fado* learning among time-honored *fado* veterans and venues.¹⁶

Natalie’s testimony also shows the value placed on innovation and keeping current, a finding that exists in opposition to previous studies of New Jersey’s *fado* community which note a distinct resistance toward innovation and staunch reliance on older repertoire of Estado Novo era *fados* (Côrte-Real 2010; Carvalho 1991). Many of the young-generation U.S. *fadistas* want to know what their Portuguese peers are performing, how they are challenging compositional form, what lyricists are writing for them, what new adaptations of classic poems seem to have popular traction and whether or not new *fados* would resonate with audiences in the U.S. Some, like Nathalie, are even recording original *fados*, trying to build their own unique cache of lyrical and musical compositions.

As most *fado* aficionados know, maintaining a unique and distinctive repertoire is highly valued among most *fado* vocalists. *Fadistas* become known for their repertoire, particularly originals that are written specifically for them. Originality of material is highly prized and protected.¹⁷ In the diaspora, it is particularly difficult to create new material. There is also, however, less pressure to sing original work in the U.S. As Maria José Côrte-Real Carvalho found in her 1991 study of this same community, there are more people writing new lyrics than composing new music. The situation has changed somewhat since then with a new focus on *fado* lyrical and musical composition as a result of the activities of Proverbo, a poetry group in the Ironbound linked to the Sport Club Português, as well as the recent Citylore *fado* workshop which took place in Newark in the spring of 2012. However, even with these local motors encouraging the creation of new *fado* lyrics in NJ, there remains a general acceptance in this community of borrowing the repertoire of other well-known *fadistas* coming out of Portugal. This acceptance is born of necessity, as well as the fact that local audiences often want to hear *fados* that they recognize from Portugal; *fado* consumption is often linked to memory work here and creating active sensory connections to an originary homeland. The tacit restrictions apply mostly to repertoire duplication in diaspora. For example, Nathalie Pires is known for singing “Povo que Lavas no Rio” made famous by Amália Rodrigues; Kimberly Gomes is known for singing “Asas” made famous by Katia Guerreiro; Fátima Santos is known for singing *fado de Coimbra*, etc. So there is pressure in New Jersey not to duplicate other

local *fadistas*' "signature *fados*" made famous originally by others across the ocean.¹⁸ Repertoire distinction, then, is cast in different terms and with different flexibilities in diaspora.

Kimberly Gomes also researches new *fados* online in order to build her repertoire. She is particularly attracted to the young *novo fado* artists such as Katia Guerreiro and Carminho. However, just as important as bringing newly recorded *fados* to U.S. shores is finding lyrics that resonate with her own experience and with the teenage lifestage. Kimberly Gomes (2011) explains:

I was drawn to the passionate romantic love music and that's why I'm drawn to *fado*. I mean there are so many *fados* that aren't about love. But the *fados* that are about love are the ones that I understand the most, that I can express the best. Because that's the moment I'm living in right now. You know, when you're young, that's all you can think about is love and it's just so passionate . . . I can make the audience feel what I'm feeling.

Kimberly's testimony challenges the notion, commonplace among second-generation luso-descendents, that *fado* is "old people's music," and that *fado* performed for immigrant audiences recalls time periods, places, and events that young people can't relate to. Kimberly, and many of the other younger-generation vocalists, find a personal entrée into the *fados* they sing—some old, some new—and argue that *fado*'s traditional focus on the vicissitudes of love and romance directly relate to their teenage and twenty-something lifestage. In this way, they claim *fado* speaks even more powerfully to their demographic than to the middle-aged set whose days of courtship and passion are typically long gone.¹⁹

Young vocalists who have little or no knowledge of *fado*'s association with the oppressive policies of Portugal's *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1926–74) and the economic hardship of that era—associations that generally resonate with immigrant *fado* aficionados who grew up in Portugal during that time—treat the genre as a tabula rasa, ripe for reinvention and reappropriation. This generation of young U.S. singers views *fado* as being more similar to the ballads of Whitney Houston and Carrie Underwood and to the TV narratives about young love such as HBO's *True Blood* than to far-away mid-century cultural influences their parents might perceive. It is this facile game of cultural connect and free association, in part fueled by new-technology modes of engagement such as web browsing and channel surfing, which also contribute to the young generation's blending of U.S. musical genres such as country and western music with *fado*.

There has been much ink spilled about the music genome project which is at the core of Pandora Radio and other online technologies seeking to connect consumers with music based on demonstrated preference. For some, these technologies open up new horizons of access and exposure; the music

genome project, along with post-modern practices of sampling and DJs who overlay freewheeling combinations of tracks from disparate artists in a claim to genre transcendence, has ushered us into a new era of the post-genre.²⁰ For other critics, however, the music genome project is taxonomic fetishism gone wrong. In his article “How Pandora’s Music Genome Project Misrepresents the Way We Hear Music,” Dave Mandl states “Not only are the rules that define what features matter often unknown outside some specific social group . . . but awareness of them is often subconscious *within* that group” (2014, 5). This, he argues, leads to the drawing of faulty generic connections among tracks and among artists. Whether we are in an age of post-genre, or hyper-genre or taxonomic misfire hardly matters, however, when reflecting on the practices of *fado* learners in diaspora. It is perhaps the very slippage in the system of connecting people with music they have a demonstrated preference for which leads to the initial discovery of *fado* (as several of my interviewees described), and then a post-facto perception of likeness and aesthetic simpatico between diverse categories of music such as *fado* and country and western.

Kimberly Gomes and Nathalie Pires both talk about listening to online clips of Portuguese *fadistas* and “American” hits in the same sitting or research session. Kimberly finds the focus on love in ballads by American crooners and Portuguese *fadistas* as strikingly similar despite certain differences in semantic orientation.²¹ In her mind, *fadistas* and singers of U.S. country ballads share similar lyrical content and a similar vocal approach, especially resonant for people her age. Once this link is suggested, it is not difficult to recognize a parallel expressive excess in the lyrics, vocal ornamentation and emotive strategies for tugging at the heartstrings characteristic of certain *fado* laments and country and western ballads.

Kimberly Gomes (2011) responds to the observation that her *fado* renditions sound “country”:

Oh my God, I get that all the time. I think it’s because . . . in high school, when I would sing English [language] music, people would say: “You sound like Carrie Underwood or Joss Stone.” I think it’s because she has that kind of thicker raspier country voice and I guess that transitioned into my *fado*. I don’t know, I don’t try to sound that way it just comes out like that. And sometimes it’s not a good thing because a lot of people don’t like the way it sounds. But I just can’t help it; that’s just the way it comes out.

Kimberly’s almost “involuntary” country sound is the result of years of listening to and singing musics from different sides of the Atlantic, appreciating their commonalities and conceiving of them in the same taxonomic container. This musical blending, it can be argued, is vitally aided by new technology and a quick click of the mouse where disparate video clips from

opposite sides of the Atlantic bump into one other on the screen and multiple tabs remain open at once.

Fado's New World Ethos of Self Display, Identity-Building and Ethnic Activism

Certain elements of *fado* orthodoxy, particularly those related to a valuing of secrecy, have been challenged by second-generation performers living in the U.S. In social, discursive, and performative terms, *fado* has long been a genre associated with mystery, interiority, shrouding and, at times, religiosity. Many *fadistas* in Portugal refer to their vocal practice and artistry as having come from a divine or other-worldly source. Well-known Portuguese *fadista* Ana Moura explains: "We have this saying in Portugal. You have to be born a *fado* singer. It's not something you can learn" (Denselow 2011). In her study of amateur *fado* performance in Lisbon, Lila Ellen Gray states: "For those deeply involved in *fado* practice and the *fado* 'life,' *fado* is often not referred to as 'music.' I often heard participants claim, *fado is a faith*, or *fado is a religion*. It is as if 'music' becomes too limiting a term to describe what for some actors borders on a metaphysics . . ." (2005, 36, italics in original). In an interview, Ana Moura (2007) compared *fado* to rock and roll, using the terms "inside" music versus outside music to emphasize *fado's* inherent interiority. The above rhetoric used to describe *fado* cosmology and *fado* vocal practice, coupled with the insularity of Lisbon's *fado* community, which has traditionally been closed to outsiders and suspicious of researchers (Nery 2004; Gray 2005) cloak *fado* culture in a veil of secrecy and inaccessibility.

Shrouding and mystery exist not just at a discursive and social level, but also at a performative one. Ever since *fado* diva Amália Rodrigues began using a black shawl to hide her "nervous hands," during mid-twentieth-century performances (Santos 1987), this element of female *fado* costuming has become ubiquitous. The practice of shrouding the upper body of female *fadistas*, popular during the *Estado Novo* era of conservative gender politics and expectations for female modesty and containment, has endured until today.²² Amália was famous not only for the use of the shawl, but also for hiding herself behind her guitarists in a spatial composition of deference and self-erasure. This posture can be seen in *fado* films featuring Amália such as *Fado corrido* and *História duma cantadeira*. In addition, *fado's* traditional locus of corporeal expression is also primarily limited to the face and the hands (Castelo-Branco 2002; Cordeiro 1994). Despite its nineteenth-century link to Afro-Brazilian dance forms, *fado*, as it is most often performed today, is a genre of corporeal stillness and reserve. The face is often the only openly animated visual element, as the rest of the body becomes erased by a lack of movement and traditionally occulted by black suits, dresses, and shawls.

The elements described above, which for many decades have defined *fado* performance, vocality and cosmology, construct an ethos of mystery, inaccessibility, interiority, self-erasure and shrouding.²³ Second-generation NJ *fadistas* challenge these norms. Perhaps because *fado* ideology is not so stringent or well understood on this side of the Atlantic. Perhaps because young U.S. *fadistas* have grown up in a more open, direct, in-your-face society and they are more comfortable operating in this expressive modality. Perhaps because of the well-documented link between teenage social development and the ways in which online technology leads to an unprecedented degree of private life made public. In my opinion, all of these considerations contribute to the shift from an ethos of interiority to one of self-display among second-generation *fadistas* in New Jersey.

It is also important to note here that the ethos of self-erasure, silence and invisibility has also been used to describe the Portuguese who settled in the U.S. more generally. Portuguese-Americans have often been described by scholars and casual observers alike, as an “invisible minority.” Estellie Smith (1974) wrote the first full-length treatment of this idea. Although there have been many subsequent critiques of the notion of Portuguese-American invisibility (see Klimt and Holton 2009, for example), it still maintains a certain analytical traction until today (Ribeiro 2000). Against this backdrop, the second-generation ethos of exposure, visibility and display, as related to *fado*, is then potentially even more transgressive.²⁴

Nathalie Pires, for example, maintains several websites and blogs. Her blog features a section called “Nathalie News” with intimate biographical information, family photos, exposés and musings on the importance of *fado* to her emotional development, links to other *fadistas* she admires and newsy confessionals regarding milestones in her singing career. She places the reader in the role of confidant, as if you were her friend sitting at the kitchen table, privy to secrets and private revelations. Except that this is a virtual space that anyone can access without restriction. This information, all centered around *fado*, a genre known for its secrecy, is laid bare for public consumption. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Nathalie, Kimberly and David openly explain the importance of YouTube recordings to their development as *fadistas*. They don’t see anything particularly taboo about revealing this process. Their openness about the role of recorded sound, where concerted “practicing” takes place in New Jersey bedrooms in front of computer screens and involves the strategic parroting of others’ fixed melodic lines and melismatic phrasing, exists in stark contrast to the often heard mythology: “*Fado não se aprende, fado nasce com a gente*” (You don’t learn *fado*, it is born within you). Within this community of twenty-somethings, the man behind the curtain is willingly unveiled, amid few claims to mystery or divinely inspired channeling of forces unknown. Success as a *fadista* in this diasporic context is the

result of solitary hard work, online research and networking, and these processes are celebrated and laid bare in personal blogs and websites.

The second-generation's ethos of direct self-display and exposure is pushed even further with nineteen-year-old David Couto's brand of ethnic activism and identity-building. Until recently, David Couto, the youngest of New Jersey's second-generation *fadistas*, maintained a website entitled "100% Portuguese and Proud." On his site, he compiled clips from his favorite Amália *fados* along with texts of the lyrics. He had a discussion board where comments from far flung cyber visitors muse on the differences between various ethnicities and their musics. In a hodgepodge of other postings, symbols of Portuguese ethnic identity, the rooster, the flag, and various *fado* emblems and props are mixed with clips of environmentalists and animal rights activists. Fragments of a Jane Goodall lecture, exhorting the audience to try to empathize with chimpanzees are run side by side with an Amália *fado* about seagulls' cries, and suddenly, taken together, *fado* is wrapped up in an aggressively amalgamated display of sound and emotion—both animal and human, all in service to Portuguese ethnic identity in the U.S. Strange bedfellows as they may be, *fado*, Jane Goodall, and save the rainforest petitions are all, according to David Couto's website, integral components of being "100% Portuguese and Proud."

Couto's stockpiling of audiovisual representations of social issues, musical forms and national symbols speak to an aesthetic enabled by new technology where "in the online world of Pinterest, Tumblr and other digital mood boards, we can all be "curators," collecting snippets and photos to tell the world who we are, or at least who we would like to be" (Chocano 2012, 48). The back-story to David's online narrative of "who he is" involves a coming of age tale of family dissolution, a move away from a Portuguese enclave and resultant feelings of alienation and marginality which found expression in *fado* and online curation. For David, beginning to sing *fado* and creating websites were part and parcel of the same proactive endeavor—strategies for projecting an identity into what was perceived as hostile territory.

Moving from an urban school system, where many of his friends were Portuguese, into a large central New Jersey high school which lacked a co-ethnic cohort, was an experience marked by social alienation and even physical aggression. His experience of marginalization was exacerbated by the fact that his newly blended family seemed to discard their Portuguese traditions in favor of Brazilian music and *telenovelas*. On many levels David felt his identity threatened. Singing *fado* and creating websites constituted a strategy for expressing sadness and loss, while simultaneously strengthening and making visible an ethnic identity he felt was under attack.

Social scientists have recently focused attention on the drama and difficulty children of immigrants can experience in forging a unified compre-

hensible identity in North America. In their study of Portuguese-Americans in Southeastern New England, Bela Feldman-Bianco and Donna Huse (1996) argue that second-generation youth live lives of inbetweenness and double-identity, having to translate for monolingual parents and manage household and family business that forces them into adult roles before they are ready. In a study of second-generation Luso-French bloggers, Manuel Antunes da Cunha notes that this population uses diverse strategies of self-representation to combat the “double devaluation of their social origins and the migratory status of their parents” (2009, 186). Laura Bulger states in her study of Luso-Canadians: “Ambivalence is the drama of the second generation, and the reaffirmation of the individual is self-controlled and dependent upon the specific circumstances of each person” (1987, 19). Miguel Moniz (2009) further explores a related dynamic in his study documenting the historical disconnect between Portuguese-American identity and U.S. definitions of race and ethnicity. In response not only to the details of his own personal trajectory, but also no doubt to the inherent challenges that scholars of second-generation ethnics document, David’s linking of *fado* vocality and personal website creation provide a two-pronged answer to ambivalence and inbetweenness, firming up an identity perceived as vulnerable, invisible or under fire. *Fado* becomes a lynchpin to being “Portuguese and Proud” in the U.S., and an important vehicle for putting this identification on display using new technology.

Conclusion

My article has examined the way in which a new crop of second-generation *fadistas* have changed the dynamics of *fado* performance in diaspora through their intense and unapologetic use of technology. They have used online sites and platforms to teach themselves to sing and play *fado* from a satellite location in diaspora, to blog about their experience, to document their biographies, to expose their opinions, performance videos and headshots and document current debates in the Portuguese community in “news you can use” formats on facebook and websites. These internet activities mark a distinct shift in how *fado* singing and playing are learned and developed—often in solitary virtual tutorials in front of the computer as opposed to live collective jam sessions in someone’s basement, in social clubs or in *casas do fado*. And these “internet internships” have led to the facile combining of U.S. musical genres with *fado*. It has also led to a freer borrowing of signature *fados* from many different vocalists, without the strict policing of originality and taboos against singing other people’s repertoire that exist in Portugal.

In addition to changing *fado* pedagogy, the second-generation use of technology also facilitates a shift in *fado*’s traditional ethos. A performative

value system that for much of the twentieth century emphasized shrouding, secrecy and mystery has been challenged by a new generation of *fadistas* who participate in a more upfront and direct ethos of self-exposure and self-promotion. My study has argued that this dynamic of exposure is not only linked to new technology but is also conditioned by the context of migration and the need to assert an ethnic identity in a U.S. context of ambiguity and confusion. Second-generation *fadistas*, most of them born in urban New Jersey, a region of the U.S. known for its ethnic and racial diversity, use *fado* as a currency, a shorthand for geographic affiliation and cultural heritage. Performing *fado* and publicizing a passion and proclivity for this Portuguese music via online platforms is part of expressing ethnic pride and “getting the word out.” Further, twenty-something *fadistas* believe that *fado* is not just old people’s music. They argue that *fado*’s traditional lyrics concerning love, passion and jealousy are particularly resonant for their demographic, on the cusp of adulthood and in the midst of intense courtship and life-partner searches. Making *fado* their own through establishing a lifestage link to lyrical content, and harnessing *fado* to projects of self-expression and ethnic identity building is part of the reason Nathalie Pires (2010) believes the new generation of young *fadistas* will continue to grow in the U.S.:

Now, if you see a [Portuguese] tourist commercial, you hear *fado* in the background. All of a sudden, it’s something that’s emerging as cool . . . and even in *novelas* you will hear *fado* in the background . . . It is really pretty awesome. The more I sing, the more I go out, the more young people I see . . . There are lots of young *fadistas* emerging . . . we have young *fadistas* in California, we have young *fadistas* in Massachusetts . . . and we are loving it, we really love the responsibility of it, we are proud of it, and we want to continue it.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the NJ/NY *fado* performers who generously offered me their time and insights over the course of several years. An early draft of this article was first presented at the American Portuguese Studies Association Meeting in October 2012; a later draft was presented at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa’s Instituto de Etnomusicologia (INET) in May 2014, and I am grateful for the insightful comments made by audience members during both Q and A sessions. I would also like to thank Salwa Castelo Branco and an anonymous reviewer at *Luso-Brazilian Review* for their careful readings and critiques of drafts of this article. Any errors are my own.

2. Performers’ real names are used with permission.

3. There are many *fado* concerts in New Jersey which receive at least passing reference or short reviews in the biweekly newspaper, *LusoAmericano*. The *Segunda*

Grande Noite do Fado which took place in Newark, NJ on April 2, 2011, however, was the subject of a decidedly more ample treatment, featuring a photo montage and three articles, one of which was dedicated to the inaugural performance of Kimberly Gomes (Pires 2011a; Pires 2011b; Martins 2011; Durães 2011).

4. To my knowledge, there are only a handful of scholarly monographs dedicated to *fado* as performed by Portuguese emigrants in diaspora (Carvalho 1991 and Côte-Real 2010—both dealing with the *fado* community in Newark, NJ and based on the same 12 month period of fieldwork in 1990, as well as Valente 2008, Valente 2013, Valente and Nunes 2011, and Faria 2012—all dealing with *fado* performance by luso-descendants in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil). Other than these works, research on expressive culture in the Portuguese diaspora has been mostly limited to performative genres such as *ranchos folclóricos*, *bandas* and the Holy Ghost festival (see, for example, Holton 2005; Carvalho 1990; Klimt 2003; Chevalier 2003; Silva 2003; Monteiro 2003; Brucher 2009; Leal 2011).

5. *Fado* lyrical content varies widely based on subgenre, ranging, for example, from uptempo *fados* about horsemen and drinking featured in the jocular “*fado marialva*” to laments about unrequited love and nostalgic neighborhood spaces in “*fado mouraria*.” Despite this range, however, *fado* is often thought of, particularly overseas, as a genre of “sad songs.”

6. Radiating out from Newark, other hubs of Portuguese-American settlement have developed in towns and cities such as Elizabeth, Union, Kearny, North Arlington, and Perth Amboy, among other areas.

7. The Ironbound’s most recent *casa do fado*, Quebra Bilhas, was shuttered almost a decade ago. While this establishment was open, it featured *fado* performances on a weekly basis. Quebra Bilhas was closed in part because of a homicide which took place just outside the front door and involved a patron of the establishment. Before Quebra Bilhas, the second-floor space of what is now the Mediterranean Manor Restaurant served as an Ironbound *casa do fado*. Still, the space with the longest history of semi-regular *fado* performance in the Ironbound is a restaurant called El Pastor. A more recent addition to the semi-regular *fado* scene is an Ironbound restaurant called Pic-Nic.

8. Michael da Silva has since moved to Portugal for over a year and then returned to the U.S.

9. Pedro was the only one of the group born in Portugal. He came to the U.S. at the age of 13 which makes him part of the 1.5 generation (children in their early teens or younger who are brought to a new country by their emigrating parents), according to some definitions (see, for example, Modood 1997). Despite this difference, I am grouping Pedro in with the other second-generation singers because of his age and the fact that he is identified within the *fado* community as part of the new generation of young performers.

10. Everyone is a self-taught vocalist; Michael is also an occasional *fado* vocalist, but his main musical contribution is as a guitarist (*viola*), an instrument he learned in intensive tutorials with local *guitarrista* Alberto Resende and with various teachers in Portugal. With the exception of Nathalie, no close relatives of these five sing or play *fado*. After David and Kimberly began learning *fado*, they discovered that distant

relatives in Portugal had also sung *fado*. Nathalie's father was a *fado* enthusiast and musician and has been instrumental in her development as a vocalist.

11. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

12. New *fado* talent is also "discovered" through local contests and on a larger scale, Lisbon's annual *Grande Noite do Fado*. For more on the history of this competition, see Costa, 1994.

13. A *madrinha* (godmother) or *padrinho* (godfather), terminology drawn from catholic traditions of religious guardianship, is a special mentor who helps a younger musician advance in his/her career. For a dissertation which explores these very relationships among *fado* performers in Portugal, see Gonçalves forthcoming. For more on related forms and examples of "cultural kinship" in Portugal with regards to *rancholfolclórico* performance, see Holton, 2003, 2005.

14. For more on amateur *fado* performance, see Cordeiro, 1994; Gray 2005, 2007, 2013.

15. Incidentally, in 2008 Nathalie acquired a *madrinha* from Portugal, Anita Guerreiro. Natalie met Anita in Virginia where they shared a performance program and where Nathalie positively impressed the well-known Lisbon *fadista*. Subsequently, Nathalie was invited to Anita Guerreiro's *fado* house in Lisbon to perform and has since had several important conversations and exchanges with her *madrinha*. But the geographical distance between Nathalie's primary residence in NJ and Anita's primary residence in Lisbon, makes this more of a symbolic link than a practical long-term relationship of help and support. Also, Nathalie has since made many high-profile contacts and has secured performance engagements around the world. She is a bit of an exception in this way, compared to the other four *fadistas* profiled in this essay.

16. It is important to note that recorded music and internet technology is not solely used to learn *fado* overseas. As Lila Ellen Gray argues in her chapter on *fado* pedagogy among amateur *fadistas* in Lisbon, sound technology is a "salient component of *fado* learning" (2013, 54). However, its use at the time of her fieldwork in the 2000s, was blamed for repertoire diminishment and stylistic homogeneity. In Gray's study, even though the use of recorded sound was prevalent among *fado* learners, there seems to have been pressures to hide or try to avoid these strategies as much as possible. In my fieldsite, there is less of this pressure. Given the lack of other avenues of *fado* learning, (there are no *casas do fado*, for example, no large groups of *fado* veterans, and only one *guitarra* player in NJ), the use of internet technology and recorded sound for *fado* learning in NJ is openly practiced and readily accepted.

17. I once went to see Cristina Branco perform in New York at Symphony Space in October 2002. She spent most of the evening performing originals from her latest CD, but by the end of the night she launched into several classics that *fado* diva Amália Rodrigues made popular. Before beginning (the song) "Gaivota," she sighed into the microphone and explained to the audience: "*Fado* singers feel a lot of pressure, so much pressure, to sing new *fados*. But sometimes all you want to do is relax and sing the old ones."

18. A good example of this dynamic was illustrated in an exchange I had with local *guitarrista* José Luís Iglesias. I had been taking lessons with him on the *guitarra*, and

at one point I expressed my frustration at my lack of progress as an instrumentalist. I explained that I thought I had more to offer as a vocalist and especially liked the *fados* of Argentina Santos. We listened to a couple of my favorites together on YouTube during the lesson, and he said, “You should learn to sing them. That would fit in well here—no one sings Argentina Santos here.”

19. It is important to note the historical shift undergirding *fado* lyrics relating to love and romance. *Fado* scholars (Nery 2004; Gray 2013; Costa and Guerreiro 1984) have documented the turn to lyrics dealing with love as a mid-twentieth-century phenomenon related to *Estado Novo* censorship and an interest in increasing international tourism. During the 1950s as a result of *Estado Novo* censors, *fado* saw a shifting “of the lyrics toward clichés about romantic intimacy and loss and away from themes that critiqued the sociopolitical status quo” (Gray 2013, 96).

20. For a provocative discussion of the political pitfalls behind claims to genre transcendence, see James 2015a and James 20015b

21. According to Gomes (2011), Portuguese *fadistas* focus mostly on sorrow when singing about feelings of love, whereas North American singers like Celine Dion focus on how to lift yourself out of sorrow.

22. Although too large a topic to cover for the purposes of this article, the oppressive gender policies of the *Estado Novo* and their impact on social life and cultural production have received increasing scholarly attention over the last two decades. Literary studies have been a particularly fertile area for this line of inquiry (for two excellent, path-breaking studies, see: Owen 2000; Sadlier 1989). Social scientists and ethnomusicologists have covered gender less centrally in studies concerning *Estado Novo* cultural policy and its effects on popular culture (Melo 2001), traditional music (Castelo-Branco 1991), folklorization (Castelo-Branco and Branco, 2003), folklore performance (Holton 2005) and musical expression, including *fado* (Côrte-Real 2000).

23. Certain types of *fado*, like *fado marialva*, known for jocularity, upbeat irony and a kind of playful *machismo* obviously do not share the characteristics described here.

24. For an interesting comparative case, see Manuel Antunes da Cunha’s study of young, second and third generation Luso-descendants in France and the use of personal blogs which dialogue with notions of ethnic (in)visibility (2009).

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