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Post Dictatorships, Cosmopolitanism, Punk and Post-punk in Portugal and Spain from 1974 to 1984

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to analyze how socio-political changes in the Iberian Peninsula, in the post-dictatorial period affected the course of youth cultures and the penetration of cosmopolitanism. Through a documentary analysis, we examined the differences/similarities among youth cultures with a focus on the emergence of the Portuguese (post-punk) movement in the late 1970s, the 1980s boom of Bairro Alto and the night in Lisbon, and the 1980s musical and cultural scene of La Movida in Spain. This research promotes knowledge outside the Anglo-American worldview, as a starting point for an analysis of the -unknown dynamics of the Iberian Peninsula.

Keywords

cosmopolitanism; Iberian Peninsula; La Movida; youth cultures; post-punk; punk

Introduction

While Spain and Portugal share many historical developments and cultural interactions (Fishman and Lizardo), few studies have compared the evolution of popular music in these countries.¹ In this article, we compare the emergence and adoption of punk and post-punk music in Spain and Portugal. The punk explosion happened in the late 1970s, when Portugal and Spain were immersed in political transitions after long dictatorships. The arrival of punk music in parallel with the development of a democratic system generated diverse youth cultures and music scenes that explored politics through music. We consider the Iberian reality fruitful for two reasons: it has crucial particularities, enabling a better understanding of youth cultures and their different political contexts; and the two realities are far from homogenous.

Despite their geographical proximity, the youth cultures of these countries are the result of different realities, particularly different models of democratic transition: in Portugal, a revolution that broke with the past; in Spain, a democratic transition initiated by political elites. We follow Fishman and Lizardo's analysis of the political transitions that occurred in Portugal and Spain. They maintain that the two transitions were deeply different. Portugal moved to democracy through a process of social revolution and Spain through a consensus-oriented transformation led by reformers. This generated different

cultural dispositions in Portugal and Spain, leading cultural consumers to be more omnivorous in Portugal than in Spain (Guerra, “Iberian Punk”).

Our hypothesis is that the different evolutionary trajectories of (post-)punk music in Portugal and Spain resulted from different political transitions. If punk in Portugal originally had an explicit political focus (Guerra, *A instável leveza*), the first punk and post-punk bands in Spain, mainly in the scenes that emerged in Madrid, adopted an ironic view of political facts (Fouce, *El futuro*; Val Ripollés, *Rockeros*). To understand the adoption of punk music in the two countries, we will apply the concept of cultural cosmopolitanism (Regev, *Pop-Rock*), showing how the new, young middle classes played a central role. To prove this hypothesis, we will analyze the historical contexts in Spain and in Portugal from 1974 to 1984, locating the musical issues within them, and relating the appearance of these musical scenes to the development of an esthetic cosmopolitanism. We will then analyze the reception and evolution of punk music in Portugal and Spain to delve deeper into the development of (post-)punk scenes in these countries. Both scenes will be analyzed to show how the respective political transitions affected the development of punk music.

From a methodological viewpoint, this article is based on Guerra’s (*A instável leveza*) research on alternative music scenes in Portugal and Val Ripollés’ (*Rockeros*) work on popular music in Spain. For the Portuguese case (Guerra, “Keep It Rocking”), our analysis was based on 198 in-depth interviews conducted between 2008 and 2010 with individuals of different social backgrounds, geographical locations, ages, professional categories, and genders, whose discourses and representations were analyzed. Interviewees were selected using a snowball sampling method, following the contacts of the actors, through an initial database referenced by the research team. The selection was intended to be as broad as possible in terms of generation, gender, space, role, and (post-)punk subgenres (Guerra, “Keep It Rocking,” “Raw Power”). The interviewees have a past or present participation in the Portuguese scene, as musicians, promoters, editors, critics, intermediaries, or consumers. A script with 50 categories was used, with responses transcribed and subjected to classical content analysis and/or other discourse analysis – quantitative and/or qualitative.² Regarding the Spanish case, two types of data-collection techniques were used: an analysis of music and cultural magazines and in-depth interviews (Val Ripollés, *Rockeros*). Analysis of the magazines gave us a first-hand look at the discourses and evaluations of the music scenes in their historical context, allowing us to reconstruct the popular music field and the debates within it. Twelve magazines and almost a thousand articles were analyzed. About the interviews, 21 were conducted. In selecting interviewees, the objective was to find a variety of voices with distinct experiences of those years, seeking a representation of the various institutions and agents in the music field (music, journalist, labels, fans . . .). The analysis of the interviews followed a classical content analysis.

The 1980s: Post Dictatorships and Cultural Revolution in the Iberian Peninsula

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by political change in Portugal. The Revolution of 25 April 1974 accelerated all facets of Portuguese life – social, cultural, and educational, opening to the exterior and so on. Before this date, Portuguese society had been

homogeneous, with little ethnic, cultural, or religious diversity – at least visibly. Portugal was a closed, poor, homogeneous country with a poor civil society (Barreto). After 25 April 1974, the chrysalis of change that would materialize most effectively in the 1980s began to emerge.

The 1980s saw profound changes for a Portugal that had just emerged from the revolutionary period and was in a phase of democratic stabilization: a remarkable expansion of purchasing power and of the middle classes; the process of agreement to the European Economic Community (EEC), which resulted in an influx of community investments; the breaking of international isolation and the end of customs barriers; a strong process of secularization; a constitutional consensus limited by successive political crises, minority governments, and repeated elections; the tertiarization of the Portuguese society; a progressive aging of the population and a decrease in the size of the household; longer average schooling; and the emergence of a (still incipient) mass culture, among other indicators (Loff). It was a time when the sense of migration began to reverse, with immigration beginning from the former African colonies and Brazil, which in the mid-1990s brought the resident foreign population to 2% of the total population (Barreto). Various population groups were integrated into society, such as women in the labor market and younger children in school. Specific youth cultures emerged, associated with extended schooling and an economic evolution that allowed young people to become a separate social layer. The changes in Portuguese culture in the 1980s constituted a real cultural revolution. Many Portuguese artists felt it was time to break with the dominant culture: the chosen path was thus a modernism receptivity, and all this implied in terms of the role of art and the artist (Nogueira). The Portuguese rock boom also emerged from this cultural broth that, despite some controversy regarding its timeframe, occurred between 1980 and 1984 – a short but extremely fruitful period, which nonetheless benefits from the shrapnel left by some bands and artists who, in previous decades, namely the 1950s and 1960s, inscribed themselves in the sphere of *ié-ié* and progressive rock. Here the break was made with what had traditionally been considered national, particularly intervention music and *fado*. The influences came from other quarters, particularly Anglo-Saxon culture (Guerra, *A instável leveza*).

In Spain, the death of the dictator Franco in 1975 and the approval of the Spanish constitution in 1978 led to major social change. In 1975, after Franco's death, the regime had two central problems: the (necessary) political democratization, and the economic crisis of the oil price, which seriously affected Spain. The Democratic Transition – a negotiated reform/compromised agreement – was only possible due to the consensus reached at three levels: social (Covenant of Moncloa), political (Constitution) and autonomic, with the Organic Law for the Harmonization of the Autonomous Process (LOAPA) (Varela). Despite the attempted *coup d'état* on 23 February 1981, there were numerous changes: the transition from a dictatorial regime to a representative democracy with free elections and freedom of the press; the shift from a protected economy to a market economic model; and the acceleration of an urbanization process that was already happening (González and Requena).

As Fishman and Lizardo point out, however, while Portugal's revolutionary path to democracy quickly induced a major transformation of social structures, the consensus-oriented regime transition in Spain was largely limited to a remaking of political institutions, leaving other spheres relatively untouched (217). The whole process was coopted

by the political elites (Morán), despite some social movements, such as the neighborhoods movement, attempting to create spaces for an active citizenship. Those movements were dissembled by the political parties (Quintana and León), leaving a feeling of disenchantment among some Spanish citizens against the general process of transition (Vilarós). For some authors (Martínez), the political elites in Spain created a “Culture of the Transition,” defined as rules, codes, and patterns of conduct about what issues were likely to be addressed and what optics were required to do so. Those cultural products that tried to problematize the Spanish transition were therefore marginalized. As we will see, this affected those punk bands that created critical discourses about the social problems that emerged during the Spanish transition.

The Spanish transition was very difficult economically, which directly affected Spain’s youth. The economic crisis and changes to the productivity system destroyed employment until the mid-1980s. At the same time, the largest generation of young Spaniards (the children of the baby boomers) was trying to access the labor market. In 1981, this youthful population represented one-third of the total Spanish population (Beltrán et al. 17). Simultaneously, a new generation of women were joining the labor market, supported by unprecedented levels of education. The result was a high youth unemployment rate, which did not begin decreasing until the mid-1980s (Garrido and González 87–88). These elements affected the relationship between youth and the political parties. Data from those years show that young people showed little interest on politics (Prieto) but were concerned with ideological questions, as well as with actions such as squatting, demonstrations, and strikes (Maravall). Nevertheless, as we will see in relation to punk music youth cultures based on different cultural objects (fanzines, music, radio) attracted the political interest of Spanish youth.

And Everything That Was Revolution Was Already (Post-Punk)

In Portugal, political change and the new conditions of freedom and access to previously censored cultural and artistic references created an internal environment conducive to experimentation, innovation, and a rapid assimilation of international paradigms. Freedom brought openness; openness brought knowledge; and both generated a matrix arrangement for questioning and transformation. Adolescents and young people would have to participate, with distinctive commitments and modes, in the public space of this global revolution. At the same time, the newly arrived liberty and cosmopolitanism shone a strong light on the Portuguese reality, particularly on the deep structures that shaped values and behaviors, habits, and conventions. By contrast, the experience of the dictatorship (or, more generally, the historical marginality of the process of modernization in Europe) made everything seem even darker. Effectively, a confrontation of cosmopolitanism and social conservatism took place as if it were erasing the flame of the revolutionary moment. If the revolution put the conservative social fund in abeyance, or in obscurity, the next moment – of institutional normalization – demonstrated this polarization. This occurred most clearly than in the field of culture. Older protagonists today regard the evolution of punk in Portugal as due largely to the new creative impulses that occurred following the democratic revolution and its conclusion. It is common to find an ambivalence in those involved in the early phase of Portuguese punk (Silva and Guerra). The theoretical field vibrates with the force of the genesis of this and other youthful and

radical subcultures that have questioned a very closed and conservative cultural and social order; however, we also feel disenchantment with the limitations of the changes that have occurred, because they have not reached the deeper layers of the social structure, due to being localized or reversed.

Punk emerged in Portugal in the late 1970s, initially as an expression of a new and radical freedom, of being and doing, of moving and showing itself, of experiencing, of belonging to an international wave and translating it locally. Punk is always both a challenge and a violent criticism of its targets; it is also the expression of a revolt against the limits of change. It was not always easy to experience this revolt, partly because of the enormous incomprehension it provoked in Portuguese society. The predecessors and pioneers of punk in Portugal had to be dissidents to be creative; they had to suffer rejection and vexations to assert their right to be part of the public, social and artistic sphere. First-wave punk constituted a direct challenge to the conservative social conventions of Portuguese society, and included bands such as Sparks (Faíscas), Aqui d'el-Rock, Mines & Traps (Minas & Armadilhas), Xutos & Pontapés, UHF, and Lightning and Flashes (Raios e Coriscos). The constitution of this first wave did not dissociate itself from a progressive formation of its own circuit: bars, clubs, concert halls, promoters, publishers, and media, as shown by the voice of these social actors:

Then, punk began to come out, but they didn't play; it was just to shock. The message was important, in terms of lyrics, but no one played anything at all. Less than two years, punk spoke louder than any other social-musical phenomenon since the advent of the Beatles . . . and Jimi Hendrix, or the colossal meetings at Woodstock. (Pedro, 54 years, record store owner, Lisbon)

Punk has always given me the strength to never get to be silent. I cannot witness injustice and cannot and often get into problems. On a day-to-day basis, I think everyone is a little angry with life. I think no one is completely satisfied and punk rock gives strength to revolt. (Vicente, 46 years, musician, Sintra, Greater Lisbon Metropolitan Area)

The true process of formation of the scene occurred intensely throughout the 1980s, combining punk and post-punk. The emergence and consolidation of the (post-)punk scenes in Portugal can be explained partly by the country's growing openness abroad, which materialized in the arrival of records, clothes, magazines, and news; by the importance of bands such as Total Crisis (Crise Total), at the time representing what it was to be punk in Portugal, being considered by the Portuguese interviewees as the most decisive of the Portuguese punk scene, not only for the critical and satirical message transmitted through their lyrics and album covers, but also for their way of being in music, at the margin of the dominant logics and circuits; by the emergence of spaces such as Rock Rendez Vous, with its regular schedule of concerts of international punk and post-punk bands; by the entry of Portugal into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 and the possibility of punk bands performing live or via video clips on television programs; and by the increasing urbanization and emergence of spaces of youthful sociability in the major Portuguese cities (Guerra, *A instável leveza*, "Keep It Rocking"; Silva and Guerra).

Almost all the early Portuguese punk bands sang in Portuguese, symbolizing a specific form of appropriation, as postulated by Regev. Another characteristic relates to the lyrics and their themes of protest and revolt against specific personalities, contexts and events

associated with the Portuguese socio-political context of the 1970s and 1980s. For example, this is the case of songs like “Murderers in Power” (Assassinos no poder) and “The Crisis Continues” (A crise continua) by Crise Total, or the song “Let Us Praise the President” (Violemos o Presidente) by Judas’ Ass. In the lyrics of these songs, a political register prevails, of extreme radicalization and defiance and also a tone of denunciation and violent attack.

These local punk (re)appropriations support the argument that this musical genre is a clear example of cultural hybridity. Portuguese punk is almost exclusively a do-it-yourself (DIY) phenomenon. The lack of record companies interested in hiring punk bands “forced” the bands (and fans) to find alternative solutions (Guerra, “Just can’t go to sleep,” “Iberian Punk”). The answer was DIY, as evidenced both in amateur recordings of live concerts and through the endless copies of tapes that passed from hand to hand. In a similar way, there was no commercially available punk fashion – no Portuguese equivalent to Carnaby Street. It was only in the mid-1980s that the first punk stylists began to appear in Portugal. Consequently, during the first phase of Portuguese punk, punk fashion was the result of the importation of clothes from the United Kingdom, or (more commonly) the creativity of young people, and the use of secondhand fashion, often coming from the wardrobes of parents and grandmothers and being adapted into a punk style.

I think it was a love-hate relationship that we had with Portugal, because deep down we liked Portugal. We never really asked ourselves that “this is shit” and stuff. We said that and we thought it was, but it should not be. But our idea was to transform society with our ideas and also with our music. But to transform to improve our country because we liked our country. (Jacinto, 49 years, designer, Coimbra)

Portuguese punk took an atomized form, segmented around the presence of individuals and bands in certain regions, such as Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto, Braga, Leiria and Viseu. Besides the aforementioned Total Crisis, in this second wave of punk in Portugal we can highlight bands like Rat-Killer (Mata-Ratos), Judas’ ass (Kú de Judas) and Final Scream (Grito Final) in Lisbon; Tilt, Siclave, and Stray Dogs (Cães Vadios) in Porto; Cardinal’s Bastards (Bastardos do Cardeal) in Viseu; Extreme Uction (Extrema União) in Coimbra; Turds (Cagalhões) in Aveiro; and Senisga in Torre de Moncorvo in the north of Portugal. It is this presence, stemming largely from the desire of its members and more devoted followers with greater or lesser adherence that is undoubtedly manifested by the punk movement. The evolution of the Portuguese punk scene is extremely focused on the interrelations between neighborhood, school, and friendship networks, and production microcircuits, bands, publishers, and punk spaces. Specifically, in the Portuguese case, it is worth noting the importance of the fanzines – such as *Total Disorder* (*Desordem Total*), *State of Emergency* (*Estado de Sítio*), and *Strange Corpse* (*Cadáver Esquisito*) – and pirate radio stations – such as *Chaos Radio* (*Rádio Caos*) – particularly radio programs by Antonio Sérgio,³ in the emergence and appeal of punk music:

The radio issue marked me, but only certain programs, because it was my only chance to have access to some things. . . . There were some underground concerts at that time. The concerts were a rare thing. They were moments of ritual in which a person was capable of thinking for a month that there was going to be a concert. (Gustavo, 34 years, musician and professor, Porto)

The Eva Apple⁴ from the Bairro Alto in Lisbon⁵

In the early 1980s, Portugal's cultural situation remained virtually unchanged. Despite some isolated efforts, the night and nightlife culture remained decadent or out of reach for most of the population. There was a huge contrast between the national reality and what was happening abroad: in Spain, there was La Movida and in London acid house had begun. Yet in Portugal, the same antiquated spaces remained as the only way to meet the cultural and leisure needs of a new generation. Despite this resistance to change, by the late 1970s a slow emergence of night spaces began, located in the Bairro Alto, such as Souk, Rock House, Jukebox, Jamaica, or Tokyo, or in Greater Lisbon, such as Banana Power, A Lontra nightclub, and Finalmente Club. Similarly, places such as the Rock Rendez-Vous, which opened in 1980 and became the main Portuguese music venue, and the Oceano Bar and Palmeiras Bar, were important spaces where young people could enjoy an alternative and live music scene in Lisbon:

Bairro Alto is the great metropolis of the independent scene, but you also have those people there who frequent a place not for the music, but because they know they will find this and that there. Then it's all in metamorphosis. What's one thing today, tomorrow it's not here anymore, it's there. (Fausto, 36 years, musician and designer, Lisbon)

This cultural scene intensified with the emergence of Manuel Reis's Frágil in 1982. Situated in one of the most decadent areas of Lisbon, Frágil represented a new sensibility and lifestyle for two reasons: first, Manuel Reis managed to attract an eclectic audience – journalists, artists, students of fine arts; second, it was a place of conviviality for a group of people with the same dispositions, with a resident DJ – something rare at this point. In short, it was Lisbon's cosmopolitan and postmodern place *par excellence* in the 1980s, and it was where everyone wanted to be. At a time of change and openness to more avant-garde dispositions, Frágil was a focus of the cultural *movida* in Lisbon in the early 1980s. Even four decades later, Frágil occupies a central place in the nightlife of Lisbon (Guerra, *A instável leveza*). The implantation of the Frágil in the Bairro Alto allowed a renovation of this previously degraded area of the city, enabling it to become the main site of a new cosmopolitan and bohemian Lisbon. The inauguration of Frágil, and its rapid success, provoked a contagious effect in the Bairro Alto, with several inaugurations of places of cosmopolitan appeal.

The Bairro Alto in the 1980s was also the site of the “cultural revolution” that took place during the political revolution of 25 April 1974. It became a place of freedom, difference, and diversity, a space of creativity and fusion, where artistic genres such as music, fashion, design, and journalism, intersected and nurtured each other. It broke with the decadent image that had plagued the neighborhood since the nineteenth century, transforming the “Cultural Quarter,” now based on new cultural values: cosmopolitanism, experimentalism, defense of difference, and an ethic of pleasure and hedonism.

La Movida in Madrid

The Spanish transition was a period of music flourishing. Since the mid-1970s, diverse musical scenes emerged, connected to some Spanish regional identities, such as the so-

called “rock andaluz” in Andalucía (García Peinazo), “rock laiteano” in Catalonia (Gómez-Font), or progressive rock in Galicia and Asturias (García Salueña). These scenes based their musical discourse on progressive rock, symphonic rock, and hard rock, hybridizing those sounds with folk music (flamenco, sardana), native languages (Catalan, Galician, Asturian . . .) and their own cultural topics, vindicating their regional identities. In Madrid, during the ’70s and the ’80s, some bands developed a particular kind of hard rock, labeled as “rock urbano” or “rock bronco.” Those bands, such as Asfalto, Coz, Topo, Cucharada, or Leño, emerged in the working-class neighborhoods of the city, and denounced in their lyrics the social and political problems of those places (Val Ripollés, *Rockeros*).

But the scene that attracted most media and political attention, during the Spanish political transition, was the so called “La Movida.” How do we approach La Movida? It was a musical and cultural scene (Val Ripollés, *Rockeros insurgents*), diverse and unconscious without theoretical, stylistic coherence, or generational homogeneity (Gallero). One of the problems involved in talking about La Movida is the idea that it was a homogeneous movement – a perspective criticized by several authors who vindicated about the musical and cultural heterogeneity of this scene. Even though the scene emerged in Madrid, and the main labels and media were located in the capital, it had ramifications around Spain (Vigo, Valencia, Granada . . .) (Fouce, *El futuro*).

The trigger for this scene was the punk explosion, which arrives quick to Spain after emerging in England, although some music magazines did not receive it with enthusiasm. The rapid spread of the punk phenomenon by the Spanish media impacted part of Spanish youth, inspiring many future musicians to get on stage:

When we listened to Pink Floyd, we could only do that, listen to them. We could not imitate them. Listening to the Sex Pistols or the Ramones was vital because it made us think that we could do that too. (Edi Clavo, 52 years, musician, Madrid)

According to the experts (Santos Unamuno), La Movida involved two distinct periods. From 1977 to 1980 the specialized press described a *nueva ola* – a phase in which the scene was characterized by amateurism. From 1980, the expression *movida* began to spread, bringing together two distinct periods: the first of euphoria followed by a rapid depression (1980–82), a consequence of the commercial failure of several bands; and the second, between 1983 and 1985, of institutionalization, culminating in the popularization of the scene and the internationalization of the term “La Movida.” In the first phase, the media focused almost exclusively on one band: Kaka de Luxe, the seminal group of this phase: from it emerged other bands of La Movida such as Alaska y los Pegamoides, Alaska y Dinarama, Paraíso, La Mode and Radio Futura. The songs were not a strict reflection of punk, as initially they were more rock – specifically, glam rock – with lyrics about sex and violence (Wheeler). Kaka de Luxe stands out more for its esthetic appearance than for its technique, which was quite poor (Cervera 109): its female singer, Alaska, was notable in a masculinized rock scene. A second singer, Manolo Campoamor, was openly gay in his performances. For journalist Patricia Godes, the impact of the figure of Alaska on the patriarchy of Spanish rock was enormous: “She was able to take power and, at her own risk, call into question the absolutely tyrannical male authority in rock; after her, the doors for women were opened” (Godes 27).

Some important journalists of that time, such as Jesús Ordovás, supported those bands because they considered them new and innovative, connected with international trends:

They are sons of the middle classes. . . . How could they be up on everything that the Yankees and Croatian groups do? Because they have chances, time, and the desire to have fun, and they see in London and New York pop-rock a source of emotions, fantasy and inspiration. Something that the Madrilenian hard rock bands did not have. (JOB)

The scene was based mainly in downtown Madrid, in neighborhoods such as Malasaña and Prosperidad. In the mid-1970s and 1980s, some pubs and venues such as El Pentagrama, El Sol, Rockola, and La Via Lactea were founded, and became in central meeting places for rock journalists, musicians, and fans. Some of them scheduled the first punk concerts. The university residence halls were another important place of encounter, so university students were part of the substrate of the punk and new wave scene. The foreign band gigs were also spaces of interaction for musicians, such as the Iggy Pop concert in Madrid in 1978 (Cervera 119).

According to Val Ripollés, the scene was configured through independent record labels such as DRO, Tres Cipreses, and Lollypop, radio stations such as Onda 2 and Radio 3, fanzines such as *Kaka de luxe* or *96 lágrimas*, music magazines such as *Disco Exprés*, *Popular 1*, *Rock Especial*, *La Luna de Madrid*, and *Madrid me mata*, and TV shows such as *La Bola de cristal* and *La edad de oro* (Rockeros 459).⁶

La Movida was a heterogeneous movement formed by bands with different musical influences, such as punk, post-punk, rockabilly, techno, new wave, and pop. In this sense, Foucault points out that it is important to distinguish the diverse “families” that formed La Movida (*El future*, 51). On one side there was the so-called “slimy pop” of bands such as Mamá, Nacha Pop, or Los Secretos, influenced by new wave bands such as the Jam or Elvis Costello, with lyrics focused on love stereotypes. A second “family” comprised punk, Gothic, and sinister bands such as Alaska y los Pegamoides, Gabinete Caligari, and Décima Víctima. A key band was Parálisis Permanente, with lyrics focused on religion and sex. Other elements were the techno bands, mainly Aviador Dro and Esplendor Geométrico, characterized by ironic lyrics, something shared with the last “family,” the so-called “hornadas irritantes” (irritating batches), a collective formed by bands such as Derribos Arias, Siniestro Total or Glutamato Ye-Ye, very critical of “slimy pop.” Most of these bands were formed by middle-class boys, some of them university students. But, as the documentary *Lo que hicimos fue secreto* (2019) showed, there was also another “family,” formed by punk bands from Madrid’s working neighborhoods, such as La Broma de Satán, OX Pow, Espasmódicos, and La U.V.I, characterized by political lyrics that refused the attitude and lyrics of some of the “middle-class” punk and post-punk bands.

The social origins of most of La Movida musicians, as well as their cultural and social capital, are relevant to an understanding of how these musicians understood their work, and how they related to the political dimension and the music industry. Most members of La Movida were part of the new middle classes (Gouldner), which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and now occupied the new jobs of tertiary capitalism. They were the sons and daughters of architects, doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Within these new middle classes was the basis of the legitimation of rock as an artistic form. They were actors who, due to their social origins, had experienced an important cultural formation. Particularly from

their trips abroad – especially to London – they had been able to absorb the esthetic of punk. In other words, they had subcultural capital (Thornton) – first-hand knowledge of the scene, recordings, haircuts, clothing, and fashion (Val Ripollés, *Rockeros*).

From a political perspective, Héctor Fouce in *El futuro* shows that La Movida was a scene with a political discourse, marked by skepticism about big theories and concerned with deconstructing established systems. La Movida renounced the role of social and political spokesperson and assumed a hedonistic role, celebrating modernity. It denounced a weariness with political commitment, with the submission of the artistic to the social. It also embodied a change in the existing cultural references: they were no longer anchored in poets or intellectuals, but rather in popular culture – musicians, comics, and cinema, almost all Anglo-Saxon in origin. La Movida incorporated an appreciation of popular culture, as well as of that Spanish culture devalued by opposition to Franco's regime. The visibility of women in the record industry and the openness of this scene to LGBTI culture were also important (see Mora and Viñuela). Even though this approximation to political commitment could be understood as hedonistic, or apolitical, some musicians denied these definitions:

It was a punk attitude. What we were rejecting was the past, in order to build something new; it was the philosophy of “do it yourself.” That is the difference between the generation of 1968 and the next – we say “we are going to burn it all.” It is a philosophy more nihilistic than hedonistic. We defend it as a neo-anarchism. (Servando Carballar, 51 years, musician and entrepreneur, Madrid).

The idea that La Movida was apolitical is something that was invented by those who wanted to be the exclusive masters of, or appropriate, the anti-Franco struggle. Moreover, all these little guys came to fuck around, because they were indomitable and they weren't going to do what they wanted, and they were going to take away the reputation of rebels. They were the official rebels, that's why there was such a harsh reaction. The story was perfect for them, La Movida people were frivolous . . . and they weren't so politicized either. If you look at the evolution of Leño and what has come after, the Viñarock, Extremoduro, is not militant, it's also anti-political. They have an acrimonious point, but very diffuse. (Sabino Méndez, 52 years, musician and writer, Barcelona).

Also, La Movida was understood as a rupture with the major musical genres of the time. According to Regev's concept of esthetic cosmopolitanism, Spanish rock bands of the period viewed rock as a common language and adapted their style and music to suit local cultural standards (“Ethno-National”). But the way the music press valued those hybridizations differed because of political issues. Rock magazines, who had supported progressive rock and hard rock along the seventies, began to criticize those scenes in the eighties, understanding that their regional vindications were provincialist and old fashioned, supporting La Movida for its novelty. But, at the same time, when some bands of La Movida (Gabinete Caligari) began to hybridize punk, rock, and pop music with homegrown sounds such as “copla” and “pasodoble,” and cultural topics such as bull-fights (cultural elements connected to the Spanish nationalism emerged from the Francoist regime), rock critics were much more indulgent with this political and cultural hybridization, showing a kind of centralism: vindications of Spanish identity were accepted, but Catalan or Basque identities not (Val Ripollés, “Sing”).

As Fouce postulates, La Movida's success lies in being a metaphor for social change in Spain in the 1980s. More than that, La Movida was able to reconcile the eternal problem

of Spanish culture: “how to be modern and Spanish at the same time” (“*De la agitación*” 143). This problem was overcome through irony, bricolage, and (re)appropriation of traditional elements by dispossessing them of their Francoist meaning. Irony is useful for talking about political objects outside militance, enabling distancing of those objects. As some authors pointed out, by ridiculing political attitudes, those bands were exercising a political critique of them (Viñuela 139). For example, in the song “*El imperio contrataca*” (“The empire strikes back,” a joke based on the *Star Wars* movies), the band Los Nikis ironized about the Spanish nationalism myths, showing the geopolitical situation of Spain in the 1980s, a peripheral country with no international relevance. We have already mentioned bands such as Parálisis Permanente and Kaka de Luxe, whose members talked openly about sexual relations or death, issues that until the 1970s were under the control of the Catholic Church under Franco. But some bands directly addressed political issues in their songs, such as Aviador Dro, which released apocalyptic songs about the future of the trade unions (“*La arenga de los sindicatos futuristas*”) or vindicating the ideas of Bakunin (“*Camarada Bakunin*”).

Some La Movida bands included political issues in their lyrics. But, as Fouce points out, they did it in a postmodern way, refusing political commitment (*El futuro*). The topics related to identity issues (revealing queer culture, criticizing the Catholic morality) rather than socioeconomic issues. These bands were not railing against the political transition, unemployment, the economic crisis, Francoism, the Spanish Civil war – those topics were covered by punk bands from working neighborhoods (La U.V.I., Espasmódicos, La broma de Satán) as well as some heavy metal and hard-rock bands (Barón Rojo, Asfalto, Topo, Leño, Obús) (Val Ripollés, *Rockeros insurgentes*). But while La Movida bands, in the second part of the 1980s, were celebrated by the media and supported by local government (Fouce, *El futuro*), those with a sociopolitical discourse were ignored. This fact could be checked analyzing the esthetic canon of the Spanish music critics (Val Ripollés et al.). In that article, these researchers showed how the punk and post-punk bands (also heavy metal and hard rock bands) with political discourse were out of the canon of the most valued bands by the Spanish rock critics, while those bands, coming from La Movida, with a postmodern discourse (Radio Futura, Alaska y Dinarama, Gabinete Caligari . . .) were highly valued. So, in the end, the idea of “culture of the Transition” could be applied here: a narrow framework that decided which cultural manifestations are valued, and which are isolated from the cultural institutions.

Beautiful, Clean, and Good: the Empire of the New Middle Classes

La Movida and its aura of modernity in “modern” musicians and bands refer to an inherent elitism. To be modern, for La Movida, was to be hedonistic – it celebrated the new, the foreigner. In the 1970s and 1980s, being modern meant keeping abreast of all the news, and given that few people had the ability to travel to London or New York, a large part of the population had no chance of being modern. Being modern became a form of social differentiation between those who were cool and those who were not.

With regard to Portuguese punk, the scene originated in Lisbon and in small groups of middle/upper-class youth, whose trips to the United States and United Kingdom allowed them to contact with new sounds and esthetics – particularly punk. The epicenter of the Lisbon punk scene was Alvalade, a part of the city inhabited by urban middle-class

families. These young people were able to travel and attend festivals abroad, as well as to import records, magazines, and punk fashion. As in Spain, there was a conversion of cultural capital into subcultural capital. In the Portuguese case, this was accentuated by the scarcity of goods and subcultural infrastructure. In these early stages of punk in Portugal, rather than a classist claim, what was intended was the affirmation of a more transversal change of values, involving an opening of Portuguese youth to new songs, new esthetics, and new forms of sociability. It was about meeting and keeping pace with modernity (Guerra, “*A instável leveza*”, *A instável leveza*, “*Keep It Rocking*”).

The same can be said of members of the Bairro Alto scene, more specifically those who frequented Frágil. As 2020 points out, when we analyze the reports of that time, we realize that a certain group occupies a prominent cultural position: the new Portuguese cultural elite, which was formed following April 25. This was a socially homogeneous population at the level of economic and cultural capital, a population of artists, journalists, stylists, actors, and photographers who shared affinities and sensibilities, but were also homogeneous in terms of their income and leisure time. As in Spain, their presence in such spaces was a form of social distinction: if you did not appear at Frágil, you did not exist. At the same time, it was a closed world. When we read reports of Lisbon in the 1980s, the voices of the old residents of the Bairro Alto rarely appear, yet they had to endure the invasion of these young people (and the noise from bars and cafes), then experience expulsion to the suburbs when rents exploded.

An End that Will Always Be a Beginning

We believe it is possible to respond to the hypothesis stated in the introduction: that the different transitions from dictatorship to democracy affected how punk and post-punk were experienced in Portugal and Spain. Also influential was the very nature of each regime, particularly its relations with foreigners.

Let's start with Spain. The Portuguese revolution was a shock to the Spanish regime and a harbinger of what could happen if preparations were not made. It was the big reason for the Transition process, where everything changed to stay the same. In the absence of a political revolution, as in Portugal, the Spanish government's concern was to demonstrate its democratic and modern credentials. After decades of dictatorship and isolation, it was important to show that Spain was back from the *civilized* world. At the same time, in the aftermath of May 1968, young people were understood as the new social agents – hence, Spain's investment in projecting the image of new social movements, such as punk and alternative rock, and La Movida. This does not mean that these young men were nothing but puppets – their desire for cosmopolitanism, freedom, and novelty was sincere. It would be too easy to see no political concerns in these young actors, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The big question is the policy model we continue to use. Most researchers and journalists, when they study this age, talk about a politicism and hedonism, because for them political participation is understood from the classical perspective: party mobilizations or belonging to a party or association. From this perspective, the Spanish case is in fact one of depoliticization. However, since May 1968 the policy was expanded. It had ceased to be only the classical perspective of elections and political mobilizations and entered more personal fields, such as life, consumption, art, and the environment.

Analyzed from this perspective, a whole set of political concerns arise, including the LGBTI struggle *avant la letter*. Another extension of the characteristic policy of May 1968 was the use of irony and kitsch. An issue which is absent from the Portuguese case, but has been deeply used in the Spanish case, is the innovative appropriations made of the bullfight or the *rumba*. This was a way of making these practices essential, of breaking the monopoly Franco's regime had over them. That, in our view, is political and allows us to say that the Spanish model was politicized, against the multiple assertions that seek to demonstrate the opposite. But it is undeniable that those rock and punk scenes that developed a direct political discourse (without any piece of irony) against the Francoist legacy, the Civil War, the Monarchy, political parties, or economic and social issues were marginalized by media, and received less attention by political institutions. And this does not imply, however, that it is a political form qualitatively different from the one triggered in the Portuguese case.

The Portuguese case has nuances that partly take it away from the Spanish case but also bring it closer. First, it should be noted that, despite the geographical proximity between the two countries, communications have not always been easy – and this remains the case today. American, Japanese, or English bands, authors, and artists become familiar faster than Spanish ones. Several authors who deal with Portuguese identity say that one of the main factors is a constant fear of Spanish invasion (Lourenço; Mattoso). It is not coincidental that Portugal has a proverb: “From Spain neither good winds nor good marriages.” This explains the lack of communication between the two countries in this historical period. As we have said, Portugal has undergone a profound social and political revolution. The government elites (along with other elites) were replaced. The country spent almost two years “in trance,” in the famous definition of a Portuguese historian (Ferreira). The Empire fell, democracy returned, and participatory and collective measures were tried. It was two years of profound change.

The punks emerged in the aftermath of this change. Although for many the revolution failed or fell short of what it proposed, there was already a long tradition of political criticism that could be seized and taken to another level, as we have seen. The politicization in the Portuguese case was intense, and the personal insults and scatological references (even in the name of the bands, as those referred to above, or in song titles, such as “Let Us Praise the President,” “Murderers in Power,” “Poison,” “The Crisis Continues,” “Censored,” “Political Lords,” or “Anguish”) did not always make it easy for the media to follow this new movement. It is also important to point out that the invisibility of the media can be explained by a Portuguese historical particularity: the main Portuguese newspapers were nationalized during the revolution and remained so until the mid-1980s and even in some cases, such as *Jornal de Notícias*, *Diário de Notícias*, and *A Capital*, until the 1990s. This lack of distance also explains the sparse attention given to the punk movement.

This situation changed in the 1980s with the movement in the Bairro Alto. There, the media coverage already existed. Several new periodicals emerged, concerned with new esthetic and cultural sensibilities. Likewise, the politicization of these young people was closer to the political model rooted in the May 1968 model, and closer to La Movida – that is, the struggle for sexual minorities, hedonism, and a cultural revolution. As in the Spanish case, it was a movement made up of the new cultural elites that had emerged

after the revolutionary period, many of them journalists, which contributed to the (self-) celebratory character of some commemorations.

To conclude, the differences between the two countries are significant, given the historical specificities of each nation in the twentieth century. Despite Portugal and Spain experiencing two dictatorships that were virtually simultaneous, the reality is that the attitudes of the Salazarist and Francoist regimes were very different with regard to youth cultures and the new cultural realities that came from outside. This accelerated or halted the advance of the constitution of young people as fully social actors. Even in the democratic phase, though, we must ask ourselves about the maintenance of so many differences (Guerra, “Iberian Punk”). Why did young people in the new middle-classes appropriate punk so differently in the two countries? Why did some follow the path of politicization and political confrontation, and pay for it with total silence on the part of the generalist media, while others took a post-modernist route and were celebrated by both the media and political power? Furthermore, why was the Lisbon scene in the Bairro Alto so successful in the early 1980s?

Regardless of all of these factors, we can affirm that, in a short period and with their specificities, the dissatisfaction of youth with the cultural artifacts their countries offered them gave rise to a true cultural revolution, with the obvious goal of catching up with the remaining European countries in terms of modernity. At heart, the aim was to recover lost time and embrace a cosmopolitanism that they had heretofore encountered only through movies, music, and magazines – or, for the lucky ones, through trips to London or New York. This cosmopolitanism was made possible by the new middle classes in Spain and Portugal, which perceived punk as the generator of a critical culture of youth, of musical, and cultural scenes that helped to modernize the culture and values of both societies, despite the resistance of conservative sectors. Thus, although the beginning of punk occurred in the 1970s, it was really in the 1980s, through the action of a group of people and spaces, that Portugal and Spain finally opened up to a sphere of esthetic and ludic cosmopolitanism.

Notes

1. An interesting exception is [Castelo-Branco and Fernández](#).
2. This article is part of the research project entitled “Urban Cultures and the Youth Ways of Living: Scenarios, Sonorities and Aesthetics in Portuguese Contemporaneity” (Foundation for Science and Technology, SFRH/BD/24614/2005) that has supported one of the author’s (Guerra’s) PhD thesis in sociology – “The Unstable Lightness of Rock: Genesis, Dynamics and Consolidation of the Alternative Rock Scene in Portugal (1980–2010)” – at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, presented in 2011. The information with which we work is the result of 191 semi-structured interviews conducted with the various agents featured on the field of analysis, complemented by 11 biographical interviews with ground-breaking (both diachronically and synchronically) Portuguese alternative rock actors. Conducted between August 2006 and February 2011, the interviews covered the diversity of agents in the subfield: bloggers, critics, and journalists, promoters, editors, managers, owners of music distribution places, shopkeepers, musicians, DJs, and music lovers (basically, only agents regarded as audiences have been excluded). All interviews were recorded on digital audio and together total approximately 300 hours.
3. Sérgio (1950–2009) was a famous radio host, radio producer, DJ, record editor, and specialist who gave exposure in Portugal to leading and innovative rock and pop music

artists. Starting in the late 1970s, Sérgio played the music of many international artists who at that time were unknown in Portugal, putting local audiences in touch with these artists and their music. In this sense, Sérgio is regarded in some circles as the Portuguese equivalent of the late British Radio DJ John Peel.

4. This is a reference to the first shop of the Portuguese designer Ana Salazar, founded in 1972 at Rua do Carmo in Lisbon. This store marked an attitude and dictated a trend. This shop was inaugurated because Ana Salazar wanted to have a point-of-sale location for the objects and clothes that were imported from London, which made the people modern.
5. Located on the seventh hill of Lisbon, the Bairro Alto is one of the oldest and most peculiar districts of Lisbon, where Lisbon's nightlife gained a reputation for being very lively and cosmopolitan.
6. Even though music journals such as *Popular 1* dedicated covers to groups such as the Sex Pistols, shortly after their appearance, underground magazines such as *Ajoblanco* and *Ozono*, and the music journal *Vibrations*, criticized the phenomenon for the use of swastikas and its musical simplicity (see Val Ripollés, *Rockeros* 269).

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