

6.7. The disturbing voice of the lower-class: from eighteenth century “Gracioso” to punk rock

Isabel Pinto¹

Abstract

As the “gracioso” presented himself/herself as a dismissive servant, always trying to survive his/her hunger, and also the love entanglements of the master, his/her subversive role in eighteenth-century mainstream public theatre has been acknowledged (e.g. Pereira, 1985; Santos, 1993; Dacanal, 2011). Based on the idea that a “necessity of history” (Miura, 2010, p. 77) sometimes determines the replacement of universalism by the “rhetoric of identity”, we have found similarities between the “gracioso”, and what he/she stands for, and the punk rock ideology, mainly in what concerns the refusal of hierarchy, and class, and an unruly attitude towards authority in general. Therefore, we will prove that although distant in time the “gracioso”, following an ethics of say-it-yourself, and a band like Crass, with its do-it-yourself, have something in common, despite the fact that eighteenth century opera, unlike punk rock, had no drum.

Keywords: eighteenth century; opera; subversive role; “gracioso”; punk rock.

In the eighteenth century, opera was the most flourishing performance genre in Portugal, and also in Europe in general. Opera was a court entertainment, involving considerable amounts of money: the sceneries were luxurious, the costumes were rich and refined, and opera was in its whole an exquisite show, addressing an intellectual and aesthetic demanding audience (Brito, 1989).

But in the first half of the century, more precisely throughout the decades of 1730s and 1740s, in Mouraria and Bairro Alto Theatres, opera was also being staged in a puppet show version (Braga, 1871), with plays from authors like António José da Silva (1705-1739) and Alexandre António de Lima (1699-1760). These shows introduced a particular type of servant, the “gracioso”, a subversive character that despite his/her ambiguous and ironic comments also took part in the singing highlights, alone or in duet, usually with the master or with another “gracioso”. The singing takes his/her defying attitude further, as he/she approaches it as a golden opportunity for extensive mocking of the events of the plot, making use of a plain and crude language. So, amidst love entanglements between princes and princesses from distant and exotic reigns, drawn from mythological narratives, the “gracioso” claims the vanity of it all, adding his unique tone to it and, at the same time, testing the aesthetic limits of the opera genre (Barone, 2012).

Taking the study on the “gracioso” as a starting point, we will try to develop a comparative approach on the subversive role played by this character and punk music in their respective societies. Therefore, in this article, we will draw insofar as possible a parallelism between the core values enacted by the “gracioso”, in the first half of the eighteenth-century, and those

¹ CECC - Center for the Study of Communication and Culture, Portuguese Catholic University, Portugal.

pursued by British punk rock, trying, at the same time, to engage punk on its own terms. With that in mind, we will take into consideration the main ideological features of both, namely in the speech of “gracioso”, in the opera *Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena* [*Amphitryon or, Jupiter and Alcmena*] (1736)² by António José da Silva (1705-1739)³, and *Adolónimo em Sidónia*⁴ [*Adolonymus in Sidon*], by Alexandre António de Lima (1699-1760)⁵, and in punk lyrics by emblematic bands such as the Sex Pistols and Crass.

The “Gracioso”

The “gracioso” has allegedly a Spanish origin, aiming at enjoying the public through lively and witty performances. On the one hand, the plot can almost unveil without him/her, but on the other hand almost all the comic effects rely on the enactment he/she is capable of. The “gracioso” adds to the concept of theatrical character to the extent that he specifically comments on the genre that situates him/her, frequently in quite dismissive terms. Therefore the “gracioso” addresses the theatrical phenomenon in two different and contrasting modes. One can directly pose the question “How does he/she do it?” The answer lies in always knowing what to say and whom to address.

Regarding the Spanish origin of the “gracioso”, we believe that it overshadows the true belonging of the character to a universal tradition of comic characters, ranging from the servants of Ancient Roman comedy to entertainment professionals of nowadays like Paul Birch, hired by the British Airways as “corporate jester” (Otto, 2001). This group of historical characters dedicated to laugh, entertainment, and creativity goes back to Plautus’ and Terence’s comedies, and is to be found both in Western and Oriental theatre. Otto (2001, p. 268) traces their origin from Ancient Rome to our days, and lists their dominant features: “[...] they challenge without threatening, act as confidants, ease tensions, advise and question, and are given the license to think outside that proverbial box.” She contends that this type of character is universal by nature, therefore refusing to associate it with a particular culture or historical period:

The crux of this work is that the jester was a universal phenomenon, not the product of a particular culture or era. [...]

Jesters in China, Europe, the Middle East, and India aimed their humorous arrows at the same targets – religion and its representatives, self-important scholars, venal officials and nobles,

² We are using the following edition: Teatro Cómico Português ou Coleção das Óperas Portuguesas, Vol. I. Lisboa: oficina patriarcal de Francisco Luís Ameno, 1759.

³ António José da Silva or, The Jew, as he was commonly known, composed a total of eight operas: *Vida do D. Quixote de La Mancha* [Life of Don Quixote of La Mancha] (1733), *Esopaida ou Vida de Esopo* [Esopaida or, Life of Aesop] (1734), *Os Encantos de Medeia* [Medea’s Enchantments] (1735), *Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena* [Amphitryon or, Jupiter and Alcmena] (1736), *Labirinto de Creta* [The Labyrinth of Crete] (1736), *Guerras do Alecrim e Mangerona* [Wars between Alecrim and Manjerona] (1737), *Variiedades de Proteu* [Proteus’ Variety] (1737), *Precipício de Faetonte* [Phaethon’s Ruin] (1738).

⁴ We are using de following edition: Teatro Cómico Português ou Coleção das Óperas Portuguesas, Vol. III. Lisboa: oficina patriarcal de Francisco Luís Ameno, 1760.

⁵ Alexandre António de Lima, besides his poetic works, wrote the following operas: *Adolónimo em Sidónia* [Adolonymus in Sidon], *A Ninfa Siringa ou Os Amores de Pan e Siringa* [The Nymph Siringa or, The Love Affair between Pan and Siringa] (1741), *Novos Encantos de Amor* [Love’s New Enchantments], *Adriano em Síria* [Adrianus in Syria], *Filinto Perseguido e Exaltado* [Filinto Persecuted and Disturbed], *Os Encantos de Circe* [Circe’s Enchantments], *Semiramis em Babilónia* [Semiramis in Babylon] (1741), *Os Encantos de Merlim* [Merlin’s Enchantments] (1741).

and erring, corrupt, or lazy rulers, together with anything deemed sacrosanct. (Otto, 2001, XXIII)

Regarding specifically the “gracioso”, several studies mainly consider how the character is approached by famous classical authors such as Pedro Calderón de la Barca (e.g. Güntert, 1980; Barone, 2012) and António José da Silva (e.g. Pereira, 1985; Dacanal, 2011). To this respect, it must be added that the plays by Alexandre António de Lima have not yet been an object of scholar interest, with the exception of Santos (1993). This study also considers the use of the “gracioso” in Alexandre António de Lima’s plays. In particular, it situates his use of the “gracioso” within a specific trend, the popular one, of eighteenth century Portuguese theatre.

Brito (1989, pp. 20-21) argues that António José da Silva’s operas “are somewhat akin to the French *opéra-comique* or to the German *singspiel*, for they sometimes start with a *sinfonia*, and include recitatives, arias, vocal minuets, duets, trios and other choruses, as well as choirs, alternating with spoken dialogues, with an average of twenty-one musical numbers in each opera.” The “gracioso” played a big role in all this musical variety, since despite his/her condition as servant he/she was not excluded from any of these numbers. Thus, as we shall further demonstrate, his/her musical and verbal versatility were the means to state an ideological position towards a world where he/she barely fitted.

Punk rock

Also a number of studies have been dedicated to punk, whether focusing on the careers of the main bands, and their influence (e.g. Savage, 1992; Cross, 2010), on its main ideological features (e.g. Laing, 1978; Miura, 2010), or on the survival of punk as a very particular subculture (e.g. Clark, 2003; Moran, 2010). The beginning of punk rock is linked to the need for a political stand in England during the late 1970s:

The First Wave of the punk subculture was intertwined with making a political statement, and it is generally accepted that the punk movement became involved with politics in England. Jim explains how the major economic depression that occurred in the United Kingdom during the late 1970s left an entire generation on welfare, without hope for steady employment. The British class system, institutionalized poverty, and unemployment, acted as fuel for bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash. (Moran, 2010, p. 64)

Punk lyrics reflected the most striking issues of the time, addressing unemployment, political decay, etc., and disseminated an attitude of general rebellion against the status quo (Laing, 1978). In particular, the origins of punk rock can also be traced in strong class tensions. The working class was, in fact, greatly affected by economic recession, and punk rock was also assumed as its unrestrained voice.

Important marks in punk rock in England were the release of *Anarchy in the UK* (1976), and *God save the queen* (1977), by the Sex Pistols, and in what concerns anarcho-punk specifically, the release of *The feeding of the 5000*, in 1978, by Crass. Another leading British punk bands include the Clash (1976-1986), the Poison Girls (1976-1987), and the Damned (1976-).

God Save the Queen was about revealing the contradictions and mischief that surrounded the monarchy in the 1970s. The lyrics presented it as something pointless and meaningless: “God save the queen/ It’s a fascist regime/ They made you a moron/ A potential H-bomb// God save the queen/ She ain’t no human being/ There is no future/ In England’s dreaming//

Don't be told what you want/ Don't be told what you need/ There's no future, no future/ No future for you."

With the Sex Pistols ending as a group in 1978, there was a second punk turn, headed by Crass, a band from outside London (Essex) mostly linked to the trend of anarcho-punk. According to Cross (2010), one of the main contributions of Crass to the British punk scene was their ideological and ethical consistency towards rebellion and anarchy. The group defied authority as necessary means for social organization, and proposed a new social landscape based on the do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) ethics, exposed in *Yes sir, I will* (1983): "You must learn to live with your own conscience,/ your own morality,/ your own decision,/ your own self./ You alone can do it./ There is no authority but yourself."

Crass was quite engaged in the political ideology that fuelled their music and performances, and thus assumed a key role in disseminating punk statements over what was going on in the society of the time. They used their own means to record independently, they gave concerts regularly, and a number of fanzines were distributed with opinion pieces. One of the group's main goals was to showcase life outside the mainstream. In fact, they were able to conduct their life, and make choices, outside the domain of institutionalised power, at least to a certain extent.

Clark (2003) states plainly that punk is the last subculture, the only one that managed to survive global capitalism. He claims that punk movement was able to fake its own death, in order to reinforce itself in contemporary terms. Nowadays, according to his view, punk has adopted going unnoticed as a general survival strategy, making for ways out of the mass media consumption that characterises twentieth-first century society.

Minding the (historical) gap

From "gracioso", the eighteenth century opera character, to punk rock in the late 1970s, a long time has gone by. Nevertheless, some similarities between the two are unmistakable, calling our attention for the revival of persistent cultural trends. Of course, there is little or nothing in common between the musical composition of eighteenth century opera and the style of punk music. But this should not prevent us from analysing how the "gracioso" and punk rock both question their respective social orders, emphasising rebellion against the status quo as an everyday life path. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that the "gracioso" is the first Portuguese theatrical character whose critical discourse can be allocated to class awareness, as in *Adolônimo em Sidônia* [*Adolonymus in Sidon*] (except indicated otherwise, all translations are mine), by Alexandre António de Lima:

PIMENTÃO: Ai que estou perdido, que se queixa de amor! É possível que um cavador de enxada padeça o achaque dos que fazem a barba duas vezes na semana; que tenha forças para andar às lutas com Cupido quem todo o dia anda alagado em suor? Mas o certo é que também pegam debaixo da água as armas que amor carrega. (Lima, 1760, p.7)

[PIMENTÃO: I am really lost, for he complains about love! Is it possible that someone who hoes the land suffers from the same harm of those that shave twice a week? That someone sweating all over still has the strength to fight Cupid? However it is still true that Cupid's arrows even fly underwater.]

"Pimentão", the "gracioso", calls for a class distinction when it comes to love affairs. According to him, only the ones that shave twice a week, and do not have to work hard, can afford to worry about Cupid. Thus, only masters have the time and disposition to indulge in

love affairs. Nevertheless, this boundary between ways of living is not presented as absolute, since it is admitted that love can make a difference whatever the circumstances might be.

Notwithstanding, we do not wish to deny that, for instance, sixteenth century Portuguese theatre is full of a number of servants discontent with their masters. Instead, we wish to point out that the social clash between servants and masters only became acute with the “gracioso”, as he triggers an initial phase of political engaged theatre. It is from here that we will look into the ideological ethos of punk rock. This urge for an historical perspective is also evident in the song *Yes sir, I will* (1983), by Crass:

*Those of us who stand out against the status quo
Do so against all odds.
We cling so closely together
Because we have little other than ourselves.
Critics say that it's just punk rock or that we're just naive anarchists.
They hope to discredit us with their labels and definitions.
Throughout history societies have condemned those who are later celebrated as heroes,
In so many bourgeois homes Van Gogh's sunflowers radiate from the walls,
Yet he lived in utter misery, condemned by those very same people.
Why is it that the kind and gentle are subjected to violence and ridicule?
How is it that the small and mealy-minded have gained so much power?
What perversion has taken place that we are governed by fools?*

In fact, throughout history societies have tried to impose dominant models as status quo, and, along with it there have always been groups of resistance that do not comply with the institutional roles being imposed on them. The “gracioso” and punk can be addressed as representing resistance through cultural/ artistic initiatives to reenact a new social context, and to cast tradition aside.

In order to mind the historical gap between the “gracioso” and punk rock, we will address, as mentioned above, the opera *Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmene* (1736) [*Amphitryon or, Jupiter and Alcmene*] by António José da Silva (1705-1739), and *Adolónimo em Sidónia* [*Adolonymus in Sidon*], by Alexandre António de Lima (1699-1760), staged as puppet shows in the first half of the eighteenth century, in Bairro Alto and Mouraria Theatres respectively. It should be added that by this time theatre ought to be considered a flourishing industry, with shows being produced on a regular basis by different companies, established in several public theatres: Teatro do Salitre [Salitre Theatre], Teatro da Rua dos Condes [Condes Theatre], Academia da Trindade [Trindade Academy], etc. As punk was produced amidst a music industry, “gracioso” was also a product of the theatre industry of the time.

In the eighteenth century, the relationship between master and servant was not meant to be questioned, i.e. it was a sort of taboo. Pereira (1985) accounting for the role of the “gracioso” in António José da Silva’s operas underlines how much the character could add laugh to social criticism by using ambiguity to enhance the ideological strength of his/her discourse. According to Pereira, by doing so the “gracioso” sets free from the dominant ideology through the capacity to question tradition, and its rigid doctrine, even conveying a rebel attitude towards the master’s dominance: “o resgate através do servo da submissão a que todos estão sujeitos numa sociedade injusta” (Pereira, 1985, p. 33). [It is the servant that frees all those that in an unfair society must show submission]. Furthermore, he contends that the “gracioso” is a central character in António José da Silva’s politically engaged theatre, which crudely depicts a narrow minded country slowly heading towards the Age of Enlightenment. So, the “gracioso” aims at mocking submission and obedience as the traditional behaviour code of the servant. He/she manages to make it a joke literally speaking.

Much of the show relied on the “gracioso’s” competence to play around with the love endeavours of his/her master by systematically opposing to them the urge to eat:

ADOLÓNIMO: I have yet to face some desperation, because tonight, I will attend the marriage ceremony disguised, as it is allowed in this reign, and I will offer my life in sacrifice, and you shall come with me.

PIMENTÃO: I would my lord, if I only had a life to offer.

ADOLÓNIMO: How come you don’t have it?

PIMENTÃO: Because I am dead starving.

What the quotation exemplifies is how the “gracioso” proves that the master/ servant relationship can be subverted, through a proper amount of mockery and irony. Defying authority is then a common ground between the “gracioso” and punk music. By showing a rebellious attitude towards dominant forms of authority, and by not compelling to social hierarchy, they both try to state a new power, based on everyday life difficult experience. Life is hard as they experience it.

In the eighteenth century the servant does not have enough to eat, must attend to all the master’s wishes and desires, and, at the same time, is ill-treated by him; in England, by the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, there was an increasing rate in unemployment, considerable cuts in state subsidies, additional funding to police and law and order agencies, and general expansion of state power (Cross, 2010). Both the harsh social atmosphere around the eighteenth century servant and the working class in the 1970s and 1980s originated new cultural interventions, in order to claim for a new sharper awareness regarding what was going on. The “democratic power” of the “gracioso’s” acting and punk music, trying to reach a broader audience, was effective in the sense that they were both meant to be signals of alert of a situation that owe to be clearly assumed and changed.

Although in relation to punk, “the fact that politics served as the driving motive of the movement’s founders has been accepted by both supporters and critics alike” (Cross, 2010, p. 4), the same does not entirely apply to the “gracioso”, since one is forced to consider his/her comic endeavour side by side with his/her unruly behaviour towards the master’s authority. It is undeniable that one of the fundamental features of such a character is to be funny, and overwhelming witty. Thus, the “gracioso’s” acting has to be recognised as a clear contribution to a performance genre that aimed at entertaining the audience. Therefore, we must consider first, prior to any ideological survey that the “gracioso” ought to say amusing words to provoke laugh, and general delight among an eclectic audience, composed of all classes (Brito, 1989).

Despite his/her comic and loosen attitude, the “gracioso” is not to be taken for a fool or jester. He/she does not need madness to cover up for his/her bold attitude, for he/she is a servant in denial, one that does not comply with the traditional role and behaviour that society wants to impose on him/her.

Furthermore, if the key role of the “gracioso” was entertaining the audience, the operas in which he/she took part could never be political works in essence. Accordingly, although Crass contended “that all music, like all forms of art, was by definition political” (Cross, 2010, p. 6), that cannot apply to the essence of the operas by António José da Silva and Alexandre António de Lima. These plays were not driven by a political agenda, but aimed mostly at enjoying the audience. Driven by this non-political goal, provocation had to be calculated and wisely used. That is in fact the reason for the uniqueness of “gracioso” as an opera character. He/she is the only subversive and provocative character amidst a sumptuous spectacle that

was to reach consensus on the part of the audience. So, even if “At the heart of early punk was calculated anger” (Clark, 2003, p. 2), the discourse of the “gracioso” had to reflect serious thought on the most effective combination of comic lust, literary achievement, irony, self-indulgence, mockery and wittiness.

As much as punk rock showed radical opposition to the authority that denied and alienated citizens’ rights (Cross, 2010), the “gracioso” had to take an alternative course of action. He/she does not refuse the system in which he/she lives in, but he/she only bears it through constant criticism. The only way in which he/she accepts to live in a system in which a servant resembles a slave is by making every occasion suitable for a piece of criticism. In this way, he/she is systematically undermining the hand that barely feeds him/her, opposing to it from the inside. Throughout his/her discourse he/she frequently adopts an outsider point of view allowing for considerable detachment in relation to the plot he/she enacts.

Another similarity between the “gracioso” and punk music is that by engaging in provocative and creative performance, both asserted for the full potential of the common people: “Crass were attacking the cumulative oppressions of the family, church, state, police and courts and asserting the dignity, capability and creativity of ‘the people’ in contrast” (Cross, 2010, p. 9). By enacting the “capability and creativity” of the common people, the “gracioso” was also urging for a new social order capable of acknowledging that potential. Both the “gracioso” and punk, namely through the do-it-yourself (D.I.Y) aspect, looked for ways to achieve a society where every individual would have the opportunity to reveal, and enhance, its full potential. Consequently, the commitment to singularity characterises their course of action, as defined by Miura (2010, p. 75), “Commitment to singularity is commitment to freedom by way of making one’s essence a radical difference”, as he identifies singularity as a key concept in the aesthetics of punk. The argument presented by Miura traces the replacement of universalism with the “rhetoric of identity” as a “necessity of history” (p. 77). In this sense we can interpret “gracioso” and punk rock as two historical moments determined by critical social and political issues, where the demand for the “rhetoric of identity” was huge: “It is commitment to singularity that necessarily only translates the aesthetic into the political” (Miura, 2010, p. 67). By enacting singularity, the “gracioso” and punk rock promoted meaning transference from aesthetic to political realm, opposing to the too many social constraints of their time. The praise of an individual voice, and choice, and the focus on individual sovereignty, i.e. singularity, is indeed appalling both in “gracioso’s” and punk performances.

How the individual can rise above the social constraints imposed on it is a recurrent subject within the performances of both the “gracioso” and punk rock, by electing self-expression as a core value. In fact, the most alluring feature of the “gracioso” is his/her constant urge for self-expression, as he/she does not stop replying to his/her master, or commenting on the plot, saying poetry, using Latin expressions, and also calling things by their right names, as “Saramago” in *Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena* (1736) [*Amphitryon or, Jupiter and Alcmena*], by António José da Silva:

Aria
I come from the war, and I am going home.
I come from the war, and I am going to the war.
If there is war in the war,
there is also war at home.
The house of war
is the home of war.

*I come from the war, and I am going to war.
I come from the war, and I am going home.
(Acting) In less than nothing, we are at the front of our house which I could barely believe I would see again! Oh, gentleman, the hole we call home is a great thing, even if full of holes itself, for a home with holes is more worthy than a body hit by bullets, but then they have already gone by, and I am not gone. (Silva, 1759, pp. 365-366)*

As the quotation puts in evidence, the “gracioso” goes from singing to acting in an eye’s blink. He sings an aria, short, repetitive but full of ambiguity, criticising how the war influences everything negatively, spreading its setbacks to one’s own home. According to “Saramago’s” point of view, the war can never be left behind instead it will hunt you wherever you go.

As one can easily recognise the main instrument of the “gracioso” is the capacity to cause an impression through language. He/she plays with the double meaning of certain words to foreground his/her critical condition in a world of masters. Despite the difficulties and hardships, the “gracioso” never loses his spirits as long as he/she manages to make himself/herself heard. In this case, singularity has everything to do with self-expression. This character never gives up the right to testify, explain, comment, reply, suggest, rephrase, etc. His/her “radical difference” lies in verbal ability. By contrasting with the frequently monotonous voice of the master in love, the servant fights for the right to an independent life, quite apart from the illusions coming from the master’s idleness. In this context, the “rhetoric of identity” coincides with enactment towards autonomy. Insofar the servant mirrors the vanity of the master’s world, he/she detaches himself/herself from it, turning his/her back as much as possible on a world that annihilates the capacity to think and speak for oneself. The “gracioso” lives for self-expression, and he/she mostly lives by the ethics of say-it-yourself (S.I.Y), in an era where servants were supposed to have no mouth, and instead be all ears for their masters’ orders and wishes. The freedom that allows for a character such as the “gracioso” is the same in which punk is based on.

Nevertheless, if it is admitted that punk gave rise to a subculture (Clark, 2003; Moran, 2010) it is difficult to assume something equivalent regarding the “gracioso”. First, because we are considering different artistic levels, since a character in an opera cannot be considered an artistic or cultural movement. Punk was the result of an ideological commitment of a group of artists, and performers in a twentieth century world, already dominated by the media. The “gracioso” was a character with unique features in a mainstream show supervised by the censorship court. On the one hand, the “gracioso” could not dare being radical in any sense of the word, but on the other hand his/her trend would be even more subversive as he/she was fighting the system within the system. To this respect, there are eighteenth century testimonies that can attest the reception of the “gracioso” as a quite subversive character.

Manuel de Figueiredo (1806), an eighteenth century playwright, member of the “Arcádia Lusitana” [Lusitanian Arcadia] (1757-1774), a literary academy that aimed at renewing the national theatre, in a letter to his friend Isidoro Soares de Ataíde, gives his opinion on the role of the “gracioso” within the Portuguese theatre: “Daquele tempo para cá é que pegam os Portugueses em uma ópera de Metastásio, metem-lhe dois ou quatro graciosos, desaforados e porcos, põem-lhe por título Comédia de tal em tal parte, no gosto do teatro português, e imprimem-na” (pp. 539-540). [From that time onwards to the present time, the Portuguese grab an opera by Metastasio, they add it two or four graciosos, nasty, and with a big mouth, and then call it a Comedy, according to the Portuguese theatrical taste, and publish it.]

As one can well see, the “gracioso” does not resist the negative appreciation of an author engaged in rebuilding the national theatre according to strict moral and educational

imperatives, as this was truly the goal of the Lusitanian Arcadia. Notwithstanding, what is worth noticing is that the “gracioso” is understood by Manuel de Figueiredo as simultaneously breathing life into the comedy genre, and calling undesirable attention due to the overflow of his/her speech and obscene remarks.

In relation to the efficiency of the “gracioso” in triggering social change, one must always keep in mind that the operas by António José da Silva and Alexandre António de Lima were to be puppet shows. Although the puppets could well resemble human figures, the amount of detachment on the part of the audience in relation to what was happening on stage was surely higher when compared to a show with human performers. With this, we do not intend to say that theatrical illusion was not prevailing, but rather introduce a qualitative distinction between this kind of show, and others enacted by human performers. Even in the preface of *Teatro cómico português ou Coleção das óperas portuguesas* [*Portuguese comic theatre or Collection of Portuguese operas*] (1759) the differences, and sometimes the limitations, of this particular kind of show are acknowledged:

... saberá discernir a dificuldade da Cômica em um Teatro, donde os representantes se animam de impulso alheio; donde os afectos e acidentes estão sepultados nas sombras do inanimado, escurecendo estas muita parte da perfeição, que nos teatros se requer, por cuja causa se faz incomparável o trabalho de compor para semelhantes interlocutores, que, como nenhum seja senhor das suas acções, não as podem executar com a perfeição que devia ser; por este motivo, surpreendido muitas vezes o discurso de quem compõe estas obras, deixa de escrever muitos lances por se não poderem executar.

[... [one] will be able to grasp the difficulty of the comic art in a theatrical genre where actors are moved by the hands of others; where feelings and events are buried in the shadows of the inanimate, diminishing these a great amount of the perfection generally required in theatres. That is the reason why writing for these characters, none of them self-dependent, is beyond any comparison. Because they cannot enact the plot with the desired perfection, the author is frequently taken by surprise, and chooses not to write certain sequences, since they cannot be executed.]

Despite the technical disadvantages of the puppet opera, in a sense, we believe that the character of the “gracioso” might be closely related with this specific kind of show, for some speech would be more acceptable coming from the mouth of a puppet than of a real person, in particular within the censorship court’s ideological framework.

The two major common features between the “gracioso” and punk rock are social and political awareness, since they both comment critically, and with lavishing irony, on the social constraints upon the individual, and the way one should not conform to the system. Both the “gracioso” and punks see themselves as outsiders, guided by a spirit of constant and restless rebellion. In this way, they wish to arouse an engaged audience that like them seeks ways to disentangle the dilemmas presented. At the same time, by rebelling against the status quo, they challenge the mainstream in which they operate. In fact, the “gracioso” mocks the same plot in which he takes part, and punk addresses “artistic excellence” in very critical terms. Barone (2012), analysing the versatile role of the “gracioso” in Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s plays suggests that the character unsettles the boundary between the comic and tragic, as he/she is systematically in between reality and fiction, truth and untruth, by using such an expressive mode that pervades the very own domain of the effectiveness of theatrical make believe.

As the “gracioso” puts in question opera as legitimate fiction, Cross (2010) claims something similar regarding anarcho-punk:

That movement proved capable of establishing not only networks for recording, distribution, publishing and organizing, but also a distinctive and well-defined sub-culture, with its own recognizable moral and political ethos. Rallying around their call, Crass and the other bands claimed to take punk's anarchist imperative seriously—to identify their ambitions as 'anarchy, peace and freedom'— and to reject mainstream punk's squalid nihilism as another act of political capitulation, an unacknowledged rehash of hippy's 'drop-out, cop-out' politics. (Cross, 2010, p. 5)

Punk music also encompasses the capacity to generate its own means of production, and dissemination. This autonomy in relation to the mainstream asserts for the importance, and invigorating dynamics of the do-it-yourself ethics as a plan of action against a system in which labour is low-paid, and, at the same time, the prices increasingly high. Punks just refuse to pay the price.

In what concerns the "gracioso", in a theatre full of people, he/she has, in fact, little to hide. The non-alignment practiced by the "gracioso" foregrounds his/her rebellious attitude towards the theatrical mainstream of the time. One can infer that the only reason why he/she accepts to be part of such a scheme is because he/she needs to support himself/herself. In this sense, the dependency of the "gracioso" does not entail submission. Accordingly, he/she accepts to be part of the mainstream but under his/her own terms. These necessarily imply opera seeing its illusory effect seriously questioned and put to proof.

Conclusion

The contradiction within the insider/ outsider approach that drove the eighteenth century "gracioso" is ultimately the same for punk movement, since its beginning to the present day. How can one be outside if, at least to a certain extent, one is living inside? We believe that the "gracioso" and punk rock contributed to an answer by defying their own performance realm. If the "gracioso" did not compel to the seriousness, or even to the legitimacy of opera genre, stressing the importance of a say-it-yourself practice, punk music, through the do-it-yourself ethics, inaugurated networks for producing music on its own terms. The rebellion towards their own art, theatre and music respectively, is the best signal of their commitment to social change.

Furthermore, we shall note that the "gracioso" and punk ultimately correspond to a "fruitful phase of ideological struggle" (Laing, 1978, p. 128) within an entertainment industry embedded in "universalism" and adopting an increasing sophistication. We can also come to the conclusion that the core values enacted by the "gracioso" and punk music are cross cultural by nature, arguing that they are based on "basic human values" (Moran, 2010, p. 64), which connect to the "rhetoric of identity" asserted by specific historical contexts (Miura, 2010).

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