

# CHAPTER 3

# **THE MARGINAL PORTO: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM HELL BY A. DASILVA O. IN THE 80'S**

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Around the 1980's, Porto started opening up to the cultural, musical and aesthetic change announced by (post)modernism. Resistance - and a search for the new - manifested itself through radio programmes, fanzines, concerts, and bulletin boards. The key motto was "for the right to be different"<sup>18</sup>. In those shifting times, besides some musicians, certain authors and editors stood out. António da Silva Oliveira (A. DaSilva O., 1958) was a key figure in the scene. He published, helped publish, and jumpstarted projects from a myriad cultural intervention domains. Through A. DaSilva O.'s "cursed" underground journey, we will trace a portrait of Porto's society in its transition to contemporaneity where the arts, music and their subversion play(ed) a key role.

**Keywords:** Porto; 1980's; underground; resistance.

### 3.1 A.DaSilva O.<sup>19</sup>: The guru of Porto's underground

*A dirty needle/ through many/ suicidal chords fills me/ with catastrophes/ between sense/ and the dissimulation/ of its destiny. Outside, impersonal people dance/ the ghost characters/ of the poetic mutilation/ of an eternal return/ within dance/ outside itself. Ode to Vinyl<sup>20</sup> (A. DaSilva O.)*

The changes in 1980's Portuguese society (Santos, 1993, 1995) were the basis of the country's cultural shift at the time. Portuguese artists had a sense of the dawn of a new beginning, the chance to lay everything on the line and avail themselves of new techniques and ways of artistic experimentation, embracing an emergent postmodernism (Baía et al., 2012: 19; Dias, 2016; Guerra & Quintela, 2020; Bennett & Guerra, 2019). Porto, specifically, though overall very late to adopting new aesthetic and cultural trends, as a consequence of a certain cultural smothering particular to the time, went through a series of significant underground and/or alternative attempts at cultural dynamizing and renewal (Melo, 2002a; Melo & Pinharanda, 1986). A good way of sketching out this cultural and aesthetic context is through local fanzines of the time. As an example, let us examine the third edition of *Confidências do Exílio* [Confessions from Exile], which initiates a tour of Porto's alternative cultural scene: "Porto looking for alternatives". The idea was that Porto

<sup>18</sup> An expression immortalised on radio microphones by António Sérgio in the radio programme "Som da Frente" [Vanguard Sound] in 1982.

<sup>19</sup> António da Silva Oliveira (A. DaSilva O., n. 1958) was (and is) a central presence in both Porto's and Portugal's underground movement, a writer, poet, editor, and performer. This chapter is part of the development of the following research projects: "Juventude e as artes da cidadania: práticas criativas, cultura participativa e ativismo" [Youth and the art of citizenry, creative practices, participative culture, and activism], financed by the Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/ SOC -SOC/28655/2017) and "CANVAS - Towards Safer and Attractive Cities: Crime and Violence Prevention through Smart Planning and Artistic Resistance" (Ref. POCI-01-0145-FEDER-030748).

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <http://antologiadoesquecimento.blogspot.pt/2007/11/ode-ao-vinil.html>.

was undergoing a new cultural dynamic, an "unconditional embracing of creative vanguardism" (Confidências do Exílio, 1985: 3): from visual arts, evident in art galleries like Roma e Pavia<sup>21</sup>, Espaço Lusitano, and Cooperativa Árvore<sup>22</sup> [Tree Cooperative]; the (limited) existence of clubs and meeting points like Moinho de Vento [Windmill], Griffon's, Aniki Bóbó, Batô, No Sense, and Meia-Cave<sup>23</sup> [Half-basement]; as well as record shops; and, in the same measure, the emergent free radio scene.

Such is the context within which the punk movement is most notable. In Porto, and in Portugal, it constituted, firstly, an important component of national youth culture and, secondly, an essential form of cosmopolitanism (Guerra & Silva, 2015). This much needed embracing of outside cultural and aesthetic trends, when contrasted with a still isolated and traditionalist country, contributed to new sociabilities based on a greater fruition of diversity and the welcoming of new cultures and values (Melo, 2002b; Melo & Cândia, 2002); an explosion, fundamentally not just at a musical level, but also at a cultural, artistic, and normative level. This movement facilitated a confrontation between individual, and group, identities and dominant values, a radical celebration of difference, diversity, and individuality, grounded in a do it yourself (DIY) philosophy (Guerra, 2014), a way of opening the country up to new aesthetic and cultural winds, to new (post)modern identities.

As for António S. Oliveira's<sup>24</sup> trajectory, he was born in Vila Nova de Gaia in 1958, into a family with low social and economic capital, as his father was a construction worker, and his mother, a florist at the Bolhão Market<sup>25</sup>. His parents decided to provide their youngest with an education, contrary to what was the norm at the time, despite the greater diffusion of the Portuguese school system. This is a social

<sup>21</sup> Founded in 1980 in Porto, under the name of Galeria Roma e Pavia. In 1990 it changed its address to the current location in the historic center of the city, and its name to Galeria Pedro Oliveira. Its activity focuses on a marked contemporary conceptual trend, spreading the work of a restricted group of Portuguese and foreign artists.

<sup>22</sup> A Árvore – Cooperativa de Atividades Artísticas CRL, is a cultural cooperative recognized by the Portuguese state as a private body of public utility. It was founded in 1963 by artists, writers, architects and intellectuals interested in creating new contributions for cultural production and dissemination, freely and independently, which thus fulfilled a dream and an ambition with the love with which dreams are always attempted. <https://arvorecoop.pt/quemsomos/>

<sup>23</sup> All these spaces – Griffon's, Aniki Bóbó, No Sense, and Meia-Cave – were emblematic spaces in the 1980s Portuguese night. They functioned as bars but were also spaces of aesthetic and artistic vanguard – with exhibitions, live acts, DJ sets.

<sup>24</sup> An incomplete bibliography of António da Silva Oliveira's works follows. Books: *Eco, ou o gago* (Self-published, 1982) *Prorapapro Renata* (Edições N, 1983) *Homenagem póstuma a José Augusto França* (Edições N, 1983) *Obra póstuma* (Edições N, 1984) *X Acto* (Black Sun Editores, 1990) *Carta a um morto* (Black Sun Editores, 1993) *Peidinhos* (Edições Mortas, 1993) *O Anti-Cristo* (Edições Mortas, 1993) *Fuck you* (Edições Mortas, 1995) *Uma pequena obra-prima* (Edições Mortas, 1995) *Correspondência amorosa entre Salazar e Marilyn Monroe* (Edições Mortas, 1997) *Auto-retrato de um decadente* (Black Sun Editores, 1997) *Diários falsos de Fernando Pessoa* (Edições Mortas, 1998) *Coração sujo* (Black Sun Editores, 1999) *Pide* (Edições Mortas, 1999) *O último desejo de um serial killer* (Edições Mortas, 2000) *Sete beijos numa pedra* (Edições Mortas, 2000) *O livro mau* (Edições Mortas, 2001) *Desobediência poética* (Black Sun Editores, 2002) *Excrementos* (Edições Mortas, 2002) *O bem volta a atacar* (Edições Mortas, 2003) *Punhetas de Wagner* (Edições Mortas, 2004) *Teatro d'abjecção, teatro radiofónico* (Edições Mortas, 2005) *Qu'inferno: porque está escuro se há fogo dentro de nós?* (co-written, A Mula, 2009) *Rendimento Mínimo* (with Rui Azevedo Ribeiro, Edições 50 Kg, 2011) *Sol para presas* (Edições Mortas, 2015), *Um poema podre* (Edições Mortas, 2016) *O poeta chupe la peace* (Edições Mortas, 2016). Magazines: *Arteneo*, a revista filha da puta; *Papa*, a revista aborto; *Movimento N*, assuntos estratégicos; *Marquesa Negra*; *Broche Suburbano*; *Última Geração*; *Voz de Deus*; *Piolho*; *Estúpida*.

<sup>25</sup> One of the most emblematic markets in the city of Porto, which is characterized by its monumentality and architectural beauty. This market is mainly dedicated to the sale of fresh products, especially food.

belonging marked by an association to some of the lower rungs of social hierarchy. A good indicator of how sparse the starting cultural capital was is the number of books present in his home: a Bible and a technical manual. This small library was made up for by book loans that allowed for a bookish voracity on young Oliveira's part<sup>26</sup>. At a time when class stratification was extremely marked and a kind of family "destiny" usually implied an impossibility of escape, social context is important: the school system was undergoing a stage of increased investment and democratisation (Stoer, 1982) and, therefore, held a greater appeal for parents. In this case, school was a social elevator that introduced Oliveira to something that would indelibly mark him: books. Another important element in the formation of musical and artistic tastes were his elder brothers: Oliveira's oldest brother would bring him newspaper clippings from *Diário de Lisboa* [Lisbon Daily], *Diário Popular* [Popular Daily], and *A Capital* [The Capital], which at the time included literary supplements. This was crucial to triggering Oliveira's passion for reading, as he himself tells it:

*There were no books in my house, there was only a stonemasonry book and, of course, the Bible. [...] I know poetry because my brother brought me issues of the Diário de Lisboa, where I would later work for eight years. So, I knew everything going on and knew all literature. I read three libraries and wanted to write crime novels. Teachers would bring me books and I'd read them. [...] I read a lot.*

This passion for literature was not simply anchored in reading. It expanded into the book itself as an object, how it was built, and into the whole writing process. This made a six-year-old DaSilva go into a stationery shop and walk out with a ream of blotting paper, which he then put through the guillotine and used to make a book. This all-encompassing bookish voracity was a mainstay for DaSilva throughout the years, allowing him to stay in touch with contracultural news as they happened, namely with the punk movement. Punk served as, above all, a symbolic and ideologic influence; what most interested him in this new movement was the spirit, the expertises, and its DIY philosophy that could be leveraged as form of urban "guerrilla" warfare (Guerra & Quintela, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; McKay, 1996; O'Connor, 2008; Guerra, 2014; McRobbie, 1994). Besides, the fact that this movement was perceived as having originated in, and stayed anchored to, the streets held an enormous appeal and influence in Oliveira's structuration of thoughts and actions, meaning the musical side of punk was the least significant out of the whole movement.

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<sup>26</sup> Our approach to António S. Oliveira is based on the gathering and analysis of documental data as part of the development of a doctoral project on Portuguese alternative rock (1980-2010). 196 key players of the Portuguese musical and artistic alternative scene were interviewed (Guerra, 2010). That self-same information was complimented by three in-depth interviews with António da Silva Oliveira in January and May 2017, and July 2018, whose purpose was to reconstitute his general life course.

This bookish voracity, the contact with new alternative cultures, and the new interpersonal relationships, usually forged in cafes, allowed the actor to develop what Albiez (2003) postulates as a 'ray of creativity', something constructed through negotiation and selection, while not being mandatorily determined by class, gender or age, since the habitus allows for the "idiomatic choices that allows them to accumulate cultural capital and build a bank of works through which they maintain creative sustainability" (Albiez, 2003: 363; Acord & DeNora, 2008; DeNora, 2000; Toynbee, 2000; Becker, 1974). The bank of works, in this case, objectivated itself in public readings, gatherings, sociabilities, etc, and was the basis of Oliveira's artistic influences. Thus, we can refer to 'instances of education' of an informal nature, meaning continuous sociabilities and self-learnings: a form of continuous DIY (Guerra, 2015: 11).

The aforementioned importance of the sociability networks forged in Porto's alternative circles, an extremely small scene, are not to be dismissed. The structuration of social networks allows for the triggering of connections and indispensable resources for the pursuing of activities that otherwise, due to the group's small size, would not be doable. Similarly, they allow further new connections to be made, some of which could be with individuals from other fields, such as journalists. Beyond demonstrating Oliveira's centrality in that very field, this may explain the 1978 invitation to work with *Revista Sema* [Scheme Magazine], a trimestral literary magazine that aimed to start publishing a dossier on counterculture; Oliveira was chosen to undertake this task<sup>27</sup>.

The following year, when in the army as part of mandatory military service, Oliveira decided to visit Vítor Silva Tavares, from vanguard alternative publisher & etc<sup>28</sup> a key player in Lisbon's underground alternative scene, in order to gauge the possibility of publishing his own poetry book (see Cameira, 2018). A fortnight later, the response arrived: "look, this is far from Herberto Helder<sup>29</sup>" which merited a reply that particularly synthesises António S. Oliveira's iconoclastic nature: "Thank you, Vítor, I'm glad not to be epigenic". Oliveira took it as a compliment, a medal (and story) he would use (and recount) for his whole life as a form of countercultural capital. After returning from military service, Oliveira decides to create an "alternative movement" in Porto. The first step was to publish a magazine, the *Arteneo*, a revista filha da puta [Arteneo, the motherfucking magazine], on March 31, 1983, in order to facilitate the flourishing of new cultural and artistic styles in the city, as well as a way of distance themselves from the influence of the Portuguese Renaissance's cultural movement. António S. Oliveira would take on the role of editor-in-chief at *Arteneo*, a revista filha da puta. In traditional DIY fashion, this one magazine ended up becoming two due to printing issues: the printing office they first went to, Alma Gráfica, specialised itself in printing invoice books, which resulted in the back of the magazine's every page remaining blank.

<sup>27</sup> Which he signed António Barraca, his father's war nickname, or ASO – António Silva Oliveira. Years later, he cooperated with *Ler & Escrever* [Reading & Writing], *Diário de Lisboa's* literary supplement.

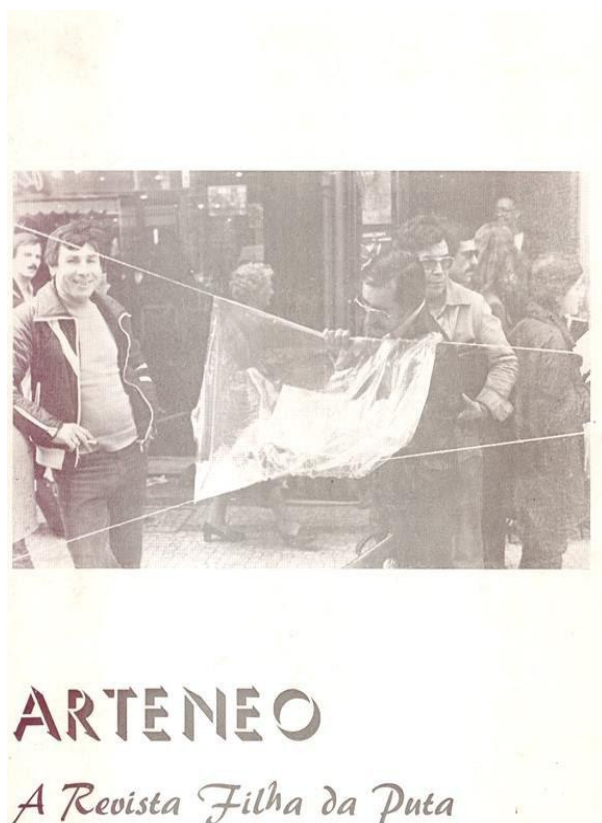
<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of this significant Portuguese publisher see AA. VV. (2013).

<sup>29</sup> Herberto Helder de Oliveira was a Portuguese poet, considered one of the greatest Portuguese poets of the second half of the 20th century, as well as a reference in the field of Portuguese Experimental Poetry.

Using artisanal methods reminiscent of fanzines, António S. Oliveira then created a second magazine, *Papa*, a revista aborto [*Papa*, the aborted magazine], in March 1984. The truth is that, to his great surprise, both magazines became real economic success stories, as he himself recounts:

*We printed 1500 copies of the magazine and I sold 750 in Lisbon alone. There we went, Bernardino and Konex and I, to sell them. We each took a bunch and sold all of it. [...] I: How much did each one go for? i: I don't remember, but about 500 or 1000 escudos<sup>30</sup>. Each magazine was twelve plus one, and the man from Velho Barato bookshop told me 'what, twelve plus one?' and the guy, bam! I freaked out watching the money come in. I came back rolling in money [...].*

*There's this notion that for a guy to write he needs to have a certain degree of culture, he must be born into university, and anything else doesn't matter. We're totally against that. If you go to Pipa Velha [a bar here in Porto] and you haven't read 'The Name of the Rose', 'Ulysses', etc. you're considered a moron. That's what we go against. Against that importation of ideas. Instead of importing, let's try to export (A. DASILVA O. in s/n, 1984).*



**Figure 3.1 Cover of *Arteneo*, a revista filha da puta**

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/editoradelume/photos/a. .>

<sup>30</sup> About 2,50 to 5 Euros.



Parallel to his editorial activities, Oliveira staged his first street activism performance, *Olá, Homem Doméstico* [Hello, Domesticated Man], at Rua Santa Catarina, Porto, in 1981<sup>31</sup>. It consisted of a thirty-metre-long carpet made of set paper written in shoeshining ink, all of it made at Bernardino Guimarães' house, his *compagnon de route* in practically all things. The intervention per se stretched from the Majestic café<sup>32</sup> to the Porto Grand Hotel. And, since bus routes had to pass by Rua de Santa Catarina, the intervention was a success, having even resulted in several arrests. As he describes it:

*I don't run in academic circles, I really appreciate academic freedom, but I really don't like the structure, I'm not for or against it. I intervened on the streets because what happens, happens on the streets. So, that's where it started, at Rua Santa Catarina, acids and that kind of thing, and even political events. So, I built an intervention with thirty metres of set paper where I'd written a text of my own. [...] But, getting back on topic, from Majestic to the Porto Grand Hotel, at the time, I created thirty metres of set paper with the guys from over there. [...] I'd learned that, when you're acting on the streets, everyone is looking at what you're doing but nobody's looking at you, no one's watching who does it [...] I staged an intervention with eggs on the 82 bus route. It was a mess, police showed up and shut the whole thing down.*



**Figure 3.2 A. DaSilva O. 'spreads the word', 31/03/2011.**  
**Photograph by António S. Ferreira**

Source: Available at: [http://edicoes-mortas.blogspot.pt/2011\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://edicoes-mortas.blogspot.pt/2011_03_01_archive.html)

<sup>31</sup> In order to commemorate that event's 30 year anniversary, A. DaSilva O. returned to Rua Santa Catarina to spread the 'word', which at its heart was just that: a piece of paper with "word" written on it, as his latest book, *Excrementos* [Excrements], was tied to his ankle and dragging on the floor.

<sup>32</sup> The Majestic Café – opened in 1921 – is a historical coffee shop located in Rua de Santa Catarina, in the city of Porto, Portugal. Its relevance comes both from the cultural ambience that surrounds it, namely the tradition of the *café tertulia*, where several personalities from the cultural and artistic life of the city met, as well as from its



His second street intervention, Bordel [Brothel], makes for a good example of his anti-academic tendencies, including an aversion to the way academia works, since, at that time, members of the alternative community itself ended up, in part, censoring his street project:

*I staged those two street interventions, the first one I already told you about, and the second, it was the guys from the alternative crowd themselves that were selling their stuff there that shut me down and cut me out, who censored me in fear that they'd come and forbid their selling things there. They were already there, selling, and they had their interests and they cancelled the whole thing. All of it was published in Filha da Puta [Son of a Bitch] magazine. Art goes back out on the street and speaks for itself, speaks through writing and the author is secondary here.*

Adding to this rejection of academia, Oliveira also refused to enrol in a university programme. He therefore proudly considers himself to be a 'free stonemason, a mallard' (Razão de Ser, 2017). Self-taught, his main literary influences are counterculture and punk rock. This kind of stance from Oliveira, and its subsequent dispositions, allows us to approach the issue of the artist's role, and its contradictions, in Western societies. In them, artists are seen as members of a 'sacred profession' (Simpson, 1981: 5), as people who create something valuable and universal. There may even be a certain degree of romanticism and an idealising of artistic activities. A factor in this is the fact that in the artistic world there are no prerequisites or permits distinguishing professionals from amateurs, unlike in other professions, such as a career in medicine or law, where there are degrees, licenses, and certificates granted to professionals in order to authenticate and legalise their work. There exists a deeply ingrained idea of art as a gift that cannot be taught (Bain, 2005).

This does not mean that there are no gatekeepers in the artistic field or that entry into it does not imply certain prerequisites that are roughly almost always associated with an academic education of some kind. There is an increasing academisation of the arts that ends up translating into a certain kind of social seclusion, a control of the profession, of its knowledge, especially that of knowledge taken as legitimate (Svensson, 2015). António S. Oliveira is on the other side of that barricade. A self-taught artist, grounded in the philosophy of the streets, who refuses the conventions that pervade the academic milieu. Such a stance is not wholly unproblematic, as we will discuss further on; it is generally based on extremes: either a condescending dismissal of ideas or, on the other hand, a labelling as cursed, with all the romanticism that implies (Bourdieu, 1996; George, 2013; Cauquelin, 2005; Heinich, 2005, 2004; Inglis, 2004).

In the 1980's, Oliveira's literary alter ego is born: A. DaSilva. O. According to himself, this is not a heteronym: the choice was due to the phonetics of A.DaSilva. O. In fact, his pen name is nothing but an adaptation of his given name, not implying any complete change and, therefore, the author anonymity the mask of a pseudonym allows<sup>33</sup>. There are, however, ambiguities relating to this choice that the author

himself continuously highlights: “I have tried to kill A DaSilva O. I confess it here, on Antena 3<sup>34</sup>. I tried to kill him, tried to end him. And I was almost killed by him in return [laughs]” (Razão de Ser, 2017). The choice to use a pen name, as well as the various stories that came to surround it in time, point towards other perspectives directly related to the question of identity. And nothing has a larger identity impact than a name:

*Identity is not necessarily what we are, but what we say we are. Better: it is what we are because we say we are it. Identity - what we are to ourselves and to others, and with who we are - is not independent of our discourse on it and their resulting theses. Much of that discourse is composed of narratives, meaning they speak our identity by telling our stories. And they are binding, meaning they speak our identity by specifying that and those we belong to and that and those that separate us. (Silva & Guerra, 2015: 101).*

The 80's were, simultaneously, the decade of a large number of alternative projects and activities, all in the periphery of mainstream culture. For example, in 1982, Oliveira self-published his first book, *Eco ou o Gago*. The book launch, a very trendy event in the 1980's Portuguese artistic scene (Dias, 2016), perfectly demonstrates the author's aesthetic and confrontational dispositions; the book was quite literally launched: he presented it on the D. Luís bridge, wrapped in a sheet. Then he ripped the sheet and threw it into the Douro river. After that project came a succession of others: the alternative information magazine *MOVIMENTO N*, *Assuntos Estratégicos* [*N MOVEMENT*, *Strategic Issues*] was first published in 1983 with Bernardo Guimarães as its information director. Thanks to this magazine, A. DaSilva O. published his second book, in 1984: *Chocolates Choupe la Peace*, under the publisher Editora N.

<sup>33</sup> Phillips & Kim (2008) analyse publishers' use of pseudonyms in jazz history's first phase as a way to preserve their cultural goods' façade of propriety relative to the time's Victorian identity.

<sup>34</sup> A Portuguese radio station known for showcasing alternative music.



**Figure 3.3 Eco. Ou o Gago**

Source: Available at: <http://edicoes-mortas.blogspot.pt/2012/05/eco-ou-o-gago-dasilva-o-casa-museu.html>

## 3.2. Caos in 80's Porto: Alternative City or City of No Alternatives

*Doing the Impossible. Thirty years ago, a handful of youngsters planned to invade the future, via ether or with a two-Watt radio transmitter, and though they planned it poorly they executed it better. With more or less theory, and all the practice in the impossible, we impregnated the electromagnetic waves, freeing the bipolar radio system. (Rádio Caos, n. d.).*

It is important to note the boost the 1970's free (or pirate radio) movement received in Portugal's alternative/underground scene in the 1980's (Reis, 2014), which constituted itself not only as a new (less structured and hierarchised) way of making radio, but as new way of making culture. This context was unique in that, on the one hand, there was a need for alternatives to mainstream media, which, in Portugal, were dominated by the State/Church duopoly and, on the other, it was legislatively impossible for private entities to develop their own broadcasts (Cordeiro, 2007: 380). In Porto – a culturally stagnant city, far removed from new international trends –, pirate radio came about as a possibility too tempting for those who wished to change the city's cultural landscape to pass up. Of the 13 pirate radio stations in Porto between 1975 and 1988<sup>35</sup>, Rádio Caos<sup>36</sup> [Radio Chaos]

is of particular importance, as it is considered by many to be the city's first free radio.

It was also one of A. DaSilva O's main activities during the 1980's. Its name and purpose intentionally referenced confrontation with the establishment - in fact, it was an attempt to overcome the cultural and aesthetic marasmus the city was mired in through fully living the, at the time recent, democracy. Caos sought divergence, diversity, to be a vessel for the aesthetic and cultural renewal of Porto, taking on an important role in promoting new national and international music alongside its brethren. A new, complete way to experience radio, in which each person, cooperatively, held numerous roles in the production and broadcasting chain, profiled in a DIY, self-teaching philosophy: a way of empowering and celebrating individuality, autonomy, and creativity without the need to make use of dominant production and/or consumerism rationales; an opposition to art for profit and an affirmation of art for its own sake (Quintela & Guerra, 2019).



**Figure 3.4 Rádio Caos advertisement<sup>37</sup>**

Source: Available at: <https://industrias-culturais.blogspot.pt/2017/01/?view=snapshot>

<sup>35</sup> Rádio Activa, Rádio Caos, RCN – Claquete Emissora do Norte, Rádio Clube do Porto, Rádio Clube Português, Rádio Concerto, Rádio Cultura, Rádio Delírio, Rádio Festival, Rádio Onda Livre, Rádio Placard, Rádio Polis and Rádio Universitária do Porto (Silva, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> It was a 'pirate radio' whose activity extended from 1982 to 1988 in the city of Porto. Besides being one of the first national pirate radio stations, it was particularly outstanding in the alternative scene in Porto due to the experiments that extended beyond the radio: they reached areas such as poetry, literature, music, fanzines, etc. (Guerra, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Text reads: "FEEL RÁDIO CAOS' AGGRESSION".

Rádio Caos was, above all, a space of intense sociabilities and experimentation, in which individuals with similar interests and trajectories could meet and discuss a whole universe of aesthetic and cultural possibilities and, at the same time, test new, more experimental ideas (Guerra, 2019). It was also, as per A. DaSilva O.'s intentions, a 'poetry-radio', grounded in an ideology of 'barrier-breaking' between "the radio maker and their listeners", making use of "the language of the people" to "intervene".

In this domain, A. DaSilva O. became responsible for various programmes. One of them, *Correspondência Amorosa Entre Salazar e Marilyn Monroe* [Love Letters Between Salazar and Marilyn Monroe], that would, years later (in 1997) be published in book form, sought to discuss the differences and similarities between Portuguese dictator Salazar and Hollywood's rhetoric. It was a sort of ironic radio play, that ended with a live wedding between Salazar and Marilyn Monroe. Another notable programme was called *Punhetas de Wagner* [Wagner Handjobs], which consisted of an hour-long monologue by A. DaSilva O. The morning show *Beijinhos e Abraços* [Kisses and Hugs] featured several segments, among them *Diários Falsos de Fernando Pessoa* [The Fake Diaries of Fernando Pessoa], with a typewriter as a soundtrack. There was also a fortnightly interview programme, *Letra, Literatura e Assassinos* [Letters, Literature, and Murderers]. For A. DaSilva O., radio was also a way to write: "Listening is also a kind of writing and, so, radio was essential to me". An interesting point, however, and one that contrasts with the idea of carelessness or voluntarism, is A. DaSilva O.'s degree of preparation: "I had all my shows written out. You think I opened my mouth on the microphone without it being written? No. I went around giving interviews and had everything prepared".

Furthermore, radio, besides its importance in alternative culture, was also a fertile breeding ground for fanzines, and several of Rádio Caos' programmes developed their own fanzines in order to promote themselves and their themes. Still in the 80's, A. DaSilva O. founded and ran *Última Geração* [Last Generation]<sup>38</sup> magazine and *Edições Mortas* [Dead Publishers], a small independent publishing company, protesting the Portuguese editorial conditions of the time, with very clear objectives:

*Edições Mortas translates into writing a whole literarily destroyed time, choked on shattered signs and objects lost in the holy scriptures' trans-symbolic imagination, along with all its demystified gospels in a theoretic, artistic, and culturally useless praxis. Edições Mortas is a corpse that gives birth three, six, or nine times a year, the new dead man that refuses to proclaim all sorts of literature. (Edições Mortas, n. d.)*

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<sup>38</sup> With a total run of 24 issues, this magazine was the starting point of both Hell Conferences.

Of particular note is the existence and consistency of the Portuguese alternative scene, especially its mutual helping spirit and optimisation of the scarce means and artifacts available, running counter to the idealised notion of the artist as a being isolated from society (Becker, 1984, 1974; Bain, 2005). We can assess this through an analysis of A. DaSilva O.'s bibliography: most of his published work is put out by his publishing companies *Edições N* [N Editions] and *Edições Mortas* [Dead Editions]. However, a relatively significant portion is published by Black Sun, a small underground publisher from Lisbon, that, in turn, co-edited, along with *Edições Mortas* [Dead Editions], *Piolho* and *Estúpida* Magazines [Lice and Stupid magazines]. This means that, no matter how underground or DIY an author may be, they always need a scene and social networks that allow them to expand the margins of their artistic freedoms. Besides cafes, gatherings, etc., magazines are in themselves a relevant means of triggering social networks, particularly those based on articles of opinion, which allow for the establishment of relevant contacts in the scene, be it with its members or with other magazines, and which can be acted on in the future.

In this respect, the role of small publishers is particularly significant. Pierre Bourdieu (1996) states that it is possible to distinguish between large scale and small-scale production. In the Portuguese alternative field, the predominant, and in many ways only, scale of production is on the smaller side, roughly typical of younger people. Another important facet of small-scale production is the non-immediate (or, sometimes, non-existent) nature of any financial rewards. However, as we have mentioned, it is possible to achieve a kind of social support between people in the same situation, which allows for the development of a non-commercial artistic and literary movement (O'Connor, 2008: 17), and of music labels that remind us of the difference between 'music for an audience' and 'music for its own sake'; to put it another way, the difference between mainstream and underground music. And so, we can state, with a high degree of certainty, that this last trait is the most relevant in Oliveira: a refusal of the economic interest aspect of musical production.

However, besides the fact that the mainstream/underground dichotomy isn't as watertight as one might think in general, it is even less so in a country as small as Portugal, where distribution and sales are in the hands of a small number of companies. Especially on a financial level, life is hard for a small publisher in the country, and their medium life expectancy is extremely small. In a country with low reading indexes (Freitas & Santos, 1992; Santos, 2007; Neves, 2015), literary genres such as poetry or theatre sustain tendentially niche target audiences. All this not to mention external factors that, since 2000, made *Edições Mortas* go on a more irregular publishing schedule: even though the publisher operated with around 400 bookselling locations, now mostly closed down, none of them "pay for or return the books" (A. DaSilva O. In Mangas, 2011).

Perhaps as a way to overcome these limitations, A. DaSilva O. sketched the idea of starting his own bookshop in the 2000's: *Pulga* [Flea] in Porto's Parque Itália. Its purpose? "[...] to flood Portugal with 'Fleas' to circulate all alternative material", that is, a bookshop specialising in selling books from small publishing houses. Once again, DaSilva sticks to the margins: a way of confronting the large publishing groups



that monopolised and corrupted book publishing in Portugal. There would be three Pulga bookshops: one in Porto and two others in Lisbon and Aveiro. This idea ended up not working out, and the entire process resulted in a heavy financial burden for A. DaSilva O.

It is also important to mention the two Conferências do Inferno [Hell Conferences], held in Porto in the 90's. The first was held in 1990-1991 at the Bacalhau and Labirinto [Codfish and Labyrinth] bars, and the second in 1994 at Porto's Commercial Athenaeum. The goal of both these conferences was to promote the works and trends of Última Geração [Last Generation] magazine. In spite of the two conferences' enormous success, A. DaSilva O. never again considered undertaking a third: in addition to its inherent financial costs there was the issue of the magnitude of such an event in a small scene; all those who were left out acutely felt and demonstrated the oblivion to which they were sentenced. Once again, in the author's own words:

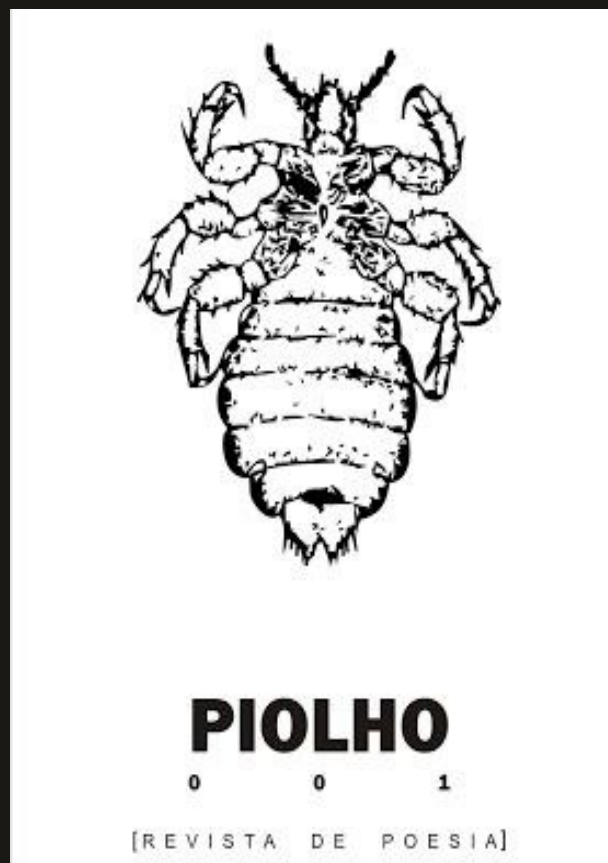
*So, the main idea was, people went around handing out Última Geração, but nobody knew those people, even though I always fought the general public. There is no general public, the general public must be contested. [...] Última Geração had good articles, bad articles, but nobody knew the people, so then I gathered the contributors to do interventions. The first was the one at Bacalhau, in Marquês. Then I talked to Maria Antónia Jardim because she had a magazine, Simbólica, and she helped out with the Hell Conferences in the Athenaeum. Then I prepared everything on a national level, with some statements and every session included a big fancy dinner. It was the bomb. I put in just about everyone from the streets, if I can put it that way, in the magazine. I talked to a guy, thought what he was saying was cool, and I told him to write an article for Piolho and they said they weren't writers. And I said 'and I am? Can you put what you're saying into words? Then you're a writer too'.*

These conferences made it into media reports at the time with a mixture of incomprehension and sarcasm, as is easily verified:

*The trompe-l'oeil effect worked perfectly, but, as you can see, it all added up into a relative failure of an event, mostly due to the disconcerting and somewhat burlesque interventions from speakers that frequently devolved into pretentious and vacuous themes, into summary and stereotyped concepts - kind of like philosophical flies buzzing. [...] Let us say that this first session of «The Hell Conferences» did not prove to have any real ideas but was limited to exploring some thrown about themes. These boys, sons of a lesser God, deserve to be in Clavel's definition: «all things considered, I have never thought about anything» (Mendes, 1990: 12).*

In the 2000's, A. DaSilva O's activity lessened. However, the decision to edit two important magazines - the poetry magazine Piolho [Lice], co-published by Edições Mortas and Black Sun, and "uncultured" magazine Estúpida [Stupid], co-published by Edições Mortas, Black Sun, and N Edições - dates from this decade.

As for the first magazine, Piolho, first published in 2010 and named after the cafe where it was created, is, once again, a work resistance in the face of Portugal's publishing scene, a form of resistance to what they perceive as cultural equalisation and a secondarisation of poetry since "official publishers refuse poetry: it's not a product, it doesn't sell" (A. DaSilva O. in Mangas, 2011). The second magazine, Estúpida, first published in 2013, features articles on international politics, interventional essays, etc. despite the acknowledgement of the quixotesque nature of such a struggle. Its name demonstrates this: "Why Estúpida? In a time when there is scarce literary publishing and social networks are king, this magazine aims to be a counter-current" (Fernandes, 2013). Its objectives, however, remain the same as always: to be "a place to escape from commercial writing that adds nothing to literature" and "[to] try to revive and question the role of the writer and intellectual in general society" (A. DaSilva O. in Fernandes, 2013).



**Figure 3.5 Cover of Piolho magazine, n.º1.**

Source: Available at: <http://edicoes-mortas.blogspot.pt/2010/04/piolho-revista-de-poesia-os.html>

### 3.3 A. DaSilva O '1,70 of A Good Person Who Only Wants the Best for People, And Nothing Else'<sup>39</sup> & The Contradictions of a Cursed Author

After all this, it is understandable that he is labelled as a cursed author<sup>40</sup> (an epithet he himself does not reject): "Me, I've been called everything. And no one calls me A. DaSilva. O. [laughs]" (Razão de Ser, 2017). Or, as he stated in our interview:

*Most of my books were bought by kids that came up to me in the pop-up black markets I used to do and said 'I have your book here, my mum threw it in the toilet'.*

*"I'm one of those guys who loves to despise talent. Despising talent creates talent in you" (Razão de Ser, 2017).*

He did not create a following. A conscious decision, in his own words: "I don't want to herd sheep. I never did" (Razão de Ser, 2017). We must note that this representation of a cursed author has its roots, firstly, in Christianity's perception of sacrifice and, secondly, in an aristocratic disdain for bourgeois values (George, 2013), in addition to depending on each time's self-representations and the volatility of the opposition between dominant and counter- culture (Barrento, 2001). However, such a duality encompasses much more complex and fluid relationships: there is an interdependence between the two cultures (Sousa, 2014: 195-196). As Moisés (2001) states: "without the system, the mere hypothesis of a «margin» would be absurd, inconceivable. On the other hand, who would realise there was a centre if there were no periphery?" (Moisés, 2001: 311). Furthermore, at the source of the appeal and antagonism cursed authors, the most notable marginals, cause is the threat of the unknown and unpredictable Other, in association with the unpredictable threat to the constitution of society as made up of a centre in opposition to the peripheries, home par excellence of the untamed (Sousa, 2014: 190-192).

They would also suffer from a double marginalisation: external on the public's and the more or less dominant literary peers' part, and a self-imposed one, due to them positioning themselves apart from the mainstream<sup>41</sup>, a form of dissidence and resistance, an option to break from the quotidian and wager on an immersion between art and life (Bourdieu, 1996; Cauquelin, 2005; Sousa, 2014; Sapiro, 2013)<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Razão de Ser [Reason of Being] (2017).

<sup>40</sup> For an ironic analysis of the concept of a cursed author by a cursed author see Pacheco (1995).

<sup>41</sup> For an analysis on the concept of marginal literature see Saraiva (1995).

<sup>42</sup> For an analysis of Portuguese Surrealism's, specifically Abjectionism's, marginality see Sousa (2014).

*The cursed author is modern Western literature's centre of gravity. They constitute the backbone of the autonomous, independent, and original writer who defends their creations to the ultimate consequences, never ceding or betraying their artistic conscience, not infrequently to the detriment of their own lives, or slipping into chasms of misfortune and suffering, or giving themselves over to every excess, destroying themselves in the process. Misunderstood in their time but immortalised by the future, the cursed one mingles with literature itself, representing the genius writer's tragic fate and their resurrection (George, 2013: 11).*

This aura of the cursed author is plastered on, and encouraged by the author, through the names he calls his magazines and literary works, such as *Chocolates Choupe la Peace* (1984), *Anti-Cristo* (1993), *Fuck You* (1995), *Auto-Retrato de Um Decadente* [A Decadent's Self-Portrait] (1997), *Arteneo*, the revista *Filha da Puta* [the Son of a Bitch magazine], *Papa* [Pope], the revista *aborto* [Abortion magazine], *Marquesa Negra* [Black Marquess], *Broche Suburbano* [Suburban Blowjob], among others, on par with the fanzine movement's influence, namely that of a punk language already influenced by the crossbreeding of such disparate facets as obscenity, radical politics, and pornography, directed towards a resistance movement that aimed to shock and unsettle the foundations of dominant culture (Triggs, 2006: 73; Laing, 1985). It would, however, be restrictive to analyse these options merely as a desire to shock and offend. As Silva & Guerra (2015) state on the names of Portuguese punk bands:

*Those who proclaim themselves to belong to the underworld and disorder, comparing themselves to dirt or excrements, or to addictions, madness or marginality, use those categorisations of the normative and technical order - that lead them back to social deviation - to flip them, affirming their radical counterpoint, and, thus, freedom, in the face of that order (Silva & Guerra, 2015: 99).*

On the other hand, like every other cursed author, DaSilva attracts polarised perspectives, as well as the media's attention, that either consider him as a great reference within Porto's literary scene<sup>43</sup>, or refer to him condescendingly:

*In about 40 years of continuous production, António da Silva Oliveira has left an indelible and unparalleled mark on the city's culture and counterculture. An important part of alternative and independent publishing, that, these days, is experiencing a period of particular dynamism,*

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<sup>43</sup> Which recently the object of an "A. DaSilva O. marathon" with "discussions, debates, book sales, autographs, and selfies" in Sede, on January 7th, 2017, hosted by this article's author.

*owes much to heterodox Oliveira and his collaborators' pioneer, demanding, and insubordinate work. A body of work that, either due to his own intentions or as a result of the blind action of different political, cultural, and academic powers, has always been more visible from the margins (Amaral, 2017).*

*In a dispossessed magazine [Piolho], circulating from hand to hand, a clandestine gesture in broad daylight. Here is A. DaSilva O.'s proposal, that old urban agitator, admiring insects' 'resistance'. [...] But the man and his words persist, just like the insects he admires. Poetry carries on (Mangas, 2011).*

*"António da Silva Oliveira, who writer and editor Valter Hugo Mãe has already called the 'guru of the Portuguese underground'" (Destak/Lusa, 2009).*

*30 years ago, the writer's initiative froze Porto's most busy street, even leading police to detain some of the participants for questioning. Three decades later, the date's evocation does not manage the same impact. The 'word' flies with increasing intensity and lines the Portuguese calçada sidewalk in white. Almost nobody managed to read it, except for Porto City Hall's street sweeper, who had his work cut out for him all afternoon. Thirty years later, all the 'words' ended up in the rubbish bin. (Lusa, 2011).*

That being said, we must not neglect an important component in A. DaSilva O.'s, and Porto's history itself's, trajectory: the cafes, with their gatherings and sociability and relationship-building processes (Guerra, 2013; Mendes, 2012). As he himself states, the information he obtained did not just come from his readings: "It wasn't only bookish information, it was also personal information, people also carried those news". And much of that information was gathered in long hours spent in cafes, in gatherings. Despite being a waning institution, the author does not abdicate a sui generis weekly gathering every Wednesday from 5 to 7 PM at Piolho Cafe<sup>44</sup>. Or, as Rui Manuel Amaral puts it:

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<sup>44</sup> Café Piolho is probably the most famous caffè in Porto. Piolho means 'louse'. The original name of the caffè was 'Café Âncora D'Ouro'. But because this caffè was the only one around the universities area (Medicine, Engineering, Humanities, Sciences and Pharmacy) students and teachers met there and started to mix. Then, the caffè became famous and there were people waiting to get a table.

*António da Silva Oliveira belongs to the last generation of author-editor-creators whose work can be related to the life and ambiance of Porto's cafes. After the golden years of the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, the 70's, 80's, and 90's are the last decades in which the cafes function as the main stage of project assembly, idea discussion, resource pooling and publishing arrangements. The cafes were still places where people wrote, traded manuscripts, sold fanzines and magazines (Amaral, 2017).*

Equally, the choice of name for his poetry magazine – Piolho - is not innocent. It is a way to honour that establishment's history, its past of resistance and student dissidence. Furthermore, the author does a "tour" of various cafes around the city, not only aiming to socialise but also to sell his work to those who frequent them. Perhaps the best way to (self)describe him is through the following quote, which reflect Oliveira's vision of an artist's work, as well as the self-irony that pervades his works' analysis:

*If I'm lyrical, I am so litigiously. As I told Pedro Rosa Mendes in an interview for Público, it's what's called nodding off in poetic freedom and academic freedom. And I tried not to have an original discourse, but a spontaneous one, that would please me. Everything has to please me (Razão de Ser, 2017).*

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