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An Immense Portugal: The Fate of Being a Colonial Empire

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Abstract: In 1973, Brazilian musician Chico Buarque, in collaboration with Mozambican poet Ruy Guerra, composed *Fado Tropical* for the play *Calabar*. Set in the 16th century during the Dutch invasion of northeastern Brazil, the play tells the story of Calabar, a mixed-race entrepreneur who switches allegiances, shifting his support from the Portuguese Empire to aiding the Dutch Republic in its invasion. *Fado Tropical* satirizes the aspirations of the colonial elite, who dreamed of transforming Brazil into an "immense Portugal," awkwardly culminating in a "colonial empire." Written during Brazil's repressive military dictatorship and shortly before Portugal's Carnation Revolution, both the song and the play were initially censored. *Fado Tropical* skillfully employs the musical tradition of *fado* (Portugal's most renowned musical genre) to deliver a biting critique of colonialism. The article aims to analyze the song in relation to its historical period. The method used is a discussion of its poetic and musical construction, and how both elements interact with various socio-cultural movements—from modernism to the cultural and artistic critiques of oppression that followed the period of dictatorship. The conclusion is that the satire in this song also conveys a strong sense of nihilism, suggesting a future where Brazil, despite its vastness and immense potential, is doomed to always remain a colony—even if one day it becomes an empire, it will be colonial empire.

Keywords: Protest song. Carnation Revolution. Calabar. tropical fado.

Um imenso Portugal: o destino de ser um império colonial

Resumo: Em 1973, o músico brasileiro Chico Buarque, em colaboração com o poeta moçambicano Ruy Guerra, compôs "Fado Tropical" para a peça teatral *Calabar*. Situado no século XVI, durante a invasão holandesa do Nordeste brasileiro, a peça explora a história de Calabar, um empreendedor mestiço que muda de lado, deixando de apoiar o império português e passando a ajudar a república holandesa em sua invasão. "Fado Tropical" satiriza as aspirações da elite colonial, que desejava um Brasil transformado em um "imenso Portugal", desajeitadamente culminando num "império colonial". Escrita durante a repressiva ditadura militar do Brasil e pouco antes da Revolução dos Cravos de Portugal, tanto a música quanto a peça teatral foram inicialmente censuradas. "Fado Tropical" emprega habilmente a tradição musical do fado (o mais famoso gênero musical português) para fazer uma crítica ferina ao colonialismo. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar esta canção em relação ao seu período histórico. O método utilizado é a discussão de sua construção poética e musical, e como ambas dialogam com diversos movimentos socioculturais; do modernismo às críticas culturais e artísticas sobre a opressão, que sucederam o período da ditadura. A conclusão é que a sátira contida nesta canção também denota um forte sentimento de niilismo, sugerindo um futuro em que o Brasil, apesar de sua vastidão e imensos potenciais, está fadado a sempre permanecer como colônia, mesmo que um dia se torne um império, este será um império colonial.

Palavras-chave: canção de protesto. Revolução dos Cravos. Calabar. fado tropical.

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Historically, it has been observed that during times of social and political turmoil, artistic manifestations often flourish as acts of resistance, rising against repression to rally ideological support from the public. This is frequently achieved by exposing and denouncing persecution, censorship, social inequality, and individual injustices (Esche, 2008, p. 14). In music, several similar instances have emerged over the last century across the globe, such as the role of popular songs in protesting apartheid in South Africa (Vershbow, 2010). Music is often chosen as a means of protest against repressive regimes because, as the most intangible of all art forms, it has a unique ability to spread and evoke emotions in listeners, particularly those who share similar ideological perspectives.

In ancient Greece, the muses—immaterial beings who inspired both the arts and sciences—were believed to favor music for its unique power to stir strong emotions in listeners. Thus, music became known as "the art of the muses" (Murray, 2020, p. 13-24). When combined with other art forms—such as poetry in songs and operas, gesture and expression in dance and theatre, and more recently, cinema and video productions—music amplifies the emotional impact and intent of a work of art.

On its own, music is a form of expressive sound communication with its own syntax, conveyed through motifs, melodic phrases, harmonic cadences, rhythmic patterns, and more. Because music lacks semantics, it does not contain specific sounds to represent actions (verbs), qualities (adjectives) or things (nouns). If it did, it would reduce music to a more primitive and inefficient form of language. Music is much more than that. Although listening to, imagining, performing, and composing music shares cognitive resources with language processing, their functions are distinct, yet complementary. Music conveys expressive meaning, while language communicates semantic meaning. Expressive meaning is processed primarily by deeper regions in the brain, known as the limbic system. Semantic meaning, in contrast, is primarily processed in the outmost regions of the brain, known as the cortex. Figuratively and literally, the expressive power of music is deeper, faster, and more potent than the semantic meaning conveyed by language (Patel, 2008).

Together with the poetic lyrics of songs—especially popular songs—music amplifies the emotional impact of its intended meaning, enhancing its power to entertain socially and to entrain[1] groups, persuading many to feel, think, and act alike. Plato, the highly influential ancient Greek philosopher, recognized music's power in his works, particularly in *Republic* and *Laws*. He believed that music could indeed shape individual character and thereby influence social harmony. Plato expressed concern about certain types of music potentially corrupting society, advocating that music should promote virtue. He discouraged genres and styles of music that incited emotional outbursts or encouraged idleness (Plato, 1992).

It is no wonder that, throughout history, dominant classes—especially under repressive and dictatorial regimes—have feared the power of popular songs that challenge their interests. These regimes often resort to censorship, prosecution, and punishment of popular artists, composers, and performers who dare to convey messages against authoritarianism and oppression through music, theater, film, and other

[1] In music, "entrainment" refers to the synchronization of an organism's rhythmic processes (e.g., tapping a foot, clapping hands) with the perceived external rhythm of the music (e.g., tempo, beat). This phenomenon reflects the human capacity to interact with and align to auditory rhythmic cues.

art forms. It is profoundly true that: "all power emanates from the people"[2], a fact that oppressors are typically well aware of. Like the bull that powers the farmer's plough, the people are immensely strong yet often unaware of their collective power. This bull, a simple creature, is extremely useful when properly guided; however, if provoked, it can easily turn on its master and crush them. The same relationship exists between the people and the oppressive elite that governs them. This creates an inherently unstable and, therefore, dangerous social situation.

For the state, anything beyond its control—such as protest songs capable of rallying large groups and sparking social upheaval—is seen as a threat. Artists who produce such work are treated as enemies to be silenced. Consequently, a safe and effective strategy for composers of protest songs (especially those who are clever and resourceful), to spread their messages without drawing repressive attention and censorship is to disguise their intent with inferences, analogies, metaphors, sarcasm, and satire. This approach is exemplified in the song discussed in this article, *Fado Tropical* (Tropical Fado), created by the Brazilian composer Chico Buarque and the Mozambican poet Ruy Guerra. The song's hidden message appears to criticize Brazilian military oppression while simultaneously praising the Portuguese military's democratic uprising, known as the Carnation Revolution. The song also mocks the local, ostentatious elite who envision Brazil as a larger, awkward version of its former empire, satirizing this unfortunate and enduring subservience that could lead this vast land to become a "colonial empire". One of the goals of this article is to highlight these idiosyncrasies, contrasting them with the social context and political era of this protest song.

1. Distinct Directions

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Brazil and Portugal took paradoxically opposite political paths. On one side of the Atlantic, Brazil's democratic government under President Juscelino Kubitschek was in full swing, implementing an ambitious policy known as "fifty years in five" (Schwarcz, 2014, p. 131). This plan for rapid growth and national sovereignty likely raised concerns in Washington over its influence in South America. Kubitschek's approach aimed at swift economic development, social autonomy, and political independence—though it still allowed multinational corporations from the United States and Europe to establish subsidiaries throughout Brazil and reap large profit. Even so, this policy was perceived as pushing beyond the boundaries of international policy dictated by Washington. In this light, Brazil, with its vast size (almost half of South America) and potential power, was much like a bull carrying the farmer's plough—too powerful to be left unrestrained and unobserved. By the 1970s, Washington seemed wary that Kubitschek's emphasis on national sovereignty might awaken this "sleeping giant"[3], making it aware

[2] In Social Contract Theory, this notion is developed by philosophers like John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), positing that legitimate government derives its power from the consent of the governed. This idea aligns with the quote's emphasis on power originating from the people.

[3] The Brazilian National Anthem contains several passages comparing Brazil to a sleeping giant, such as "*Gigante pela própria natureza*" (Giant by nature itself) or "*Deitado eternamente em berço esplêndido*" (Eternally lying in a splendid cradle).

of both its own power and the shackles of oppression [foreign influence]. This giant, they feared, might then be tempted by communist ideology.

Kubitschek's presidency began in 1956 with his democratic election, followed in 1961 by President Jânio Quadros, who served less than seven months. Quadros stunned the nation when he abruptly resigned, citing "occult powers" as the cause of his departure, an explanation that left the public baffled (Silva, 1981, p. 201-228). He was succeeded by his vice president, João Goulart popularly known as "Jango", also in 1961. Goulart was the last president before the military dictatorship seized control in 1964. With Azorean[4] roots and coming from a wealthy landowning family, Jango, nevertheless, displayed socialist sympathies and political intentions. Soon after taking office, he proposed a series of social reforms, including free, universal education, a progressive tax system with higher rates for the wealthy, and, most controversially for the elite, land reform. This reform aimed to confiscate vast areas of unused land, divide it into smaller parcels, and redistribute it to landless farmers (De Vasconcelos Silva, 2019).

Needless to say, Jango was ousted before his term ended in 1964, fleeing the country as the military dictatorship took power with Washington's support, facing little local resistance. Ironically, this coup occurred on April 1st—April Fools' Day (Spektor, 2018).

On the other side of the Atlantic, Portugal was in the final years of a long "corporatist dictatorship"[5], a regime akin to fascism in its anti-communist, conservative, pro-Catholic, and ultra-nationalist tendencies. On April 24, 1974, the Carnation Revolution (*Revolução dos Cravos*, in Portuguese) took place in Lisbon, Portugal's capital. The military coup did the opposite of what Brazil's military had done ten years earlier, in 1964. In Brazil, the military, aligned with Washington's interests, seized control of the government without firing a single shot, ushering in 21 years of military dictatorship marked by repression, censorship, prosecution, torture, and death. In contrast, in 1974, the Portuguese military acted as a truly patriotic force. Rather than serving foreign interests, they overthrew their fascist government, ending a dictatorship that had ruled since 1933, initially under António Salazar (1933 to 1970) and later Marcelo Caetano (1970 to 1974). The Portuguese military restored democracy, freeing their country from 41 years of fascist oppression (Serrano, 2024).

The term "carnation" comes from the gesture of gratitude shown by locals, who placed red carnations in the barrels of soldiers' rifles to thank them for restoring democracy. This act resembles the hippie "Flower Power " movement of the 1960s' anti-Vietnam War protests, though here, the Portuguese people expressed thanks for the military for championing freedom and democracy. The Portuguese public also yearned for the end of the so-called Colonial War[6], a conflict in which Portugal fought against the

[4]The Azores is a Portuguese archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, located about 1,500 kilometers west of mainland Portugal. Comprising nine volcanic islands, it is renowned for its stunning natural beauty, featuring lush landscapes, volcanic craters, and hot springs.

[5]A corporatist dictatorship is a one-party rule (dictatorship) that incorporates business and labor groups into decision-making without granting them real power. Its aim is to maintain control and suppress dissent by bringing these groups under the regime's influence.

[6] The Colonial War in Portugal, also known as the African Wars of Independence, was a series of conflicts fought by Portugal against independence movements in its former African colonies in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These colonies included Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

independence movements of its former African colonies. Some historians such as Pinto (2015, p. 1-34), suggest that carnations became the symbol of this revolution because it unfolded peacefully and joyfully.

Interestingly, this image of people offering carnations—known for their distinctive clove-like fragrance—to soldiers bears a resemblance, however coincidental, to Jorge Amado's famous novel *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* (*Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*), published in 1958. Amado, a former member of the Communist Party (1947-1951) and recipient of many honors, including the Camões Prize[7]. Later in life, G*abriela* is considered Amado's first novel that does not directly denounce social inequalities and injustices. However, indirectly and between the lines, the novel appears rich with such references. It subtly reveals socioeconomic, political, ethnic, and gender inequalities, all within an otherwise naive, fictional romantic story. *Gabriela* is the most translated of all Amado's novels.

Chico Buarque, celebrated composer of *Música Popular Brasileira* (MPB)[8] and, like Amado, a fellow Camões Prize laureate. The two shared a close friendship as they frequently visited each other, especially when both were living in Rio de Janeiro and later in Paris (Silva, 2008).

Buarque and Amado undoubtedly shared many political, social, and ideological viewpoints, which ultimately made both of them targets of far-right opposition, aligning themselves with a commitment to what I consider to be the morally and humanistically right side of history. Over the ten years spanning the Brazilian military coup in 1964 and Portugal's democratic revolution in 1974, Buarque composed numerous protest songs, many laden with hidden, metaphorical, and satirical "Easter eggs"[9]. Among these, *Fado Tropical* stands out. Initially, it seems naive, sweet, and playful, like Amado's *Gabriela, Clove, and Cinnamon*, yet a closer look reveals it to be full of social criticism. The characteristics of this song are examined in the following section.

2. Fado in the Tropics

Fado is perhaps Portugal's most renown musical genre (Elliott, 2017. Gray, 2013). It often conveys themes of melancholy, nostalgic longing, and romantic impossibilities, typically sung in a sorrowful, lamenting voice. The genre is usually accompanied by the Portuguese guitar, a twelve-string instrument with pairs of steel strings. This unique instrument produces a distinctive sound characterized by its bright, percussive tones and vibrato (Cristo, 2014). The word *fado* can also be translated as "fate" or "destiny," a concept closely tied to *saudade*—a word often regarded as unique to the Portuguese language, though some scholars, like Leal (2000, p. 267-287), contest this notion. *Saudade* is deeply woven into *fado* culture,

[7] *Prémio Camões* (Camões Prize), named after the Portuguese poet Luís de Camões, is the most prestigious literary award in the Portuguese language. It was established in 1988 by the governments of Portugal and Brazil to honor authors who have made significant contributions to the literary and cultural heritage of the Portuguese language.

[8] *Música Popular Brasileira* (Portuguese for "Brazilian Popular Music"), also known as MPB, is a broad genre of popular music that emerged in Brazil in the late 1960s. It encompasses a diverse range of styles and influences, drawing from traditional Brazilian music, samba, bossa nova, international genres like jazz and rock, and social and political movements of the time (Albin, 1997).

[9] In the world of the internet and digital media, an easter egg is a hidden message, image, joke, or feature intentionally placed by creators. These can be found in websites, video games, software programs, and other digital spaces. Discovering them is like finding a little surprise, rewarding users who take the time to explore and be observant.

evoking a sense of longing for something lost or unattainable. This sentiment may have intensified with Portugal's 15th-century maritime explorations and the 16th-century phenomenon of Sebastianism[10].

In 1973, Chico Buarque composed the song *Fado Tropical* (translated as "Tropical Fado" in English. Napolitano (2003, p. 115-134) suggests that Buarque composed both the lyrics and melody of this song. Florent (2007), however, claims that *Fado Tropical* was a collaboration between Buarque and Ruy Guerra, a poet and filmmaker born in Mozambique, then still a Portuguese colony. It is likely that the two stanzas, which in the original recording are recited rather than sung by Guerra (shown in the following table in bold and quotation marks), were his unique contribution to the lyrics of the song.

Fado Tropical was specifically composed for the play *Calabar*, written by Buarque and Guerra. The full title of this play is *Calabar: O Elogio da Traição* ("Calabar: In Praise of Treason" in English). The play refers to João Fernandes Calabar, a 17th-century *Caboclo* (son of Portuguese and Indigenous parents), a wealthy trader and military leader who played a key role in the Dutch conquest of Pernambuco, Brazil, from the Portuguese empire[11]. Calabar is often seen as a complex and controversial figure—admired for his strategic skill but condemned for betraying the Portuguese Empire, in favor of the Dutch Republic. The phrase "*o elogio da traição*" ("the praise of treason") encourages a reexamination of Calabar's actions, challenging the conventional view of him as simply a traitor. Instead, it invites a deeper understanding of his motivations and the historical context in which he acted (Florent, 2007). This interpretative lens is relevant to the analysis of *Fado Tropical*, as discussed further.

In an interview, Guerra mentioned that he was involved in composing all the songs for *Calabar* (Guerra, 2017). The character Calabar, in the play of the same name, seems to resemble Macunaíma, the fictional protagonist of Mário de Andrade's 1928 novel of the same title. Andrade was one of the founders of the Brazilian Modernist Movement[12] which included notable authors such as Jorge Amado. Calabar and Macunaíma can both be seen as tricksters—often amoral characters who do whatever it takes, including changing allies or committing acts of treason, to achieve their goals and justify their actions.

As scholars like Souza (2017) have noted, this behavior reflects the actions of many members of the local elite dating back to colonial times. Their ideology continues to emphasize social distinction based on economic status, while simultaneously admiring and emulating foreign masters—from the former Kingdom of Portugal and the Dutch Republic (as portrayed in *Calabar*), to the British Empire and, more recently, the foreign plutocracy symbolized by Washington. The behavior of this local elite mirrors that of the overseers of former slaves, who managed slaves, livestock, land, businesses, and other menial tasks on behalf of their colonial masters, the actual owners. In some cases, their actions may even resemble those of the Jewish Kapos[13] in Nazi concentration camps, driven more by fear than by ambition.

[10] Sebastianism was a religious and political movement that emerged in Portugal after the death of King Sebastian I in the Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578.

[11] The Dutch Conquest of Pernambuco (1624-1654) was a significant episode in the history of Brazil. During this period, the Dutch West India Company seized control of the northeastern region of Pernambuco, a major sugar-producing area.

[12] The Brazilian Modernist Movement, flourishing from the 1920s to roughly the 1930s, was a cultural and artistic revolution that challenged established European aesthetics and sought to define a uniquely Brazilian identity.

[13] Jewish Kapos were Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps who were forced to serve as overseers or supervisors over other prisoners.

About a year before the Carnation Revolution, Buarque and Guerra submitted the full script and song lyrics for *Calabar* to the Brazilian military government's censorship office, as was required for all artistic productions at the time. The material was initially approved, allowing the production to invest in and gear up for the play, which was reportedly the most expensive production of its time[14]. However, three months later, on October 20, 1974, the same censorship department unexpectedly issued a prohibition. This order halted the play's premiere, banned its performance, prohibited the use of the name *Calabar*, and barred the entire text from any form of publication or distribution. This prohibition was lifted six years later.

It appears that the Brazilian military censors anticipated the impending democratic shift in their former colonial power, fearing that *Calabar* might encourage a similar movement in Brazil. Metaphorically, it was as if democratic winds from across the ocean had carried the clove-like fragrance of carnations from the rifles fighting for democratic freedom. Despite censorship and repression, *Calabar* and many other productions of that time helped ignite the democratic movement in Brazil, which ultimately led to the official end of the Brazilian military dictatorship 11 years later, in 1985.

Also in 1973, Buarque released an album titled *Chico Canta*[15]*.* It was originally intended to be called *Calabar*, as it featured all the songs from the play. However, due to military censorship banning the name, the album had to be renamed. This LP runs 30 minutes and 13 seconds (30:13) and contains the following 11 tracks:

(1) "Prólogo" (*Prologue*). Instrumental. Duration: 2:52
(2) "Cala a Boca, Bárbara" (*Shut Up, Barbara*). Song. Duration: 4:15
(3) "Tatuagem" (*Tattoo*). Song. Duration: 2:50
(4) "Ana de Amsterdam" (*Ana of Amsterdam*). Instrumental. Duration: 2:30
(5) "Bárbara" (*Barbara*). Song. Duration: 2:50
(6) "Não Existe Pecado ao Sul do Equador" / "Boi Voador Não Pode" (*There Is No Sin South of the Equator / Flying Ox Cannot*). Song. Duration: 3:57
(7) "Fado Tropical" (*Tropical Fado*). Song. Duration: 4:14
(8) "Tira as Mãos de Mim" (*Get Your Hands Off Me*). Song. Duration: 2:30
(9) "Cobra de Vidro" (*Glass Snake*). Song. Duration: 1:30
(10) "Vence na Vida Quem Diz Sim" (*Those Who Say Yes Win in Life*). Instrumental. Duration: 1:57
(11) "Fortaleza" (*Fortress*[16]). Song. Duration: 0:52

According to a 2005 interview with Buarque, many words, sentences, and even entire lyrics from this LP were censored by the military. This likely explains why tracks 1, 4, and 10 are instrumental versions (without lyrics)[17]. The play and its songs explore the ambiguity of who is the true traitor and who

[14] https://documentosrevelados.com.br/censura-a-peca-teatral-de-chico-buarque-e-rui-guerra/ (accessed in Sept. 2024).

[15] https://youtu.be/OAbEY_eTW2c?si=b95jDO9DJ7b-aG3D (accessed in Sept. 2024)

[16] Also referring to "Fortaleza", the name of the capital of the state of Ceará in Brazil, also invaded in the 17th-century by the Dutch empire.

[17] Recording on Youtube, possibly from 1974, where the song is performed with lyrics https://youtu.be/8WFb9vwWFMg?si=SuCBrnLRCG3Vt9Ff (accessed in Sept. 2024).

is the true hero, inviting the audience to reflect on the actual difference between them (MARTINS, 2005, p. 2). This moral ambivalence is often seen across both the elite and the oppressed in all cultures and has been widely depicted in art. For example, the classic novel *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, first published in 1862, tells the story of Jean Valjean, a man imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his starving family. Is he a villain or a hero? Who are the true "*misérables*" in this story? More recently, the 2019 South Korean dark comedy *Parasite*, written and directed by Bong Joon-ho, portrays a poor, opportunistic family crammed into a dingy basement apartment who scheme their way into working for an obscenely wealthy family, completely disconnected from life's hardship. Who, then, are the actual "parasites" of society?

In *Fado Tropical*, the lyrics convey the local elite's ambivalent desire to keep this vast tropical land as a colony of its empire or, if growth is inevitable, to mold it into a "colonial empire,"—a tacky version of Portugal—rather than embracing an anthropophagic[18] approach.

The following table presents the full lyrics of the song, with the original text on the left and the translation on the right (translated by the author). Passages in bold and quotation marks are not sung but recited. In the original recording, Guerra's voice, with its distinct Mozambican Portuguese accent, delivers these recitations, while Buarque sings the melody in his Brazilian *Carioca* accent[19].

Fado Tropical	*Tropical Fado*
Oh, musa do meu fado	Oh, muse of my fado
Oh, minha mãe gentil	Oh, my gentle mother
Te deixo consternado	I leave you dismayed
No primeiro abril	On the first of April
Mas não sê tão ingrata	But don't be so ungrateful
Não esquece quem te amou	Don't forget who loved you
E em tua densa mata	And in your dense forest
Se perdeu e se encontrou	Was lost and found himself
Ai, esta terra ainda vai cumprir seu ideal	Oh, this land will still fulfill its ideal
Ainda vai tornar-se um imenso Portugal	Still, it will become an immense Portugal
"Sabe, no fundo eu sou um sentimental	**"You know, deep down, I'm a sentimentalist**
Todos nós herdamos no sangue lusitano uma boa dosagem de lirismo (além da sífilis, é claro)	**We all inherit in our Lusitanian blood a good dose of lyricism (along with syphilis, of course)**
Mesmo quando as minhas mãos estão ocupadas em torturar, esganar, trucidar	**Even when my hands are busy torturing, strangling, butchering**
Meu coração fecha os olhos e sinceramente chora..."	**My heart closes its eyes and sincerely weeps..."**
Com avencas na caatinga	With maidenhair ferns in the caatinga
Alecrins no canavial	Rosemary in the sugarcane field
Licores na moringa	Liqueurs in the clay jug
Um vinho tropical	A tropical wine
E a linda mulata	And close-ups of the beautiful *mulata*
Com rendas do Alentejo	In Alentejo lace
De quem numa bravata	From whom, in a bravado
Arrebata um beijo	Steals a kiss
Ai, esta terra ainda vai cumprir seu ideal	Oh, this land will still fulfil its ideal
Ainda vai tornar-se um imenso Portugal	Still, it will become an immense Portugal.

[18] Anthropophagy, in the context of Brazilian Modernism, refers to the idea of devouring or absorbing foreign cultural influences and transforming them into something uniquely Brazilian.

[19] https://youtu.be/NfjaFMah7sE?si=1UvVYl5qWW2Rliaw (accessed in Sept. 2024).

"Meu coração tem um sereno jeito	**"My heart has a serene way**
E as minhas mãos o golpe duro e presto	**And my hands, a hard and swift blow**
De tal maneira que, depois de feito	**So that, once it's done**
Desencontrado, eu mesmo me contesto	**Conflicted, I even question myself**
Se trago as mãos distantes do meu peito	**If I keep my hands distant from my chest**
É que há distância entre intenção e gesto	**It's because there's a distance between intention and action**
E se o meu coração nas mãos estreito	**And if my heart in tight hands**
Me assombra a súbita impressão de incesto	**Haunt me by the sudden impression of incest**
Quando me encontro no calor da luta	**When I find myself in the heat of battle**
Ostento a aguda empunhadura à proa	**I brandish the sharp blade at the bow**
Mas meu peito se desabotoa	**But my chest unbuttons itself**
E se a sentença se anuncia bruta	**And if the sentence appears brutal**
Mais que depressa a mão cega executa	**The blind hand quickly executes it**
Pois que senão o coração perdoa"	**For otherwise, the heart would forgive."**
Guitarras e sanfonas	Guitars and accordions
Jasmins, coqueiros, fontes	Jasmines, coconut trees, fountains
Sardinhas, mandioca	Sardines, cassava
Num suave azulejo	On a smooth tile
E o rio Amazonas	And the Amazon River
Que corre Trás-os-Montes	Flowing through Trás-os-Montes
E numa pororoca	And in a tidal bore
Deságua no Tejo	Empties into the Tagus
Ai, esta terra ainda vai cumprir seu ideal	Oh, this land will still fulfill its ideal
Ainda vai tornar-se um império colonial	It will still become a colonial empire
Ai, esta terra ainda vai cumprir seu ideal	Oh, this land will still fulfill its ideal
Ainda vai tornar-se um império colonial	Still it will become a colonial empire.

Table 1: *Fado Tropical* lyrics in original Portuguese and English translation

Some important academic works, such as Florent (2007), suggest that the primary message of this song is focused on creating ironic Luso-tropical allegories. However, the satirical content of *Fado Tropical* seems to extend beyond that. This is especially evident in the fatalistic, even nihilistic line: "Oh, this land will still fulfill its ideal. Still, it will become a colonial empire". The lyrics, melody, and recited poetry in *Fado Tropical* appear to criticize the local elite's efforts to transform the colony—where they live, exploit, and profit from inequality—into a stereotypical, exaggerated, and corny version of their ideal society. Two examples of these ironic contrasts in the lyrics include the verses: "Rosemary in the sugarcane field" and "A tropical wine".

Musically, this song has a straightforward pulse and a familiar, almost cliché epic tone. Its style resembles the punctuated, solemn rhythm and chord progression alternating between minor and major keys, similar to some famous Portuguese songs, such as *Vinho Verde*, composed by Paulo Alexandre in 1977. *Fado Tropical* begins with a solo on Portuguese guitar, a characteristic feature in many fados. The notation of this melody is shown in the following figure.

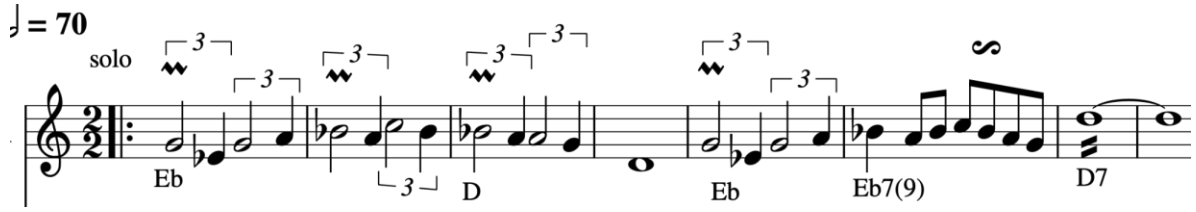


Fig. 1: Excerpt from *Fado Tropical*'s introduction, played on Portuguese guitar.

The lyrics begin on the dominant chord D7 as Buarque sings the first verse, here translated as: "Oh, muse of my fado," resolving[20] in the minor tonic Gm as he sings the second verse: "Oh, my gentle mother". This progression seems to reflect an association commonly found in literature —such as in *Os Lusíadas* (Camoes, 1572) and the lyrics of the Brazilian National Anthem[21] —that links "muse" with "mother" and "homeland".

Next, on the dominant chord F7, he sings: "I leave you dismayed", resolving to its tonic Bb with "On the first of April". This line appears to reference the military coup that took place on April Fool's Day of 1964 (officially moved to March 31st in historical records, possibly to avoid inevitable historical embarrassment. In the fifth verse of this first stanza, over the dominant chord of G7, Buarque sings: "But don't be so ungrateful", resolving in Cm with "Don't forget who loved you". Then, on the dominant chord A7: "And in your dense forest" resolving in D7 with: "Was lost and found himself". The melody and chords of this excerpt are shown in the following figure.

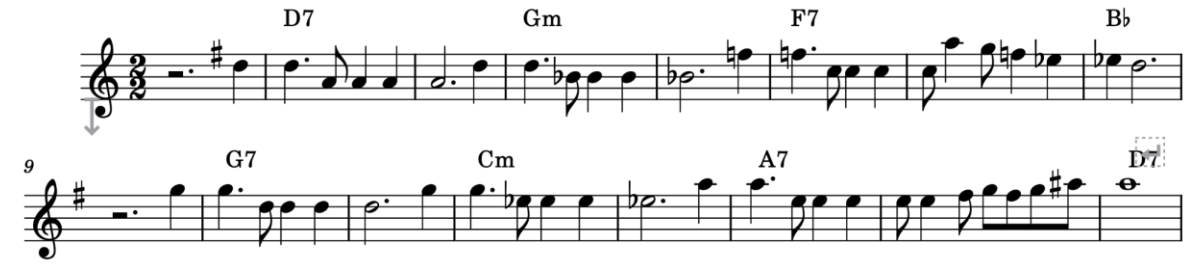


Fig. 2: Excerpt of the melody and chords of the first stanza of the *Fado Tropical*.

This refrain reaches its climax in a melodic pattern typical of many fados. The vocal line echoes the introduction, but the lyrics now convey a resounding wish, a flash of insight that culminates in an unwavering declaration. Meanwhile, the harmony shifts back and forth in half-step modulations, from D to

[20] In traditional tonal music, a dominant chord, characterized by its tritone, tends to resolve its tension by moving to a chord located 7 semitones below (or equivalently, 5 semitones above) or to a chord one semitone below. When the resolving chord is minor (due to the minor third interval from its root), this cadence often imparts a melancholic nuance, though there are numerous counterexamples in music history. If the resolving chord is also dominant, the cadence creates the effect of one tension being replaced by another.

[21] https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/hino.htm

Eb. Beginning on Eb, the line "Oh, this land will still fulfill its ideal" is sung, resolving to D, then rising again to Eb for "Still, it will become an immense Portugal", where the melody reaches its highest note, and the harmony returns to D, dramatically reinforcing the statement. This melody and harmony are illustrated in the following figure.

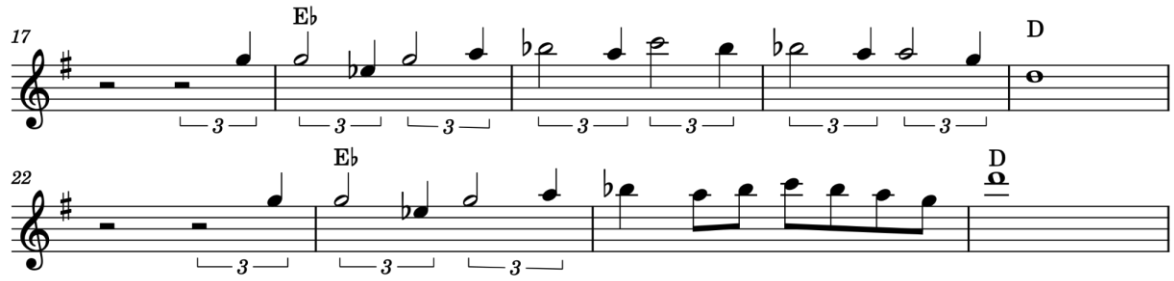


Fig. 3: Excerpt of the refrain of the song *Fado Tropical*.

The lyrics are filled with amusing, deliberately contrasting comparisons that humorously depict idiosyncratic situations and improbable associations, such as "Maidenhair ferns in the caatinga"[22], a semi-arid biome far too hot and dry for these delicate plants; "Rosemary in the sugarcane field"; or the challenge of producing "A tropical wine", given that winemaking requires a temperate climate like that of Mediterranean Portugal, vastly different from Brazil's tropical heat.

In the recited sections, phrases that are more shocking than amusing are presented with impeccable poetic prosody, likely crafted by Guerra. This is evident in the following passage: "When I find myself in the heat of battle, I brandish the sharp blade at the bow. But my chest unbuttons itself. And if the sentence appears brutal, the blind hand quickly executes it; for otherwise the heart would forgive". This passage seems to capture Calabar's dual nature, oscillating between emotion and reason, aggression and affection—expressing a warm, forgiving temperament while still capable of the most horrendous and cruel acts when necessary.

At the end of this stanza, the final satirical twist in the sung lyrics replaces the earlier "immense Portugal" with "colonial empire", serving as biting satire on what has recurred throughout Brazilian history—its perpetual return to a colonial state. Even if this land one day becomes an empire, it seems destined to be a colonial empire.

[22] Caatinga is a biome found exclusively in Brazil, distinguished by its harsh semi-arid climate, unpredictable rainfall, and extended droughts that shape its rare and resilient ecosystems.

3. More of the Same

In analyzing *Fado Tropical*, this article also aims to offer insight into the complex, multifaceted process of enculturation that has shaped Brazil since its colonization, continued through the military dictatorship period when the song was composed, and persists to the present day. This colonial mindset is so deeply entrenched that challenging it is almost like defying a Gestalt[23] principle. It creates a kind of shared illusion, where most people perceive and respond to it in similar ways—even those fully aware of its underlying falsehood, cruelty, and unsustainability. Indeed, we are all products of our time and history.

There is a famous quote, often attributed to Henry Ford but now debunked, about why he began building and selling cars without first conducting market research during a time when land transportation was almost exclusively horse drawn. Ford famously quipped, "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses". Most people initially resist unfamiliar ideas, and creativity and innovation are rare, often sparking ideas that are initially rejected simply because they are new. It's difficult to break free from ingrained habits and social ideologies. This phenomenon is characterized here as the *cultura do vira-lata* ("culture of the mutt")—a satirical term coined in the mid-20th century by Nelson Rodrigues, a brilliant and controversial Brazilian journalist, writer, and playwright. The term refers to a perceived inferiority complex among many Brazilians in relation to people from developed nations, particularly the USA and Europe. This feeling of being a mutt among purebred dogs seems to have been ingrained through centuries of colonialism and reinforced by marketing, mass media, television, cinema, and social media, which perpetuate the belief that the highest aspiration for this vast land is to achieve the status of a colonial empire.

I had initially chosen the word "humongous" instead of "immense" for the title of this article to emphasize the somewhat unwieldy nature of this metaphorical sleeping giant. The inculcation of a colonial mindset makes any decolonization effort met with fear and resentment, not only by the local elite but also by the so-called *pobres de direita*, the "right-wing poor"—a phenomenon now seen worldwide (Huber, 2007). As in many other third-world countries, this mindset seems to underpin an eternal return to a colonial state, perpetually subservient to the prevailing superpower and quick to switch allegiances, as Calabar did, whenever necessary. Today, a similar process is underway as the global economy gradually shifts from west to east, signaling a new geopolitical world order. Once again, this seems to be the fate of this vast southern land below the equator, where "there are no sins"[24], whether humanitarian or environmental.

As stated in the Brazilian National Anthem, this land is metaphorically portrayed as a kind of Sleeping Beauty[25], waiting to be awakened by a non-existent enchanted prince. This "*gigante pela própria natureza*" (giant by its very nature) "*deitado eternamente em berço esplêndido*" (forever laid in a splendid cradle) resembles more a drowsy, colossal figure doomed to an eternal slumber, never to be awakened.

[23] Gestalt is a psychological theory that emphasizes the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It suggests that we perceive objects and situations as organized wholes, rather than as individual elements. This theory is often used to explain how we perceive visual patterns, auditory information, and even social interactions.

[24] As mentioned in the previous track of the aforementioned album "*Chico canta*" ("There is no sin south of the Equator", or in Portuguese: "*Não Existe Pecado ao Sul do Equador*").

[25] The most well-known version of Sleeping Beauty is the one popularised by the French author Charles Perrault in his 1697 collection of fairy tales, "Stories of the Past and Present."

The few brave (or perhaps foolish) souls with the will, courage, skills, and opportunity to attempt such an awakening were silenced, deported, imprisoned, or destroyed. These individuals, whose names and histories can be found in many official sources such as Brasil (2014), were often chased off, metaphorically speaking, by both the overseers of this eternal slumber and the giant itself, embodied by its people. This is the result of a carefully constructed notion of "second-class citizenship" (Souza, 2003).

Even the very name, "Brasileiro" reflects this. In English, "Brasileiro" is translated as "Brazilian", a euphemism for citizens of Brazil. However, the suffix -*eiro* in Portuguese, derived from the Latin -*arius*, often denotes objects (such as *cinzeiro* for ashtray), plants (*limoeiro* for lemon tree), and, more specifically, working-class occupations, such as *lixeiro* (garbage collector), *carpinteiro* (carpenter), *mineiro* (miner), *enfermeiro* (nurse), and so forth. This differs from names given to professions praised by the elite, like *médico* (doctor), *advogado* (lawyer), *juiz* (judge), and *político* (politician). Curiously, no other nationality in Portuguese uses this suffix (e.g. *Português* for Portuguese, *Japonês* for Japanese, *Argentino* for Argentine, *Cubano* for Cuban, etc.). The origins of this distinction trace back to colonial times, when in the 16th century, local woodcutters were hired to clear the forests of *Pau-brasil*[26] [Brazilwood] for minimal wages, enriching their European masters. The extraction of valuable wood led to the devastation of entire ecosystems[27], and these workers came to be known, often pejoratively, as "Brasileiros" by their overseers.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Brazil received large waves of immigrants from Italy, Germany, and Japan (Oliveira, 2002, p. 74)—the very countries that, during World War II, formed the Axis Powers[28], sharing ideologies of ultranationalism, authoritarianism, and anti-communism[29]. In the 1930s, Brazil was home to the largest fascist party outside Europe, the Brazilian Integralist Action (*Ação Integralista Brasileira*, AIB), which attracted approximately one million members. The lavishly named "land of carnival"[30] reveals an ambivalence similar to that of Calabar, particularly in the recited part of the song, where he appears both warm-hearted and yet cruel and violent. This deeply ingrained authoritarian and controversial root acts as a powerful gravitational force, pulling back and crushing any socio-cultural movement that challenges the colonial mindset. These movements may launch meaningful changes that seem to soar for a time but ultimately plummet, never quite reaching the necessary escape velocity[31]. In this somber scenario,

[26] Also known as Brazilwood or Pernambuco wood, *Paubrasilia echinata* is a tree species native to Brazil's Atlantic Forest and is recognized as the country's national tree. It is distinguished by its striking red heartwood, which has been used as a dye since the 16th century. In fact, the name "Brazil" comes from the Portuguese term for this tree, "pau-brasil" (from *brasa* meaning ember).

[27] The extraction of *pau-brasil* in the 17th century led to the destruction of vast areas of the *Mata Atlântica*, a once-extensive rainforest that covered much of Brazil's coastal region.

[28] The Axis Powers were a military alliance formed during World War II. The main members of the Axis Powers were: Germany, Italy, Japan. Later, other countries also joined the Axis Powers, at various points during the war, including Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia.

[29] **Ultranationalism**: Each of the three countries embraced an extreme form of nationalism, viewing their nation as superior and destined for greatness, which fueled their expansionist ambitions.

Authoritarianism: Each nation was ruled by a dictator who suppressed dissent and concentrated power. This included Adolf Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy, and the Emperor of Japan serving as a figurehead for a militaristic government.

Anti-Communism: The Axis powers were vehemently opposed to communism, fearing its spread and threat to their control.

[30] Brazil is known as the "Land of Carnival" due to its world-renowned Carnival celebrations.

[31] Escape velocity refers to the minimum speed an object needs to achieve to break free from the gravitational pull of a celestial body (like a planet, moon, or star) and escape into outer space, never to return.

the options for contemporary "slaves" appear to be either desperate revolt (as seen in those who challenged the status quo and failed) or a safe, satirical nihilism—a stance I subscribe to and find depicted in many great works, such as Andrade's *Macunaíma*, Amado's *Gabriela*, or Buarque's *Fado Tropical*.

4. So Much Sea, So Few Seeds

In 1975, one year after the Carnation Revolution, Chico Buarque composed the song *Tanto Mar*, or in English, "So Much Sea". Initially, the lyrics were as follows:

Tanto Mar	So Much Sea
Sei que estás em festa, pá	I know you're partying, man
Fico contente	I'm glad
E enquanto estou ausente	And while I'm away
Guarda um cravo pra mim	Save a carnation for me
Eu queria estar na festa, pá	I wish I was at the party, man
Com a tua gente	With your people
E colher pessoalmente	And personally pick
Uma flor do teu jardim	A flower from your garden
Sei que há léguas a nos separar	I know there are leagues between us
Tanto mar, tanto mar	So much sea, so much sea
Sei também que é preciso, pá	I know too that it's necessary, man
Navegar, navegar	To sail, to sail
Lá faz primavera, pá	Over there, it's spring, man
Cá estou doente	Here, I'm sick
Manda urgentemente	Send urgently
Algum cheirinho de alecrim	A hint of rosemary scent

Table 2: *Tanto Mar* (1975) lyrics in original Portuguese and English translation

This song expresses the composer's satisfaction with the restoration of democracy in Portugal and his hope for a similar transformation in Brazil, despite the "so much sea" that separates these countries, both geographically and ideologically. According to de Oliveira (2017, p. 73-87), the lyrics in *Tanto Mar* seem to allude to the poem *Isto* ("This"), published in 1915 by Fernando Pessoa[32], particularly the famous line: "*navegar é preciso, viver não é preciso*", which can be translated either as "to sail is necessary, to live is not necessary" or "to sail is precise, to live is not precise". This interdiscursivity[33], as de Oliveira (2017) notes, also connects with a famous quotation attributed to the Roman general Pompey. Around 70 BC, Pompey, facing famine in Rome, encouraged his crew to undertake a dangerous voyage to transport wheat from the provinces with the words, "It is necessary to sail, it is not necessary to live". This rhetorical device, grounded in intertextuality, creates a concessive relationship of overcoming adversity, symbolized by the sea, which the protagonist, cast as a seeker, is destined to navigate.

[32] Pessoa was one of the most renown Portuguese poets and wrote under many heteronyms. This poem was authored by Alberto Caeiro, a shepherd-poet who embodies a simple, rustic worldview.

[33] Interdiscursivity is a linguistic concept that refers to the ways in which different discourses or types of language interact and influence each other within a text.

In Buarque's lyrics, this allusion seems to reflect the unpredictability of social change and political upheaval—forces we can and should plan to "navigate" precisely, while acknowledging that the future is unpredictable and may surprise us with unforeseen outcomes, whether good or bad.

Three years later, in 1978, Buarque released a new version of this song, now with slightly different lyrics, as shown in the following table. The changes in the verses are highlighted in bold.

Tanto Mar, revised (1978)	***So Much Sea***, revised 1978
Foi bonita a festa, pá	It was a beautiful party, man
fiquei contente	I was glad
'inda guardo renitente,	I still hold on stubbornly
um velho cravo para mim	To an old carnation for myself
Já murcharam tua festa, pá	**Your party has withered, man**
mas, certamente	**But, surely**
esqueceram uma semente	**They left a seed**
nalgum canto de jardim	**In some corner of the garden**
Sei que há léguas a nos separar	I know there are leagues between us
tanto mar, tanto mar	So much sea, so much sea
Sei também como é preciso, pá	I also know how necessary it is, man
navegar, navegar	To sail, to sail
Canta a Primavera, pá	Spring is singing, man
cá estou carente	Here I am, longing
manda novamente	Send once again
algum cheirinho de alecrim	A hint of rosemary scent

Table 2: *Tanto Mar* (1978) revised lyrics in original Portuguese and English translation (changes are highlighted in bold.)

This change in the lyrics seems to reflect the author's concern with the turbulent political period[34] in Portugal following the Carnation Revolution, while also expressing optimism that the "seeds of democracy" had been sown and would eventually sprout. Seven years later, some of these seeds indeed appeared to have taken root in Brazil: in 1985, the first civilian Brazilian president took office after 21 years of military dictatorship. Over three decades later, Brazil's still fragile democracy was once again challenged by the rise of far-right ideologies. In 2016, President Dilma Rousseff was impeached on a technicality, paving the way for the far-right's rise to power. On January 8, 2023, thousands of supporters of the defeated far-right presidential candidate invaded the capital, Brasília. Shortly after the inauguration of his progressive successor, this mob trespassed, invaded, and vandalized multiple federal government buildings. The attack was carried out in a manner similar to the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. (Phillips, 2023).

These events resonate as signs of a new wave of anti-democratic violence, neoliberalism, and a push toward techno-feudalism[35]. The far-right rose to power through massive internet campaigns, spreading social media posts filled with alarming fake news. These posts disappear immediately after being viewed, similar to the ephemeral messages on platforms like Facebook, leaving no trace when the page

[34] The Ongoing Revolutionary Process (Portuguese: *Processo Revolucionário em Curso*, PREC) marked the transitional period in Portugal following the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, which overthrew the authoritarian regime of Salazar and Caetano. The PREC concluded with the defeat of a subsequent left-wing coup attempt on November 25, 1975.

[35] Techno-feudalism is a term coined to describe a hypothetical future society where technology has become so powerful and concentrated in the hands of a few that it resembles a feudal system.

refreshes. However, they can have a lasting impact on the user's ideology. This type of mass propaganda on social media is highly effective, as each post is a custom-made piece of fake news, carefully designed to target individual users based on the platform's collected data about them[36].

In conclusion, the same ideological sea divides the two Brazils. As noted in Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (translated as *Masters and Slaves*), there is the Brazil of the masters—or more accurately, the "overseers" acting on behalf of foreign masters—and the Brazil of the slaves, comprising the rest of the population. Today, while global geopolitics undergo tectonic shifts and environmental crises loom larger, unveiling a bleak, dystopian future, Chico Buarque remains an active cultural force. This year, he turned eighty, coinciding with both the fiftieth anniversary of the Carnation Revolution and the sixtieth anniversary of the infamous April 1st Brazilian military coup. Buarque continues to be one of Brazil's greatest popular composers and is internationally recognized as a major cultural figure. He is among the few who, with quiet yet resolute conviction, have remained on the right side of history, as history will ultimately reflect.

Tanto Mar serves as a clever reminder that to be Brazilian, a true *brasileiro*, is to be fated to adapt constantly to changing circumstances. This requires proactive resilience, much like that of a low-wage worker who must continually labor just to survive—becoming less of a "human being" and more of a "human doing". As suggested by the title of Castor's book (2003), which echoes a prophetic phrase attributed to Tom Jobim, another of Brazil's great composers and Buarque's frequent collaborator, "Brazil is Not for Amateurs".

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[36] As with Cambridge Analytica, which from 2013 to 2018 harvested Facebook data from millions of users without their explicit consent and used this data for political targeting, the company played a major role in influencing elections worldwide and contributed to the global rise of the far-right.

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