

ABSTRACT

The article examines the trajectory of Paula Ferreira, a pioneer of Portuguese underground culture and the first woman to own a comic bookshop and to create a fanzine in Portugal, situating her activity in the post-dictatorship period of the late 1970s. Adopting a socio-historical approach, the article explores how Ferreira established herself as a cultural agent within a field marked by gender inequalities and by the invisibility of underground culture and countercultural movements. Methodologically, the study draws on a semi-structured interview and a narrative reconstruction of Ferreira's trajectory, articulating individual memory with its wider social context. The article highlights the role of urban spaces, informal networks, and alternative cultural economies in the emergence of new forms of youth subjectivity in a country that had only recently emerged from a dictatorship and remained dominated by cultural traditionalism and a broader closure towards Europe and the world.

keywords

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Countercultural Splinters, Cultural Metamorphoses and Artistic Differences in Post-dictatorship Portugal

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All I need is a *Leitmotiv*¹

This article examines the work of Paula Ferreira, the first Portuguese woman to own a comic bookshop and to publish a fanzine in Portugal.² In the text, Ferreira's trajectory is situated within a complex patriarchal configuration composed of multiple agents who are politically and socially stratified, yet geographically interconnected. Ferreira's life-course is paradigmatic because it condenses key tensions that shaped the Portuguese cultural field in the late twentieth century. Her trajectory spans the transition from dictatorship to post-dictatorship and then democracy, reflecting how new possibilities for female cultural agency gradually emerged.

Ferreira's attitudes and ways of dealing with everyday life diverged from the dominant discourse, evident in an identity that was marked and solidified from an early age by multiculturalism and openness to the world, due to her privileged family background and economic and social conditions. Her experience exemplifies the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos: she created spaces, networks and cultural products independently, often mobilising collective practices embedded in the underground scene, involving zinesters, musicians and political activists.

As part of this DIY ethos, the production of fanzines functioned, above all, as an alternative communicative form to the traditional press, which, after four decades of dictatorship, remained largely resistant to acknowledging women as autonomous subjects independent of the often oppressive and patriarchal male

¹ '*Leitmotiv* is a German word that means conductive motif. Conducting or characteristic motif, a frequently repeated theme in a score, associated with an idea, a character' (*Leitmotiv* 1980: 2).

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figure (Rich 1995). Zines and fanzines provide a privileged lens through which to observe how alternative cultural forms emerge, circulate and articulate forms of identity and resistance. Besides, these cultural expressions occupy a central place in the sociology of culture due to their close entanglement with specific social contexts, including media practices, artistic production, fan cultures, feminism and youth subcultures (Watson and Bennett 2020; Hodkinson and Lincoln 2008).

In this article, the concept of post-dictatorship is used not only to refer to the years immediately after 1974, when the so-called Carnation Revolution marked the beginning of the end of the Portuguese dictatorial regime (the *Estado Novo*), but to a longer period in which the structural and cultural impacts of the regime continued to shape practices, mindsets and opportunities. Thus, although the focus is the late 1970s and early 1980s, these dynamics should be understood as deeply informed by the continuities of the *Estado Novo* and the social memory of the revolutionary process.

As informal and DIY ways of cultural production expanded during these years, new voices began to reshape the landscape of alternative culture. It was within this broader context that punk, and later post-punk, became key arenas for experimentation and expression, offering unprecedented visibility and creative autonomy. Although the earliest Portuguese punk bands of the late 1970s were short-lived, the formative movements of the Portuguese punk scene played a crucial role in shaping what would follow. From the mid-1980s, punk in Portugal began to consolidate, driven by growing exposure to international influences through records, fashion, magazines and media; by the symbolic importance of bands such as *Crise Total* [Total Crisis]; and by venues like *Rock Rendez Vous* (RRV), which regularly hosted international punk and post-punk events.

Portugal's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 increased the number of live television performances and music videos; urbanisation and the proliferation of youth spaces in major cities also contributed to this development. A defining feature of this scene was punk songs written and performed in Portuguese, with lyrics that protested and challenged local socio-political figures and events. Such dynamics reveal how these early movements were instrumental in locally reappropriating the global punk ethos, demonstrating punk rock's hybrid nature as it was reshaped through Portugal's specific social and political contexts.

These voices found resonance in political movements of resistance (Guerra 2018b), such as the *União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta* (UMAR)³, that contested conventional constructions of femininity. Within this framework, Ferreira played a pioneering and subversive role in challenging male domination in the underground and post-punk domains, establishing her own modalities of participation and asserting an active position within the logics of fanzine production and distribution.

³ Alternative Women's Union and Response.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the re-evaluation of women's contributions to alternative and underground cultural scenes has become an increasingly pressing concern within cultural sociology and feminist media studies (Negra and Tasker 2014). Revisiting Ferreira's trajectory allows for an exploration not only of her individual agency, but also of the broader processes through which Portuguese women negotiated visibility and authorship in spaces historically dominated by men. By focusing on Ferreira's activities, ranging from comic book entrepreneurship to fanzine production, this article repositions her as a cultural mediator who anticipated later discussions on creative labour, gendered authorship and DIY cultural economies.

Revisiting the theoretical foundations of the sociology of interactions and identities, I draw upon Goffman (1982) and Elias (1993) to apprehend the multiple layers involved in the constitution of Ferreira's identity, from her social identity to her self-identity (Guerra 2025). It follows that practices, tastes and attitudes are not only constitutive elements in the process of identity construction, but also indispensable for society's comprehension of those identities. According to Hall and Du Gay (1996), identities represent positions occupied by individuals within specific discursive formations. Ferreira's process of identity construction may be understood as a symbolic resource, which both enabled and reflected society's gradual accommodation of emergent youth identities. Conversely, these identities themselves became symbolic resources insofar as they constituted a shared symbolic repertoire. In this regard, I underscore the 'inseparability between identity, self, and society, emphasising the reciprocal dynamic whereby the self is both nourished by the social context and contributes to its reproduction' (Guerra 2010: 664). This theoretical premise substantiates the methodological choice of employing semi-structured interviews to elucidate such interconnections, recognising that all action is contextually situated and that context requires action for its manifestation and consolidation.

Methodologically, I view semi-structured interviews as useful because they allow and facilitate understanding of a given topic and the procedures used to construct it. This point gains particular relevance because Portugal's socio-historical trajectory is characterised by irregular and contested processes of modernisation, and recognising these tensions is key to understanding the cultural and gendered dynamics that shaped Ferreira's experience. The narrative and the interview are both essential for such understanding, but also allow the clarification and identification of key mechanisms that engendered the meaning of Ferreira's life (Vieira 2014), even assuming a socio-anthropological perspective.

Thus, the approach woven here includes the narrative of Ferreira, told by the person who lived it in the most complete way possible, and consisting of her mem-

ories and what she felt was important (Guerra 2020b). The autobiography presented in this article can be framed as indirect, since the researcher played a role in making it, conducting the process in order to enable the comparison of data and perspectives. Even so, Ferreira's narrative provides us with an endogenous perspective in the sense that she clarifies her vision of herself. Parallel to this is a heterogeneous view, since Ferreira's life is also approached from the point of view of the Other. The combination of these visions makes it possible to define the place occupied by the individual in the social order (Atkinson 1998).

The article combines this personal approach with a mapping of the political and social contexts Ferreira traversed in order to understand the factors that contributed to the affirmation of her identity. Her case is significant because it encapsulates the tensions surrounding gender, cultural autonomy and DIY practices within Portugal's post-dictatorship in the late-twentieth-century and in the underground scene. Methodologically, it reconstructs and interprets her narrative (Guerra 2020b), establishing a dialogue with the multiple forms of resistance and affirmation (Hall and Jefferson 1975) that have shaped both her professional trajectory and her personal development.

A cultural and socio-historical contextualisation

The Portuguese dictatorial regime led by António de Oliveira Salazar consolidated its authority in the 1930s partly through ideological affinities with the German and Italian fascist regimes and through a discourse of restoring national and European order. Following World War II, Portugal entered a period of increasing political isolation, sustained internally by censorship, surveillance and a conservative social order that restricted women's autonomy and limited cultural experimentation. The Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, brought about by a military-led movement, dismantled this authoritarian structure and opened the way for democratisation, cultural liberalisation and new possibilities for participation in public life. These transformations form the socio-historical backdrop to Ferreira's trajectory: her work as the first woman to own a comic bookshop in Portugal emerged precisely at the intersection of expanding cultural freedoms, shifting gender norms and the rise of alternative cultural circuits in the post-authoritarian period.

Guerra and Quintela (2020) characterise Portuguese society at that time as conservative, embedded in paternalistic norms that predated Salazar but which were systematised and strategically exploited by the *Estado Novo* to legitimise its

authoritarian project. This ideology was based on persecution, the establishment of distrust and suspicion, and on the woman's role as a housewife and family carer, always dependent on her husband's authority. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Portugal saw a gradual massification of education, with compulsory schooling extended. Although these reforms remained modest compared with other European countries, they contributed to the emergence of a younger generation with broader cultural horizons.

The revolutionary years that followed the dictatorship altered the country's cultural landscape. Censorship was dismantled, new forms of artistic and political expression proliferated and urban centres became sites of experimentation. It was in this transformed environment, particularly in Lisbon, that punk fanzine culture took shape, drawing on the newly accessible channels of communication, the effervescence of youth scenes and the unprecedented freedom to publish, circulate and contest dominant cultural narratives. These processes of cultural opening were driven by several factors, including the growing circulation of Anglo-American popular music. The importation of records, the presence of pirate radio and the programming choices of broadcasters demonstrated that Portuguese youth were increasingly exposed to cultural forms that diverged from the regime-endorsed nationalist canon, symbolised most iconically by *fado*.

Gradually, radio programmes such as *Em Órbita* and *Rádio Clube Português* became influential spaces for disseminating new musical trends and expanding the cultural imagination of young listeners (Guerra 2025). Radio but also fanzines were essential for circulating other perspectives and for consolidating the significance of alternative media more broadly (Bailey, et al. 2007; Guerra 2019). In the context of a growing DIY and underground culture, fanzines in particular became key vehicles through which young people engaged with and developed alternative forms of expression.

Despite having emerged from the mid-1920s, fanzines gained significant expression between the 1970s and 1980s, with the emergence of the punk phenomenon in the United Kingdom and the United States. Typically homemade and crafted individually or collectively, these publications circulated in small networks, a pattern particularly visible in 1970s Portugal. Later on, the transformations that unfolded throughout the 1980s further diversified their themes and aesthetic approaches, reflecting broader shifts in Portuguese cultural life (Guerra 2020a) and the early emergence of postmodern sensibilities (Baía 2012).

Fanzines enabled visibility, nurtured affective bonds and helped to foster feelings of belonging among participants (Silva and Guerra 2015; Thompson 2004). Yet, as Atton (2006) argues, the fanzine is more than a subcultural practice: it constitutes a form of resistance and critique of massification itself. It is an alter-

native visual space in which individuals move and communicate to overcome the misrepresentations of traditional media (Guerra, et al. 2020; Hebdige 1979). As a medium of communication and a form of artistic expression, fanzines gave voice to the contesting fringes of society and contributed to the emergence of strong community dynamics (Force 2005; Guerra 2016). As Duncombe (1997) notes, the personal reflections and ethical positions embedded in these publications frequently carried political-social and ideological meanings, a point echoed by Dannus (2013: 25). This perspective is particularly useful for understanding Ferreira's creative work, as her engagement with fanzine culture operated not only as a form of expression but also as a means of social affirmation and cultural participation within emerging underground networks.

As well as being seen as the epitome of freedom of expression, fanzines were grounded in a strong DIY ethos (Triggs 2006). Rather than appealing to the masses, they offered an alternative to media forms perceived as industry controlled. Crucially, these practices were understood as DIY not only in the sense of autonomous cultural production, but also as a form of social organisation based on horizontal, non-hierarchical and participatory structures (Howley 2010). It is in this broader sense that the DIY ethos underpinned the networks, collaborations and collective initiatives that sustained these underground cultural scenes.

This aspect is even more relevant when we think about the career of Paula Ferreira, one of the creators of *Leitmotiv*, a fanzine that had only one issue and was produced within the core group of Ferreira's comic bookshop Mundo da Banda Desenhada [World of Comics]. This was a kind of alternative production (Guerra 2020a) since these creations facilitated active cultural participation. They were, and remain, a fundamental element of the concretisation of tastes, affinities, belonging, ideologies and lifestyles. In other words, they are material forms of symbolic depiction (Pine 2006): visual and textual constructions through which producers articulated identities, affiliations and forms of dissent.

And not just producers, but also readers. In fact, reading a fanzine is an affective experience in the sense that all the elements that make it up — from the text to the graphic materials and the sentimental ideology expressed in various forms — make the reader feel as if they are experiencing something more than a mere agglomeration of pages. It is in the embodiment of Simmel's 'felt value' (2005) that sociology can be a useful science for understanding iconicity and immersion in the arts, but also in DIY projects of various scales and natures. This problematic of iconicity and the meanings attached to fanzines are all the more valuable for the construction of our argument, especially with regard to Ferreira's story, but also in the production of *Leitmotiv*, since it reveals itself — materially — as a form of meaning-making (Watson and Bennett 2020).

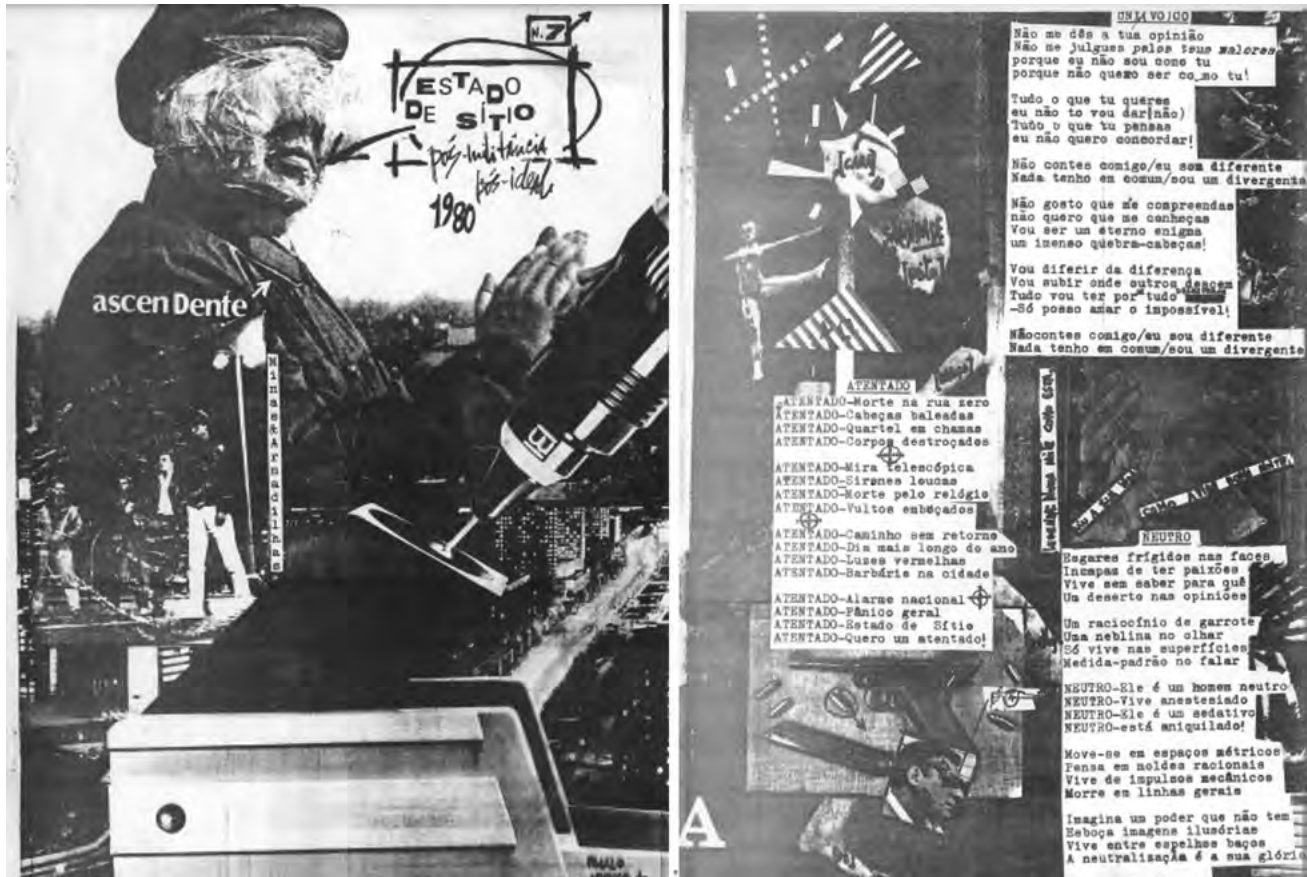


Fig. 1 Paulo Nunca Mais, ed. *Estado de Sítio*. *Pós-militância pós-ideal* [State of Emergency. Post-militancy post-ideal] (1980). Inside pages of the no. 7 (October). Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.

Fanzines such as *Desordem Total* [Total Disorder] (1978–1979) and *Estado de Sítio* [State of Emergency] (1978) [Fig. 1] are milestones and references for the socio-temporal period of post-dictatorial Portugal. In both cases, a strong DIY aesthetic orientation has always been present, characterised by a mix of techniques. While Portugal's punk movement was still in an embryonic state, similarities with Anglo-American fanzines could already be noted, especially regarding the language used — sarcastic in nature and always in line with the political and social reality experienced in Portugal and other countries. The references to bands through cut-and-paste images are also expressive of the tastes and aesthetics prevailing in this underground artistic field.

However, as previously noted, the significance of fanzines does not lie solely in their materiality, but also in the spaces in which they were created, read, and distributed. Hence the importance of sites such as Paula Ferreira's comic book-shop, which operated for ten years in the city of Lisbon (1977–1987). In addition to being a selling point for cult magazines, underground publications and national

fanzines, the shop became a meeting place for an alternative community, still far from the cosmopolitanism that would later emerge (Guerra and Quintela 2020). Moreover, it functioned as a space of resistance (Bennett 2018a; 2018b; Guerra 2018b) to a society emerging from forty years of dictatorship and entering a period of profound reconfiguration.

Paula Ferreira clashes with the future

Towards the end of its existence, Ferreira's bookshop was renamed Op when its owner also started to import contemporary art books and magazines (according to Ferreira, 'everything that is pleasing to the eye'⁴). A little earlier, in 1980, the core group associated with the shop launched the publication *Leitmotiv*, a single-issue author's edition. Before these milestones, Ferreira recalled how her interest in the punk scene began in 1977 when she met António Sérgio by chance in London.⁵ He was starting his radio show *Rotação* [Rotation] in the early days of Rádio Renascença. Ferreira also highlighted the role of Paulo Pedro Gonçalves and Faíscas⁶ [Sparks], her favourite Portuguese punk band. Thinking about the importance of places that lay between cosmopolitanism and provincialism, Ferreira highlighted the area around Avenida de Roma in Lisbon, particularly two locations: the disco Brown's⁷ and the café Tic Tac, where her friends, together with figures from the city's musical, cultural and artistic movement, such as António Variações,⁸ Zé da Guiné⁹ and Zé Pedro¹⁰ of Xutos & Pontapés, would congregate.

Ferreira said she viewed punk as a cultural movement of enormous importance in social terms — as important as the hippie movement. In fact, from her perspective, the main contribution of punk was precisely to have 'killed off' the hippie era — in other words, to have put an end to the inertia of the ideology of 'make peace, not war', the folklore of 'flower power' and the 'stars' of rock. In contrast, punk as a counterculture represented a cry of despair, its main contribution being its pure physical energy, which acted against any imposed system.

Ferreira was involved in some of the most significant and memorable experiences and practices of the emergence of punk and the DIY ethic and aesthetic in Lisbon. For example, in the summer of 1979, she and three friends (Paulo Nozolino,¹¹ Pedro Costa¹² and José Trabucho) organised a concert with the recently formed band Corpo Diplomático [Diplomatic Corps]¹³ [Fig. 2], which took place in the Sociedade de Alunos de Apolo [Pupils of Apollo Society]. In addition to some radio, newspaper and word-of-mouth publicity, Ferreira put up posters in

⁴ Unless stated otherwise, all direct quotations from Paula Ferreira come from the interview I conducted with her in Lisbon in February 2016. The interview lasted around three hours and was transcribed with informed consent before being subjected to categorical content analysis.

⁵ António Sérgio (1950–2009) was a famous radio host, radio producer, DJ, record editor and specialist who gave exposure to leading and innovative music artists in Portugal. From the late 1970s onward, he played the music of many international artists who were previously unknown in Portugal, putting local audiences in touch with them and with their music.

⁶ The first Portuguese punk-rock band, formed in 1977.

⁷ One of Lisbon's main nightclubs, where some of Portugal's most successful pop-rock bands debuted.

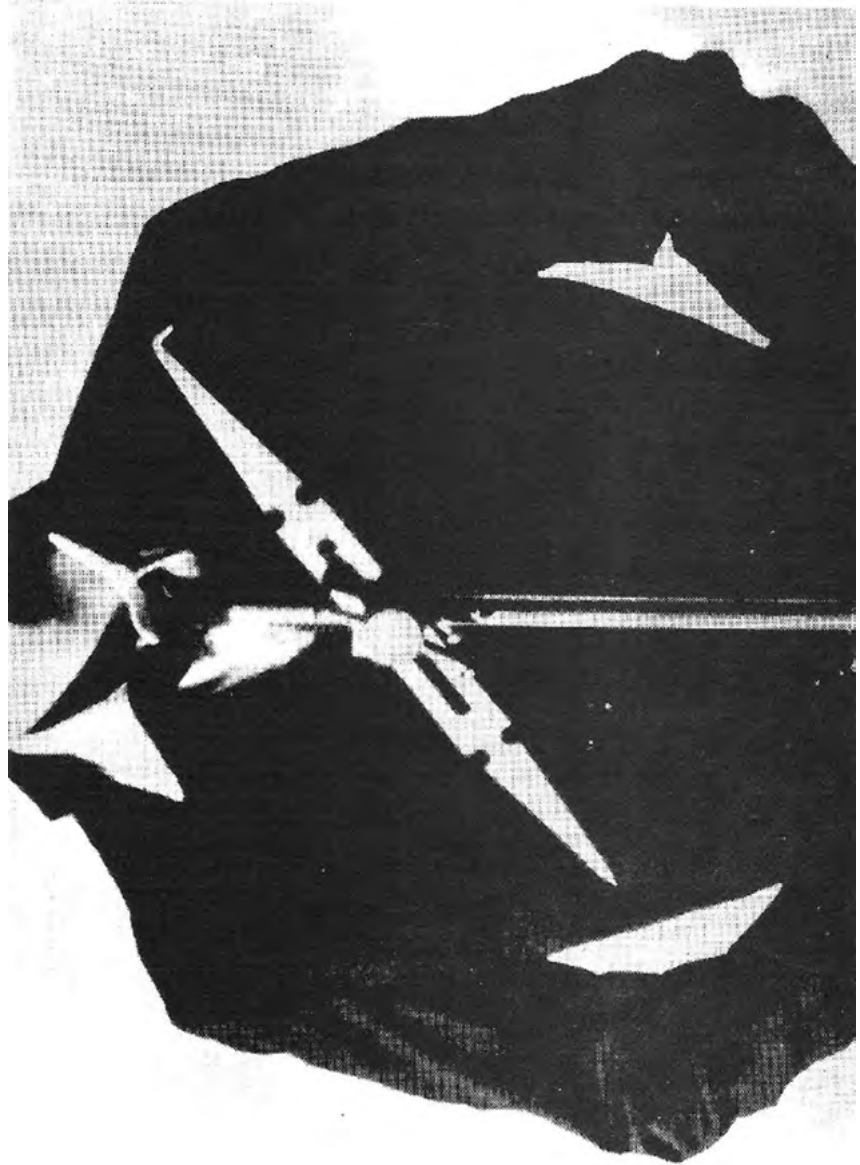
⁸ A Portuguese singer-songwriter of the 1980s, known for his eccentricity. *Variações* combined musical genres such as pop, rock, blues and *fado*.

⁹ An iconic figure of Lisbon nightlife in the 1980s. Born in Guinea-Bissau in 1959, Barbosa had a brief stint in the guerrilla war for liberation. He arrived in Lisbon in the 1970s, after the Carnation Revolution. At the end of that decade, he was one of the first to venture into the territory of bad reputation that was the Bairro Alto in Lisbon, opening the space Souk. Later, he embarked on the Rock House project (later renamed Juke Box), taking on various roles and participating in the emergence of Bairro Alto as the place *par excellence* of the cultural Lisbon of the 1980s.

¹⁰ José Pedro Amaro dos Santos Reis, known as Zé Pedro (Lisbon, 1956–2017), was a Portuguese musician, guitarist and founder of Xutos & Pontapés, perhaps the most relevant rock band in Portugal, formed in late 1978. He was a leading figure in contemporary Portuguese art, culture and society.

¹¹ Portuguese photographer Paulo Nozolino (1955) began his training when he attended the painting course at the Sociedade de Belas-Artes de Lisboa. In the mid-1970s, he entered the London College of Printing, from which he graduated with a higher diploma in creative photography.

Fig. 2 Poster with the logo (original photo) of Corpo Diplomático [Diplomatic Corps] at the Sociedade de Alunos de Apolo (Lisbon) in the summer of 1979. Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.



¹² Born in 1959, Pedro Costa is one of the leading names in Portuguese cinema and, together with Manoel de Oliveira, one of the Portuguese filmmakers with the greatest international expression.

¹³ The first Portuguese new wave band, formed in Lisbon in 1979. The band had a short career, releasing only two albums.

the city with her troupe and distributed many more. During the concert, a non-stop slide show of images handpicked and assembled by two of the members of the organisation was projected on each side of the stage. This performance logic is crucial to understanding a little of the country's social configuration, particularly that Portuguese punk is an exclusively DIY phenomenon. In fact, the lack of publishers interested in hiring Portuguese punk bands made these kinds of initiatives essential (Guerra 2017; 2018b; 2025).

The answer was DIY, something evident both in amateur live concert recordings and in cassette copies that passed from hand to hand. Similarly, no punk fashion existed that was marketable and available: it was only in the 1980s that the first punk fashion designers arrived in Portugal (Guerra 2025). This led Ferreira to expand into the world of fashion and design, intensifying the logic of female participation in subcultural environments. For example, she told us that she designed the clothes of the Heróis do Mar [Heroes of the Ocean]¹⁴ for the videoclip of *Brava Dança dos Heróis* [Brave Dance of Heroes] [Fig. 3]. In 1982, the album *Amor* [Love] came out with a photograph of Paulo Nozolino on the cover. Some of these projects were plotted, produced and realised from the bookshop [Fig. 4], in the Olivais house¹⁵ or behind the wheel of a Ford Transit van, which she drove ‘with her nerves on edge. It was all for us’.

All these examples demonstrate that the evolution of the Portuguese punk scene is centred on interrelationships and friendship networks, as well as on production microcircuits of bands, publishers and spaces. It was during this process of transformation and scene formation in the 1980s that the combination of punk and post-punk evolved, largely due to the country’s growing openness to new records, new clothes, magazines and news, but also due to the importance of bands such as *Crise Total*.¹⁶

Based on Ferreira’s work [Fig. 5] and speech, we cannot miss the link with Alison Rice’s (2020) contributions. For this author, activism does not only mean written works or the use of the word, but a commitment to, and an involvement with, the acts of doing differently or being different that go beyond the text. Ferreira’s opposition to, and protests against, a retrograde, misogynistic and macho society began early, and contested the usual experiences of a woman living in a society with these characteristics. She became a pioneer and can indeed be seen as a feminist activist, as she provided other women with valuable business insight. Ferreira stated that her immediate circle maintained a commitment to a certain rebellious attitude of non-alignment and individual affirmation.

Ferreira described herself as having a rebellious mentality: ‘Maybe I was born punk!’ She also stated that she had ‘lived a thousand lives’ with the punk movement and with attitude, and in this sense, she remembered being a ‘happy rebel’ — a ‘rebel by vocation’. Ferreira mentioned that in Lisbon she was part of a privileged collective that was permanently connected to the current: ‘our inspiration came from abroad — the United States and England — but only some of us could travel. Afterwards, the information was processed, but no secrets were kept.’ In fact, her stable economic situation afforded her privileged access to cultural resources, including music, cinema and literature. In Portugal, from childhood, she listened carefully to records in the cellar of the *Discoteca do Carmo*¹⁷ [Carmo Disco],

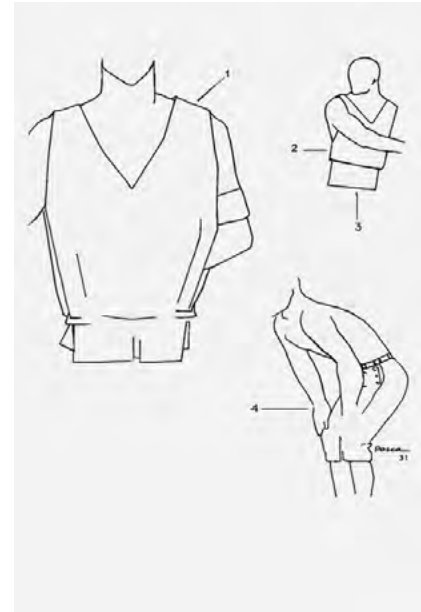


Fig. 3 Sketches of the Heróis do Mar [Heroes of the Ocean] costumes made by Ferreira in 1981. Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.

¹⁴ A Portuguese pop-rock band formed in 1981. The band’s image was marked by a nationalist and neoliberal aesthetic. Its songs reflected the glorification of Portugal’s past, which was controversial at the time.

¹⁵ A residential neighbourhood of historic character that was once the destination of the bourgeoisie and industry.

¹⁶ A punk group formed in 1983.

¹⁷ The disco opened its doors in 1957 on Rua do Carmo, in Lisbon. It was intended to disseminate the main musical releases arriving in Lisbon from abroad.



Fig. 4 Paula Ferreira at the Mundo da Banda Desenhada bookshop, and the bookshop's façade in 1977. Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.



Fig. 5 *Leitmotiv. Aventuras, Motins, Actualidades Filmadas, Duas Entrevistas e...* Cover of the first issue (May 1980). Lisboa: O Mundo da Banda Desenhada. Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.

owned by a friend of her father; and, at the age of 16, she started travelling alone frequently, mainly to London.

According to Ferreira, the opening of the Mundo da Banda Desenhada comic bookshop when she was 23 was a result of her willingness to do things differently. The bookshop contained countless imported books related to art — comics, photography, graphic arts, painting, music, architecture and design — as well as pirated fanzines and all the ‘fringe’ publications. Examples of how the new wave materialised in the graphic and visual arts were also to be found in the bookshop. In fact, the very choice of the name ‘Banda Desenhada’ is contestatory and of a historical and social nature, referring to the satirical drawings that proliferated with the 1969 academic crisis (Guerra 2018a), a turning point marked by student unrest and a heightened production of political satire.

Ferreira perceived that, under an oppressive and misinformed cultural climate, comics were often viewed in simplistic terms — either as children’s entertainment, exemplified by *Uncle Scrooge*, or as illicit pornography — even though a broader comic culture did exist at the time, as she had learned from her travels. At the age of 21, Ferreira went to Brussels, where she attended a general course in cinema and photography at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion (IAD), while working menial jobs to earn a living. Returning to Portugal after a year without having finished the course, she brought back with her the idea of opening a comic bookshop in Lisbon, infected by the Franco-Belgian comic book boom.

The space she had available — a small, empty warehouse lent by her father — soon became a meeting place. The bookshop was also frequently used as a laboratory for ideas, as well as a place to rehearse music and to socialise with friends behind closed doors. The world of comics is a form of expression that defines an identity, a vision, providing a link between different ways of reading the world, such as cinema, painting, photography, the visual arts, music, architecture and design. But in the context of post-revolutionary Portugal, dedicating oneself to the production and dissemination of comics and fanzines also reflected an attitude of defiance and resistance.

This resistance was visible in Ferreira’s attitudes and everyday practices, reflecting an identity shaped and consolidated by multiculturalism and openness to the world from an early age, due to a privileged family background and economic and social conditions. This experience and attitude towards life allows us to argue that her feminist involvement aligned with a decolonial feminism that recognised the multidimensionality of oppression (Sommers 2001) and refuses to separate race, sexuality and class into mutually exclusive categories (Rice 2020). This openness was reflected in her attitude of being completely anti-system and anti-normative towards Portuguese society:

My way of dealing with clients here and with foreign publishers was quite informal. When I started I was only 23 years old. I was relaxed (naïve?) and not at all prejudiced about my status as owner and manager. At the time, in Portugal, being a manager was a status reserved for older people with experience in commerce. In my case it was all empirical. Since I was sixteen travelling around Europe and poking my nose into alternative clothes and music shops, second-hand bookshops and street markets, I was naturally used to another pulse.

Portuguese culture in the 1980s was marked by a real cultural revolution, in the sense that numerous Portuguese artists felt it was the ideal time to break with the dominant culture, thus showing themselves to be more receptive to, and influenced by, postmodernity (Guerra 2025; Nogueira 2002). According to Pinharanda (1995: 615), in the 1980s ‘there was a generalised creative euphoria in architecture, design, photography, fashion and music, a “lust for life” capable of recalling the liberation of customs only timidly felt in Portugal in the 1960s’.

During that time, Ferreira wrote a letter to the headquarters of *Interview* magazine, addressing it to Andy Warhol. According to her, Warhol did not reply personally but asked someone on his team to respond to the question she had sent him. She also placed an order for three copies of the *Tulsa* photography book directly from the author, Larry Clark, asking him to please send them autographed. He sent her the books by boat, but they were not autographed. A few years later, he would direct the films *Kids*, *Ken Park* and many others.

Despite this ‘lust for life’, the reality was that Paula Ferreira had to overcome many barriers to make her business sustainable. Although the comic bookshop closed in 1987, Ferreira has kept the space at no. 49 on the Escadinhas do Duque as her place of work in other areas:

In Lisbon I had the space and the possibility to be a pioneer in Portugal where small import businesses were almost non-existent because the final product was expensive and went through a lengthy and costly process that involved clearing customs and paying customs fees and brokers. In addition, in the case of books, there was also the book exchange rate, which was higher than the currency exchange rate. Orders coming from America were subject to additional taxes because they went direct to the Netherlands, which was the warehouse for Europe. In addition, they took months to arrive because they came by boat. All this was obviously reflected in the final price — a huge difference between the cover price and the retail price in the bookshop. It was a non-business.

She also recalled the difficulties of keeping the business running, especially as a woman:

There was no organised accounting. The money that came in had to be enough for everything. My father helped with the health insurance contributions, and sometimes I even had to ask him for back-up for an order. But as I didn't pay rent and didn't have any employees, I managed to cut down on the fixed expenses as much as possible. There was always some friend who needed to work temporarily because he was studying or unemployed. I paid by the hour and never more than two hours a day. I couldn't afford any more. I opened the bookshop at 11 a.m. and started by sweeping the pavement and cleaning the window glass. I didn't have time to close.

When we consider how youth and gender intersect through physical media such as magazines, debates or special issues, these relationships appear far more complex than they might initially seem (Guerra 2020c). As I have already mentioned, between the 1970s and 1980s, despite the exponential increase in studies on subcultures, women were part of a hidden face (LeBlanc 2005). In this context, Angela McRobbie (2009) emerged with the aim of criticising this lack of empirical and theoretical support for the role played by women in the subcultural field. McRobbie was a pioneer in subcultural studies, just as Ferreira was a pioneer in Portugal, particularly with regard to her comic bookshop, but also to the edition of the fanzine *Leitmotiv*.

***Leitmotiv* and gendered editing practices**

A few years after opening the comic bookshop, Paula Ferreira embarked on another short-lived, though no less significant, project: the publication of the fanzine *Leitmotiv*. The cover of the fanzine was designed by Ferreira, who, as we have already observed, had an aptitude for design. In this sense, I highlight that the aesthetic perception of the works (DeNora 2000; Lash 2016) creates forms of imaginary enchantment that essentially translate into the affective experience of reading a fanzine. Ferreira was also responsible for the 'adventures' section — and, of course, the fanzine bore the imprint of Ferreira's bookshop and was disseminated there.

Returning to the previous issue of the invisibility of women, McRobbie (2009) states that the participation of women in the subcultural field was scarce because they had less money than men. Ferreira occupied an atypical position within the



Fig. 6 'Acerca de um Motim Neurótico. Entrevista com Paulo Borges', *Leitmotiv 1*, 1980. Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.

subcultural context. Unlike the majority of women, who were excluded from participation due to financial and educational constraints, her upper-class Lisbon background — her father was an economist, and she completed twelve years of schooling — afforded her opportunities that were not widely available to women at the time (Bergen 2019). She studied fine arts and photography, which placed her outside the common educational trajectories of young Portuguese women at the time.

This background shaped the fanzine in two distinct ways. First, photography assumed a central role in the publication, reflecting her formal training. Second, it displayed her cultural capital, evident in her interview with Paulo Borges, a member of one of her favourite bands, Minas e Armadilhas [Mines and Traps] [Fig. 6]. As Fetterley (1978) and Long (2003), working in the field of critical theories of feminism, communities and masculinities, state, reading fanzines such as *Leitmotiv* leads to the development of a strong self-knowledge (Vieira 2014), as well as putting women on alert regarding the lived world, their social position and their status. Thus, similar to what Thurston Moore writes about Patti Smith, Ferreira can be seen as a significant figure, since she informed the punk movement not only as a woman, but also as a writer and artist (Letts 2005).

In the interview with Borges, several paradigmatic and controversial points were addressed, reflecting the theoretical contributions of the fanzine, both as a means of dissemination of a musical taste and as a way of promoting political ideologies and expressing resistance against normativity and the mainstream (McKay 1998).

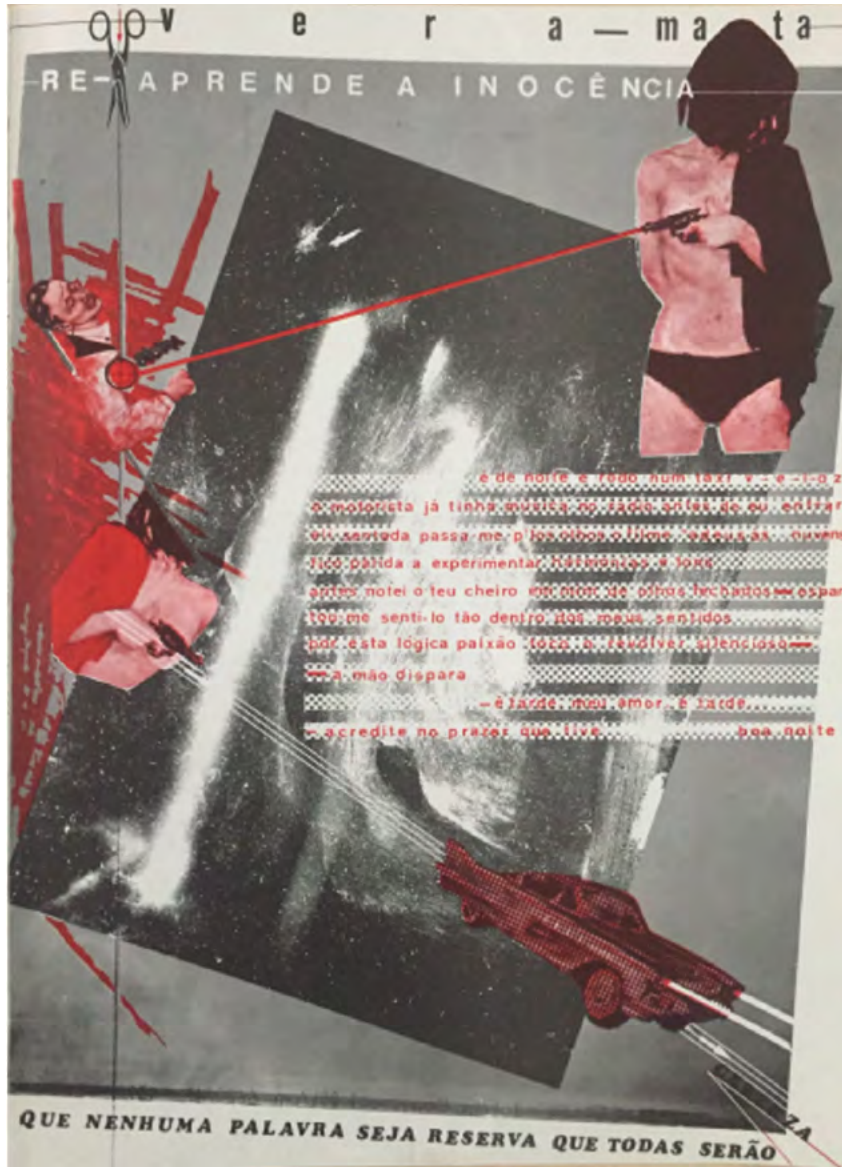


Fig. 7 'Vera Mata', *Leitmotiv 1*, 1980.
Image: courtesy of Paula Ferreira.

The fanzine is an expression of a social and collective identity, while fostering and giving rise to cultural and class confrontations — the so-called ‘third cultures’ (Vieira 2014). In Ferreira’s fanzine, this becomes evident in the way she mobilises her photographic training and cultural networks, positioning herself within a scene typically dominated by working-class male participants. During the interview, Paulo Borges reveals several of the points discussed in this article, on issues ranging from the Anglo-American influence on the punk aesthetic (Guerra 2025):

I identified very much with the spirit of '77. The first references came through foreign magazines: *Rock & Folk*, *Melody Maker*. The first thing I read, I remember well, was a news article about a Clash concert saying that some guys dressed in red plastic appeared, whose vocalist shouted out a sentence about a neurotic riot that ended up with the room being destroyed (Borges 1980: 5).

Even in the interview with António Sérgio (perhaps one of the main people responsible for the dissemination of Anglo-American and punk culture in Portugal), themes that mark the history of Portugal are addressed, mainly regarding pirate radio (Guerra 2019). In this sense, Ferreira's actions show that she did not want to establish herself within a rising underground scene (Schilt 2003); on the contrary, she intended (and managed) to create her own scene (Smith 2010), just like her idol, António Sérgio, and doing so not only through discourse, but also via a plastic and creative intervention, as articulated in *Leitmotiv*.

The cut-and-paste aesthetic references that can be found in the fanzine (Guerra 2025; Guerra and Quintela 2020) are latent as the main element of DIY culture, notable due to their aesthetic and linguistic aggressiveness, encouraging reflection but also denunciation. Bennett (2018a; 2018b) highlights how youth and the creative process are interconnected, explaining how this relationship fosters an ethos rooted in punk logic. Taking one of the pages of *Leitmotiv* as a starting point [Fig. 7], I ascertain that here DIY culture has undergone several changes, becoming involved with politics and several cultural practices. However, DIY is still an essential element for understanding culture and artistic production within a given social context. The questions of the body, sexuality, femininity and masculinity are all expressed in the image, somewhat disruptive in that social and temporal context (Vitak 2012).

Besides functioning as a social product, fanzines also have the ability to encourage social change, in the sense that they highlight the tiniest anti-hegemonic possibilities. Keeping this premise in mind, we find in Ferreira's trajectory, and particularly in *Leitmotiv*, the possibility of being transported to the capital at that time. Fanzines are a strong element of demarcation of experiences and spatialities in the sense that, like identities (Guerra, 2010; 2018b), they cannot be produced without the influence of a certain context. On another page of the fanzine, below a map of Lisbon marked with strong red lines, we read the following:

Report: nothing special to report in the morning hours. Lunch. 11.15 am. A large number of people come to the cafés. The first contacts of the afternoon are made. Shoes are pressed, newspapers are bought, an occupation is sought. 5 pm. The most determined leave. The old people take their places. Small groups of

people stand out in the street. 19.30. A patrol car passes by. The zigzagging begins. The first pinball bowls are launched. Five sticks are asked for. Night falls. 20.30: cafés empty. Concentration on beer halls, burger joints. Finish re-reading the newspaper. 9.30 pm. Neons and shop windows alight (Carvalho 1980: 14).

The fanzine also makes a reference to the Anglo-American context of influence. A kind of tragic romance is written in red and in an unmistakable typewriter font, the expression of Ferreira's creative self (Eisler and Montuori 2007). The fanzine even ends with a reference to the growing cosmopolitanism that plagued the galloping modernisation process, with a reference to a Chevrolet car and a Polaroid photograph of New York [Fig. 8]. Both the text and the Polaroid photograph belong to Ferreira — to her memories.

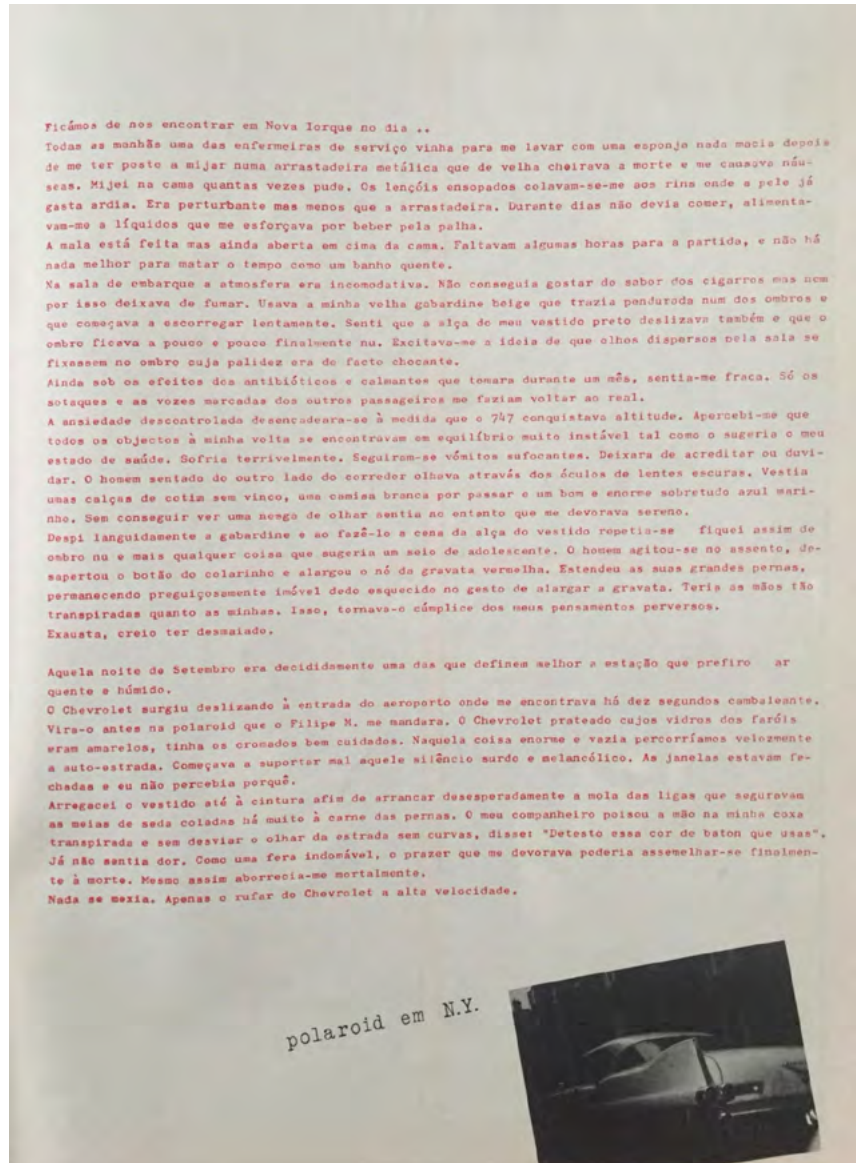
Ferreira's accounts of her 'adventures' offer insight into how femininity was being negotiated and expressed within subcultural contexts. Several aspects of her self-presentation — autonomy, humour, self-awareness and a refusal of passive femininity — resonate with themes later central to post-feminist theory (Gill 2007). These resonances allow us to consider her narrative as an early site where new forms of gendered agency were being articulated. Post-feminist analyses have highlighted how femininity in media culture has increasingly been associated with youth, heterosexuality, whiteness and middle-class, cisgender norms (Butler 2013; Gill 2017). Yet this framework is not without limitations. As McRobbie (2009) notes, post-feminism often struggles to account for broader social and political dynamics, while O'Neill (2018) argues that it has become permeable to neoliberal logics that frame women's experiences as equivalent to those of men.

While these debates are highly relevant in the twenty-first century, they raise an important question for Ferreira's historical moment: to what extent were such notions of gendered agency and expressive freedom available or even thinkable in the late twentieth century? It is in this context that Ferreira's own writing becomes especially illuminating. She describes her 'adventures' in the following terms:

Every morning one of the nurses on duty came to wash me with a not-so-soft sponge after having me piss in a metal bedpan that smelt of death and made me nauseous. I pissed the bed as many times as I could. The soaked sheets stuck to my kidneys, where the already worn skin burned (Ferreira 1980: 17).

We are thus faced with an emerging tension between beauty and authenticity, patterns and oppositions. Both paradigms are resolved by personal choices on

Fig. 8 'Aventuras de Paula Ferreira',
Leitmotiv 1, 1980. Image: courtesy
of Paula Ferreira.



Ferreira's part, giving rise to a mix of individuality and authenticity (Chen and Kanai 2021), but never obeying what would be hegemonically attractive (Bergen 2019). Authenticity was therefore legitimised by being attached to a body that did not correspond to normative and socially imposed beauty. Ferreira's own authenticity was deployed as a strategy to cultivate a sense of common aspiration for all those who did not fit the norm.

Final remarks

Throughout both the interview with Ferreira and her narrative, the artistic sensibilities and the demands that guided the events of the 1970s and 1980s in Portugal become evident (Guerra 2020a). Women like Ferreira are currently seen as the representation of a deformalisation and liberalisation of the values of Portuguese society (Guerra 2018a). In this way, Ferreira's stance, marked by intellectual openness and a break with established norms, reflects Portugal's gradual alignment with broader European forms of cosmopolitanism, which had long circulated in Anglo-American and other Western European contexts but reached Portugal later due to the constraints of the authoritarian regime.

The punk connection to fanzines cannot be reduced to their existence in the punk context: fanzines existed from the beginning of the twentieth century and were the pioneers of independent publications. The fanzine corresponds to the creation of a community of interest and taste, acting as a kind of handmade predecessor of contemporary social networks. It is also assumed as a practice and as an object that could promote and cement affective relationships (Watson and Bennett 2020). Indeed, since the 1970s, fanzines such as *Leitmotiv* became pioneers in Portugal, albeit confined to the city of Lisbon, offering a detailed, lived vision of a city marked by dualities.

It was within these dualities that Ferreira asserted herself and stood out within a subculture, and a society, in which women still remained 'less important' in relation to men. Thus, in the context of post-feminist discourses (Gill 2007; 2017; McRobbie 2009), Ferreira and her practices and actions can be seen from the point of view of authenticity in the sense that — keeping the DIY ethos in mind — they were associated with an anti-mainstream and anti-normative logic, creating and promoting new forms of femininity and action within Portugal's evolving cultural landscape.

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