

The interactions of musicians, mass media and the state in the context of Brazilian and Uruguayan authoritarianism

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During the 1960s and 1970s, the Uruguayan and Brazilian states clashed with artistic movements which protested against the regime both politically and culturally. Whereas counter-cultural artists built their images and created art against the grain of accepted cultural norms, politically engaged artists supported and participated in the struggle for social change, serving as mouthpieces for social movements by using their songs to transmit political messages. Not all artists fell squarely into one camp or the other, and career trajectories more often spanned more than one type of expression. Still, identifying artists as belonging to one category or the other according to their predominant tendencies in musical production facilitates an analysis of the period. Both types of artists encountered varying forms of repression, which transformed their art aesthetically and according to communicative necessities. The movements to which they belonged reshaped themselves accordingly. The state responded to these transformations and adjusted its approach to cultural movements in turn, participating in a dialogue charged with different and unequal power relations.

From the initial 1964 *coup d'état* throughout the decade, Brazilian musicians fought over television time as they developed divergent and innovative musical movements. In Brazil, the competition stimulated by televised festivals hardened aesthetic distinctions between musical movements and impaired possibilities for collaboration. Offstage, producers and musicians shared in the tension induced by the consumer market driving the festivals. As the era of the festivals faded and the dictatorship deepened, innovation in Brazilian music diminished as well. The euphoric burst of *Tropicalismo* – a provocative movement that built a kalei-

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doscopio Brazilian sound and dabbled in surrealism – and the earnest presence of protest singers melding *bossa nova* with more traditional genres, were not to be repeated. The movements dissipated, with members leaving the country, either forcibly or voluntarily, and pursuing independent creative paths. But the music industry itself, forcibly de-politicized by the early 1970s, continued to flourish, driving musical consumption and shaping tastes using the resources of the late 1960s.

By contrast, in Uruguay, politically engaged and counter-cultural singer-songwriters seldom performed on television in the 1960s and 1970s. Musicians encountered audiences in live recitals organized by small producers, leftist political parties or movements. Their paths crossed less often, and when they did so it was on friendly terrain. This would eventually facilitate the fusion of musical movements as repression hardened in the 1970s. The support of a major recording label strongly identified with the political opposition to the dictatorship enabled politically committed artists to continue producing music even in exile where they maintained strong ties with one another and with political groups. Live performances sustained relationships with audiences until restrictions forced the opposition's music underground. Most of the counter-cultural musicians who identified with the "beat" movement had left the country by the early 1970s and their heavily rock-influenced musical movement dissipated. The musicians that remained in Uruguay, representative of both movements and generally younger than those that distinguished themselves during the transition to authoritarianism, collaborated to produce songs that expressed opposition "between the lines." In the late 1970s, as the transition to democracy neared, informal recitals in small auditoriums led to larger concerts in stadiums, where individuals opposed to the dictatorship gathered in communities of fans. The concerts became synonymous with resistance against the regime.

The trajectories of and relationships between musicians with different aesthetic and political leanings bring to light the dynamics and interactions involved in the construction of artistic movements. Adding the contexts in which these processes and encounters take place – political, commercial and social – contributes much to understanding how artists shape their lives and their work in times of political crisis. The boundaries and ground rules for expression in authoritarian regimes continually change, never providing the kind of stability that facilitates the settlement of aesthetic conventions in artistic movements. State officials make subjective decisions based on laws and decrees that are purposely ambiguous, so that artists can only be guided by precedent and even that provides no guarantees. Media institutions, also navigating an unstable and unpredictable terrain, shape the spaces in which artists interact. This paper focuses on counter-cultural and politically engaged movements in authoritarian contexts, incorporating a

perspective that considers the roles of media institutions, including television channels, radio stations and concert venues, as intermediaries among artists and between artists and the state.

Resistance amid tightening repression

The cases I consider – those of Uruguay and Brazil -- are linked through a common regional context and similar repressive strategies, although they have little else in common considering their divergent 20th century histories and national characteristics. Both turned to authoritarianism in the 1960s following severe political, economic and social crises. Uruguay, seen as a bastion of democracy in the region, with a traditionally strong labor movement and a progressive and protective state, had only briefly succumbed to dictatorship in the 1930s. By contrast, Brazil's history had seen the fall of a succession of democratic governments amid constant regional struggles. The extended populist dictatorship of Getulio Vargas had shaped the relationship between social movements and the state, making the transition to authoritarianism in the 1960s seem less of a rupture with the past than it was in Uruguay. Though Brazil's first *coup d'état* preceded Uruguay's dictatorship by nine years, the periods of intense repression roughly coincided, while democracy returned to both countries in 1985. By 1968, a year of internationally widespread political unrest and counter-cultural manifestations, Brazil was four years into a dictatorship that would last 17 more years, and Uruguay's democracy was already crumbling under the strain of growing discontent and an urban guerrilla movement.

In the two countries, imported industrialization failed, while labor unions, progressive political parties and social movements demanding a supportive, far-reaching welfare state became increasingly powerful. Students took a leading role throughout the Americas in supporting worker struggles and challenging state repression. Movements were conducting a discourse regarding culture's role in politics precisely at a time when local and international cultural markets were beginning to grant students a central role as consumers. British and North American rock music, Italian, Spanish and French pop, as well as other cultural and consumer products invaded both countries and transformed youth culture. Imitative rock bands popped up throughout Latin America. These young musicians internalized rock, eventually adding local sounds to it or, in some cases, infusing regional music with its influence. Simultaneously, other agents reacted against what they saw as an invasion of foreign music, which in their view went hand in hand with United States imperialism. Adopting a nationalist stance, they advocated a return to local forms of expression and musical genres. National

markets for rock music emerged in the shadow of U.S. and British rock consumption alongside already existing markets and dissemination networks for national music. Cultural expression inside and outside of these markets negotiated between international influences and the pressure to support and produce national music, as well as changing political circumstances that demanded a cultural response.

Though Brazil and Uruguay were allied under a CIA-led network of South American militaries, and officials were equally trained in methods of repression, the actual construction of bureaucratic-authoritarian structures as well as their impact on each of the country's civil populations varied. While civilian and military trained technocrats penetrated state institutions and ruled in both regimes, the long-term goals and justifications for the dictatorships took different paths. Economic development and the struggle against the perceived menace of Marxist movements influenced by Cold War rhetoric drove both regimes, though the Brazilian regime placed a stronger emphasis on developmental goals while the Uruguayan regime insisted more emphatically on the ideological struggle. This difference affected the balance between the state and the media in relation to artists in each country. Brazil's number of political prisoners never approached the high levels of political incarceration proportional to population in Uruguay. Similarly, the number of exiles per capita was smaller and the length of exile generally shorter than in Uruguay. Despite these disparities, repression had a heavy impact on communities of artists in both countries.

The significant differences in the extent and the type of repression, and the effects of these differences on artistic production remain largely unexplored. In 1976, Uruguay had the highest per capita prison population in the world. Through the time of the dictatorship, 10% of the almost three million inhabitants would migrate for political or economic reasons, while one out of every 50 who remained would be interrogated and/or imprisoned. Brazil's population grew from less than 90 million to over 130 million during the dictatorship. Over that time less than 500 persons were killed, 10,000 were exiled, and 50,000 were arrested, interrogated and/or sentenced to prison (Arns 1985).

When Aparicio Méndez took power in Uruguay in 1976, he signed law AI-4, which repealed the political rights of 15,000 civilians for the next 15 years. In Brazil, only 500 civilians officially lost their political rights during the regime. Official censorship pre-dated the dictatorships in both countries, yet both made censorship explicit within a short time of the military coups. The rules remained sufficiently vague to make their application unpredictable and subject to either the censors' whims or direct orders from the higher echelons of the regime. As a result, artists in both countries censored themselves in anticipation of sanctions while using every resource available to communicate with their audiences.

Whether forced by the authorities or voluntarily, leading artists of the 1960s in conflict with the regimes went into exile, primarily to Europe. The Uruguayan periods of exile in most cases stretched for the duration of the *de facto* period, sometimes lasting up to 12 years. Brazilian exiles seldom lasted more than three years. This difference contributed to varying dynamics of continuity and rupture in the artistic movements of each country and in the development and overlap of “generations” of artists. The Uruguayan experience exemplifies rupture, with most of the leading musicians, playwrights and actors of the 1960s either imprisoned or in exile throughout the seventies and beginning of the eighties. The artists that developed and flourished in the 1970s did so without the tutelage of the previous generation and within a highly repressive context. The return of exiled and imprisoned artists in the mid-80s led to a confrontation between the sector that had stayed and “resisted” and those who had experienced the dictatorship either from abroad or from prison. Brazil experienced continuity, with only a few artists out of the country at any one time.

Though it is possible to deduce the effects of these different types of regimes and regime transitions on repression in the arts, theories based on this do not reach the actual relationship that developed with civilians and, specifically, with communities of artists. An important effort in this project is building the basis for developing such a theory. The musicians I trace in this endeavor belonged to four movements from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s: in Brazil, the Tropicalia and Protest movements; in Uruguay, the Beat and Protest movements. Musicians followed paths that converged and bifurcated at key moments in both countries, and these together make up the larger paths of the movements. Following the trajectory of the two movements in each of the two countries, I found that under parallel political circumstances but disparate realities in mass communication structures, the Uruguayan pair of movements converged while the Brazilian pair diverged both aesthetically and with respect to political engagement. How did the trajectories of these four musical movements interact with the political transformations the two societies were undergoing? Social scientists have compared the regimes in both countries, highlighting political and economic aspects, and less often, the social dynamics that accompanied regimes. The coexistence and interrelation of the two in both countries is not coincidental and its analysis raises new questions about authoritarianism and resistance in South America during the 1960s and 70s. But the exploration necessarily involves analysis of the media industries participating, mediating and shaping the cultural landscapes in both countries, either by their aggressive involvement or by their conspicuous silence.

Brazilian Protest and Tropicalia

Historians of Brazilian music agree that the samba that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s is the root of contemporary Popular Brazilian Music (MPB), though the path from that original samba to the series of genres that make up MPB in the 1960s as well as the influence of other Brazilian and foreign music along the way is a continued source of contention. Regardless, the centrality of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as cities where musical influences are consolidated is stable throughout the 20th century. Further, genres and particular musicians consistently migrated from the Northeast to the two urban centers, where after a brief struggle to enter the structure of the music industry, they succeed and became established, no longer as regional, but as Brazilian. Rock influences could be heard by the 1960s among musicians especially in São Paulo. Those musicians met up with members of the Tropicalia movement in an urban context toward the end of the decade.

Returning to a previous chronological moment, the politically disengaged *bossa nova* movement that developed in the prosperous and politically stable mid-1950s led to the emergence of the protest and Tropicalia movements of the unsteady mid to late 1960s, both politically engaged in very different ways. The protest group included direct inheritors of the *bossa nova* generation who devoted their energies to the leftist student movement and modified *bossa* by politicizing lyrics and incorporating traditional, rural song forms. In the early 1960s, Geraldo Vandré, Carlos Lyra, Sérgio Ricardo and other emerging Brazilian singer-songwriters had devoted their energies to the People's Center for Culture (CPC), an organization affiliated to the Brazilian university student union movement. As a field of negotiation between activists from the communist party and the Catholic left, the CPC offered a stage for discussion and negotiation between communist and liberal, particularly Christian democratic, students and artists. The CPC advocated "revolutionary popular art," or art that could "mobilize the masses" (Dunn 2001:41). The 1964 *coup d'état* cut off the brief trajectory of the CPC; its headquarters were burned down and the organization outlawed by the regime. Artists who had been involved broke up into groups that continued to create politically engaged plays, songs, poems and films. By the mid-60s, Geraldo Vandré had become a symbol of indignation and aggressiveness not only because of his call for social change, but because of his intransigence in dealing with producers, record labels and television stations (Napolitano 2001:160).

The protest effort manifested itself particularly well in the musical production, *Show Opinião*, whose three main characters were singers representing three potentially revolutionary classes, the rural poor, the marginalized urban poor and the politicized students. The piece, directed by Augusto Boal, represented

the idealism of cultural progressives re-grouping after the 1964 *coup d'état*, imagining that those three classes could unite and resist without broaching latent class conflicts with any depth. The piece searched for a unified identity based in a re-conceptualization of Brazilian culture, a patchwork that almost immediately came apart with the second coup in 1968. In addition to posing a political challenge to state power, the effort reflected a nationalist response to the perceived cultural invasion of Anglo-American music and the internationalization of Brazilian mass culture.

Around the same time that the new *bossa* generation turned to protest music, a group of musicians from Bahia who also traced their origins to *bossa nova* began to subvert the tradition, building a “universal sound” that carefully combined local, regional and international musics to produce Brazilian music in a universal language. They consciously composed and performed against the grain of *bossa nova* and traditional Brazilian music, seeking to provoke audiences into questioning relations to music, politics and the music industry. These musicians simultaneously attacked cultural nationalists who sought the essence of what was Brazilian in rural life and modernists who looked to the United States and Europe for paths to development. The movement which would come to be named “Tropicalia” drew on ties to the literary and artistic *avant garde*, bringing elements of surrealism and post-modern innovation to their music. The songs were less explicitly politically engaged than those of protest musicians, yet they elicited just as severe a reaction from the regime. Their work pushed nationalist leftist sectors to a cultural limit, initially engendering negative reactions among militants and intellectuals, but in the long run becoming extremely popular among audiences.

As television programming expanded in Brazil, Tropicalistas and protest musicians interacted and clashed with one another. The first national television station in Brazil, TV Tupi, was inaugurated in 1950. In 1953, TV Record initiated broadcasting and immediately began to compete with Tupi. Record was the first to broadcast musical programs, and with the expansion and increasing popularity of MPB in 1965, Record took the lead (Amorim 1988). By the end of the 1960s, musical festivals were prevalent on Brazilian television, where musicians, their songs, and interpreters competed for national prizes (following the model of the San Remo Festival in Italy). These performances exploited the conflict between groups of artists, particularly nationalists and “*Iê iê iê*” or pop singers, but also between members of Tropicalia and the rest. Through the mid- to late 1960s, ratings soared as musicians competed on three main television channels before charged university audiences. As Veloso recalls,

...it was at MPB's huge televised festivals that the world of the students interacted with that of the wide masses of TV spectators.... At these events, one could encounter the more or less conscious illusion that this was where the problems of national affirmation, social justice, and advances in modernization were to be resolved.... the conversations and hostilities between the groups would focus as much on an artist's political attitude and his fidelity to national characteristics as on his harmonic or rhythmic daring. (2002: 5)

The channels also hired musicians to host popular television shows linked to festival performances. The industry consolidated quickly as the press and record labels collaborated with channels to profit as effectively as possible from each festival. The need for a public political forum was fulfilled on the screen, albeit indirectly. Watching artists sing against the dictatorship and take aesthetic risks was infinitely safer than protesting on the street, risking physical attacks and imprisonment. Though clearly siding with anti-authoritarianism, television channels were threatened and censored but not shut down. As Napolitano notes (2001:153), this period saw the emergence of a mature cultural industry, forged through the clashes between musical movements emerging and innovating at the time.

As repression against the population increased, politically engaged songs were welcomed, while the *avant-garde* songs of the Tropicalistas were initially shunned. Veloso describes the presentation of *É proibido proibir* ("Prohibiting is Prohibited"), a song that took its title from a 1968 Parisian graffiti,

... "*É proibido proibir* was transformed, with a little help from Os Mutantes and Rogério Duprat (who, though not responsible for the orchestral arrangement, directed the atonal introduction, reminiscent of Os Mutantes' concrete and electronic music), into a highly scandalous piece. My hair was very long and, left to its own rebellious curliness, seemed like a cross between Hendrix and his British accompanists from the Experience. I wore plastic clothing in green and black, my chest covered with thick necklaces made of electrical wires with the plugs hanging at the ends, and thick chains with animal teeth.... (2002: 187-8)

The presentation, which resembled a happening more than the performance of a song, included the recitation of a poem, and the singer screaming "God is loose." It drew immediate booing from the audience. Veloso continues, "...the audience...made up predominantly of students who were pro-Left nationalists

(meaning anti-imperialists), reacted with violent indignation. Many faces looked at me with evident hostility, and not a few punctuated the conventional booing with swearing and insults” (2002: 189). Yet the incident – as with any publicized controversy in show business – only served to make Veloso more successful in the music industry. Because the performance was not simply meant to provoke, but also carried a message to Brazilian leftists and intellectuals, particularly students, the initial reaction led to extensive analysis of the event and the audience’s reaction. As Gilberto Gil comments in an interview with Augusto de Campos, “Innovation becomes just a fact of the requirements of the market” (Veloso et al, 1968). The innovation of Tropicalia was precisely to link cultural subversion to political resistance. Thus Tropicalia members succeeded in making counter-cultural expression marketable and opposing the regime’s cultural and political projects simultaneously. In so doing they built a temporary space for resistant expression sheltered by the powerful structure of the music industry. As will be demonstrated further on, Uruguayan musicians had no such protection.

The *É proibido proibir* (*Prohibiting is Prohibited*) example reflects the process by which in the late 1960s, the tide turned against protest musicians, and the “universal sound” and aesthetic of Tropicalia became massively popular. While the protest singers resisted the co-modification of their songs by the culture industry, Tropicalistas accepted the relationship to mass consumption, and chose to subvert the cultural industry from within. Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil taunted audiences, constantly questioning the relationship with the media, but at the same time establishing a strong positions within the industry. In 1968 Veloso commented to Augusto de Campos that the music industry served as both a structure with clear limits and an invitation to innovate (Veloso 1968). Gil and Veloso thus incorporated a critique of the media within their performances, especially at televised festivals, but maintained a collaborative relationship with key mediating figures (Dunn 2001:136). This sophisticated approach to participation in the mass media allowed Veloso and Gil to open a highly prominent space for themselves, but this did not free them from having to submit to producers’ pressure. As Celso Favaretto writes,

The placing of the aesthetic and market aspects on the same level is part of the process of desacralization, of the strategy that creates a dialectic relationship in the system of art production in Brazil through the distancing-approximation of the object-commodity. This position varies from others, whether from left or right, which, though using different justifications, unanimously condemned the commercial involvement of art considered at the time as commitment to the cultural industry. (2000 [1979]:140)¹

In its simultaneous critique of and contribution to the mass media industry in Brazil, Tropicalia reached unprecedented ratings among the general public with songs that non-nationalist intellectuals could decipher as resistant and that leftist nationalists could reject, but not without then revealing themselves as cultural conservatives. The songs, of course, could be understood in myriad ways and only required a willing ear. The commotion they initiated among other musicians and how they reshaped the Brazilian musical landscape is of interest in this context.

An illustrative example of the relationship between counter-culture and political resistance is the song *Alegria alegria* (*Joy, joy*), among the first to be identified with Tropicalia (Dunn 2001:65-66). The first time Veloso performed the song at a television festival, backed by an Argentinean rock band, the Beat Boys, fans jeered. Acoustic guitars or traditional *violas* such as the one used by Vandr  were valued over “alienated” electronic sounds. However, the song rapidly won over the reluctant fans and within a short time reached the top of the Brazilian singles chart (Dunn 2001:65). The song describes a casual walk through Rio de Janeiro. The protagonist walks without a handkerchief or documents, books, weapons, hunger or telephone. He observes the headlines of newspapers while letting disconnected images pass before his eyes. Nothing engages this pedestrian except the lazy feeling of the sun’s warmth. Flitting thoughts about marriage, singing on television and love intersperse with the images of the city. The song clearly shows the banality of life, though the protagonist passively resists by not carrying any of the documents required by the authorities at the time. Still the resistance is far from traditionally militant. The song’s style and lyrics transgress aesthetic norms. With a disengaged, alienated protagonist, drawing from various genres and citing the Beatles, it is a clear jab at protest musicians.

Veloso writes that around the time *Alegria, alegria* was released, Vandr  “who had taken on the role of the protest singer *par excellence*” approached the group of Tropicalistas at a restaurant and attacked them for “betraying national culture” (1997:280). Members of Tropicalia critiqued Vandr  alleging he did not test musical or poetic limits. Tropicalismo challenged the protest musicians’ assumption that the form should facilitate the transmission of a revolutionary content. The CPC had built its strategy based on this notion. Veloso, Gil and his group privileged musical experimentation and cultural critique over traditional forms and political engagement. Their work pushed nationalist leftist sectors to a cultural limit, in the long run attaining greater popularity than the protest musicians.

The protest singers developed a thorny relationship with television channels and record labels, exemplified by Geraldo Vandr  who engaged in violent discussions not only with media entities, but also with members of Tropicalia and

with his own audience (Veloso 1997:280). Vandr  defended “national” music against what he saw as Tropicalia’s adulteration of authentic Brazilian music. Nevertheless, protest singers hosted programs on television and continued to appear on the small screen as long as the channels invited them. The climax of the mounting tension between protest singers and media industries was S rgio Ricardo’s outburst in 1967 when, amid booing from the audience at a televised festival competition, the musician smashed his guitar on the pedestal that held the trophy for which he was competing. Ricardo later stated that his anger issued from a realization that the audience at the festival did not represent Brazilian opinion, but merely the bourgeois elite (Napolitano 2001:199). Toward the end of 1968, repression “hardened” in Brazil with the implementation of Institutional Act 5, which, among other measures, suspended the right of habeas corpus and severely tightened limits on expression. After this, the majority of protest singers no longer produced songs for the music industry or participated in nationally televised programs.

Both movements achieved unprecedented sales, each facilitating a different type of capitalization according to tastes that clearly fluctuated in relation to the process by which authoritarianism was implemented. As social organizations broke down and the autonomous university governance was forced underground, the protest music that had fueled leftist movements faded. On the other hand, Tropicalia’s music, which flirted with pop sounds and images, expressed the malaise of the moment and did not prescribe a clear path to revolution continued to flourish.. Despite the elusive nature of much of Tropicalia’s material, Gil and Veloso did nod to leftist movements through veiled references in their songs, so that politically engaged students and leaders ultimately joined the Tropicalia vanguard (Ridenti 2000:281).

The relationship with media industries played no small role in the paths of the two musical movements. By organizing song festivals and television programs that brought musicians from opposing camps into contact and conflict, media industries structured audience tastes and consumption. The increasing involvement of the state in turn limited and shaped television programs, proscribing songs and musicians and threatening reprisals against individuals unwilling to comply with the demands of censors and other officials. Channels negotiated with censors, maintaining a level of autonomy that guarded a limited but vibrant space for musical expression. Their financial success shielded musicians threatened by the state but willing to play by cultural industry rules.

Ultimately, the regime treated Veloso and Gil more harshly than Vandr  and other protest musicians. This points to the threat the regime perceived in the increasing popularity of Tropicalia compared to protest music. With severely weakened social and labor movements,² protest musicians lost their strong politi-

cal base. More dangerous was Tropicalia's call to cultural rebellion. The cultural threat thus proved stronger than the political threat in a dictatorship that sought cultural order as part of development rather than an ideological struggle. Once a high level of popularity was reached, the music industry could no longer shelter or mediate for Tropicalia's musicians. Whereas Vandr  voluntarily left Brazil once his music was prohibited and he was no longer allowed to record, Veloso and Gil spent two months in prison followed by house arrests, and eventually were forced to leave the country for three years. The regime's intervention did not reduce the popularity of Veloso and Gil who continued to be popular musicians in Brazil and worldwide (Gil is now Minister of Culture for the Workers' Party government). Vandr  reacted harshly against audience expectations that he continue creating protest songs and, in a move that baffled his fans, went on to support the military once the dictatorship ended. Other members of the protest group continued producing music outside Brazil and, but never again reached their 1960s popularity levels. Throughout the 1970s, the two movements didn't converge but rather diverged. While Tropicalia's artists continued to evolve, even as its protagonists were sent into exile, the protest movement and its songs became static and crystallized in a 60s-style resistance to authoritarianism.

Uruguayan Beat and Protest in comparison

The protest and beat movements developing in Uruguay in the 60s held what initially appeared as divergent outlooks on the role of the musician in society. The protest song group traced its roots to the folk music of the Southern Plate region and developed in the late 1950s. Their songs were the first to make a distinction between themselves and other regional genres, both musically and with respect to lyrical content. In an effort to develop a local genre, members of the group incorporated influences from Afro-Uruguayan *candombe* rhythms, tango, other Latin American and foreign music and, more subtly, elements of United States and British rock and roll. Also considering their songs as tools for social change, they aligned from the outset with both non-violent and armed leftist groups. Differences between musicians in the protest group were sometimes worked out in songs and usually were concerned with the armed movements and the role of the Communist Party. No major rivalries developed in this group, and even Daniel Viglietti and Alfredo Zitarrosa, the two most prominent protest singers, who represented two poles of this axis underwent ideological transformations through their careers. Almost every member suffered from repression during the authoritarian period.

Like their Brazilian counterparts, the protest musicians sought to construct a politicized national musical identity through their music. Viglietti wrote songs in order to “pay tribute to certain emergencies” and subordinated the creative process to the urgency of political communication (Benedetti 1987:82). Zitarrosa’s motivation for writing songs was internal:

When I take the guitar and compose a song, I reflect my state of being. It’s very simple. You start from a first phrase that issues instinctively: the guitar, then, does the rest. As a man I am a complete species: submerged in my personal context, I suffer, laugh, protest, cry or fight. As a popular singer I reflect all this in my songs until finally I compose a personal and egocentric vision of the world. And if that dynamized people, all the better. (*Siete Días*, Buenos Aires 8/10/1970 cited in Pellegrino 1999:156)

Unlike the Brazilian protest singers, they developed their careers outside the media mainstream, hardly engaging in major conflicts with the mass media or publicly questioning their relationship with the music industry. Though they sold record numbers of albums in Uruguay, they did not sustain a music industry on the scale of the Brazilian one. This can explain why relationships with producers and record labels were more casual and less weighted down by the commercial interests of the music industry. Protest musicians built their audiences through live performances, recorded albums, and their songs disseminated through the radio for a short time before censorship took them off the airwaves. By the time of the 1973 *coup d’état*, most members of the protest movement were either imprisoned or in exile. Similarly to the fate of protest music in Brazil, the songs of the Uruguayan protest movement remained locked in one style throughout the dictatorship and their authors did not become more innovative with the return of democracy.

Simultaneously, a beat movement had grown locally out of early imitations of rock and roll. Coming from a different direction, this group experimented by infusing rock with local rhythms and organized multi-disciplinary concerts that were looked down upon by both the mainstream press and traditional leftists. As Diane Denoir, a key participant in the beat movement explains in a 1999 interview:

We wanted to show, then, that what seemed irreverent was absolutely mixable: the music of Bach or Mozart with a *bossa nova* for example. That was the most acceptable option for our parents, because it seemed less raucous than the rest. Everything was played

along with texts by Boris Vian, Mrozek, and many others. It wasn't by chance that we thought to do the **Beat Concerts** in the Solís³ which, for our parents, was an icon of culture with capital letters. And the idea worked, the theater would fill up with all types of generations. (Denoir 1999)

These collages reflect the openness of beat artists to foreign artistic expressions. Whereas since the early 20th century Brazil musical movements were constantly preoccupied with producing a national sound, and musicians adapted themselves to this goal, Uruguayan beat musicians related to foreign music differently. As Denoir attests,

In the 60s, we sang in all the languages and didn't feel more engaged or less nationalist. The demand for Spanish came later....I don't believe we sang in another language because we were snobs or superficial. We sang because it sounded good to us....We had more flexibility, we were more free in our interpretations, we weren't as orthodox....In the critiques of '66, '67 or '68, the worry related to the continuity of what was going on, to what a new group of young people were doing. I think there later developed a gratuitous and cheap concern: 'if you don't sing in Spanish it's not worth it, what you're doing is no good.' That seems an overly quick judgment to me, because the value or effect of things isn't necessarily in the language in which they're expressed. (Denoir 1999)

Instead of constructing their movement as a reaction to the nationalist protest singers popular at the time, beat musicians sought to collaborate with them. Concerts such as the *Musición* series that took place in the late 1960s, or even the beat-inspired *Los que iban cantando* concerts that emerged much later in the dictatorship, invited protest singers to participate or clearly cited them and their songs. Still, the beat concerts did not seek the approval of the older generation (as Denoir describes above) and they presented an openly irreverent challenge to the deteriorating political situation. This heterogeneous approach to organizing concerts was combined with a lack of concern for intolerant audiences. In one typically irreverent beat concert, the script blatantly ridiculed Artigas, the Uruguayan founding father and liberator. As a result, the audience witnessed a scuffle on stage between police and performers. The daily newspaper *El Día* commented,

Using the bad resources of a certain juvenile [non]conformity, a little group of contemporary Uruguayan snobs have lately been attacking the Uruguayan established values. [...]

The tone in which these youth express themselves is one of “protest,” which could cultivate some alarm. Especially when their activities produce the type of scandalous and condemnable spectacle that took place two nights ago on the stage of the Odeón Theater. (Cited in Pinto 2002: 70)

Similarly to the Tropicalistas, the beat musicians were affiliated with other *avant garde* artistic movements in Uruguay, and were especially influenced by psychedelic art and surrealism. However, in the case of Uruguay, the songs were not critical of the mass media or the music industry since the movement they represented remained on the fringes of the entertainment world. In fact, few registries of the beat movement’s albums remain since very few were actually recorded.

The beat movement’s political engagement was sporadic and inconsistent, but that didn’t stop members from regularly suffering the consequences of challenging both traditional conservative and liberal cultural norms. Whereas the left harangued beat musicians for their lack of political commitment and their openness to “imperialist” musical influences,⁴ the right disparaged them for their unkempt appearance and their contempt for traditional values (as exemplified by the quote from *El Día* above). Nevertheless, progressive audiences certainly condemned beat musicians less than their conservative counterparts. Despite some initial resistance, the Tropicalistas were more openly received by the more heterogeneous and less socially conservative Brazilian left wing.

At a time of political radicalization, few musicians bridged the gap between cultural and political resistance. The politically engaged and more traditional musicians were openly persecuted, imprisoned and/or sent into exile after widely publicized arrests or other shows of authority; the counter-cultural musicians and their followers were targeted daily but less spectacularly for minor infractions, drug consumption, or hair styles and attire. As limitations on free expression tightened in the mid-1970s, a new generation of musicians combined elements of the two musical approaches and achieved communication between the lines despite severe censorship.

Unlike Brazil, where *bossa nova* fueled national and exportable musical production, the Uruguayan music industry expanded with the rise of the protest generation. Uruguayans had previously preferred foreign music to their own, and Uruguayan musicians were forced to leave the country in order to record albums. Bigger and more frequent concerts and increased exposure over the airwaves

led to an increased interest in local music. In 1971 a group of protest musicians created the independent record label Ayuí-Tacuabé, which survived throughout the dictatorship recording local, often politically engaged music. The protest group indirectly paved the way for beat musicians who had previously traveled to Buenos Aires to record their albums. Key figures such as Gastón Ciarlo “Dino” and Eduardo Darnauchans straddled both movements, serving as intermediaries and sometimes appearing in live festivals or radio broadcasts, while other figures such as Zitarrosa organized heterogeneous performances. These instances were sufficient to produce some cross-pollination between musical movements, which remained aesthetically distinct but on amicable terms, though their audiences continued to be separate for the most part. In Uruguay the resistance movement against state repression did not take part in the global counter-cultural reaction led by North American and British musicians. And although Uruguayan youth took an interest in popular foreign musicians such as The Beatles, those who were politically committed to resisting authoritarianism stayed within the bounds of traditional culture (Pinto 2004). The two movements existed alongside one another; the cross-pollination mentioned above came to expression only toward the end of the dictatorship and among a second generation of musicians that had mostly participated or performed on the periphery of the late 1960s movements. This phenomenon arose through the combined efforts of exiled protest movement leaders and a new generation struggling to communicate within the tight restrictions determined by the regime.

Because the cultural industries in Uruguay remained far behind their Brazilian counterparts, musicians didn’t take a stand *vis-à-vis* the media, generally welcoming opportunities to play in whatever venues were open to them. The only television program dedicated to Uruguayan music was Discodromo, which had initially been a radio program focusing primarily on “beat” music; however, as the 1960s advanced, the most prominent members of the protest generation also increasingly performed on this program. Although there was a certain amount of competition on Discodromo, it did not remotely resemble the showdowns that drew massive audiences in Brazil. Instead, Discodromo was based on informal interactions with audiences, especially in its early days as a radio show. The program served to expose musicians to wider audiences and foster the counterculture associated with the Uruguayan beat movement. With the stiffening of repression from 1971 onwards, television channels were forced to limit the appearances of controversial musicians, initially those identified with protest songs, and later also those associated with the beat movement. Discodromo survived until shortly after the formal *coup-d’état* of July, 1973, when its host, Ruben Castillo, called upon his audience to participate in the final massive protest against the dictatorship (Goldstein 1998).

By the mid-1970s, leading members of both musical movements were either imprisoned or in exile, leaving behind a group of surviving musicians that had been virtually silenced. Unlike Brazil, where the music industry continued to grow, intensifying repression on the part of the state sent the Uruguayan media industry into crisis. Whereas the cultural industry in Brazil played a mediating role in shielding politically resistant musicians from state retaliation, in Uruguay this was not the case, as the state came into more direct confrontation with musicians, physically isolating them from their audiences through imprisonment and exile.

Political and cultural resistance to authoritarianism

In his study of punk in Great Britain, Dick Hebdige develops a history-based theory of how conflict forges cultural manifestations. He claims that the “challenge to hegemony” posed by subcultures is “oblique” (1991 [1979]:17). Conversely, I propose that the state reaction to controversial or protesting musicians in Brazil and Uruguay demonstrates that the potential for development of a resistant subculture, however oblique, was enough to engender repression. Music poses a threat to an authoritarian state whose goals include restructuring cultural development, not only due to its link with social movements, but also due to its capacity for instigating cultural transformation outside these movements. In Uruguay the protest musicians’ link to social movements placed them in direct conflict with the state. In order to understand the Brazilian situation, one must take into account the threat posed by the cultural movements themselves. According to Stuart Hall’s distinction between subculture and counterculture, where counterculture involves a politically and ideologically resistant element (Clark et al 1993 [1975]), regardless of how they developed, what these movements produced more nearly reflected a counterculture. Hebdige’s concept is useful insofar as it helps one understand how culture developed within a capitalist system and how rebellious culture (whether “sub-” or “counter-”) grew as part of a historical process. However, it is necessary to transpose these concepts to 1960s Latin America.

Commenting on rock movements in Latin America, George Yúdice claims that they were repressed because they challenged the “normative national identities promoted by Latin American elites” (2004:347-8). This statement may equally apply to the beat movement in Uruguay and its transition from an imitative genre to one that sought a local identity. Whereas protest music was fueled by nationalism, Uruguayan beat music was influenced by individual musicians such as Eduardo Mateo, who introduced *bossa nova*, or another contemporary

musician, Rada, who incorporated *candombe* an Afro-Uruguayan rhythm, into his songs. Yúdice applies Brazilian intellectual Roberto Schwarz's perspective that rock on the periphery expresses a developmental dissonance generated by "combined and unequal development" (Yúdice 2004:348). Furthermore, Yúdice indicates that the difference between the protest movement of British and U.S. youth and Latin American youth is that the latter confronted state violence rather than "social and cultural discipline" (348). Considering the evidence from the Uruguayan and Brazilian musical scene, this distinction is too sharp. United States youth in particular did confront state violence depending on the type of resistance in which they were engaged. The state directed violence inward, for example in repressing protest rallies, and outward against non-Americans in the Vietnam War. In both cases, both social and cultural discipline were linked to political repression, though one way to de-legitimize the anti-war demands issuing from within the United States was to separate the social, cultural and political realms. In the South American cases observed above, the effort to separate realms produced different effects in Brazil than in Uruguay.

As counter-cultural expressions, both the Tropicalia and beat movements tested the limits of the older generation and their leftist nationalist contemporaries. But testing the limits of the regime required a level of politicization reached by the Tropicalistas (but temporarily camouflaged by the musicians' television successes), but not by the beat musicians. Still, the Uruguayan regime was clearly more socially conservative than its Brazilian counterpart. The beat movement was broken by constant repression on the street, as well as no access to media outlets. The protest movements were subject to a different dynamic. Neither movement challenged tradition and both called for social and political -- but not cultural -- transformations. Here again the buffering effect of the developed cultural industries in Brazil is evident. But, as with the counter-cultural movements, this effect reached its limit when state repression began overriding commercial interests. No such buffer existed in Uruguay, with the result that musicians were more effectively removed from public life during the dictatorship.

The triangular relationship that developed in Brazil between musicians, the media, and the state did not evolve in Uruguay, where musicians and the state clashed with one another directly. At a time of increasing authoritarianism, the Brazilian cultural industry both shielded musicians from the state and structured interactive venues that shaped audience preferences. The media industry in Brazil fulfilled one of the military's goals, namely to transform popular culture. Television inevitably "popularized" and directed even the most committed artists to a non-consumer orientation. Images, even rebellious ones, were considerably toned down when they appeared on the screen in individual homes. While festival and studio audiences reacted by chanting and booing artists off the stage,

isolated individuals or small groups of viewers experienced the excitement second-hand, and without the organizational potential of large public gatherings. As Yúdice writes,

Political repression was part of the strategy for modernizing Brazilian society, aided by investment and promotion in modern communication technologies and television. The military formulated clear policies to re-signify and transform the very notion and reality of the popular, away from a perspective rooted in class and cultural struggles and toward a notion of popularity defined by consumer markets. (2004: 353)

This of course also had its limits, as illustrated by the fact that both Veloso and Gil were eventually arrested and sent into exile. Still, this serves as an example of the role of the media as a buffer between artist and state, not only because participation in the mainstream transforms art, but also because it is commercially unsound to repress universally popular musicians.

Because the cultural industry took a mediating role between musicians and their audiences, the issue of mediation itself, combined with their critique of authoritarianism, became a theme for both protest and Tropicalia musicians. Cultural resistance and political protest were combined both in Uruguay and Brazil, but in Brazil the two were inextricable. Engaging in either type of resistance could elicit a reaction on the part of the regime. In Uruguay artists chose to situate themselves in either one camp or the other, experiencing their relationship with the regime differently according to whether they expressed themselves in political or counter-cultural terms. However, this difference cannot be understood solely by investigating interactions between musicians and the authoritarian state. In Brazil the relationship with the media transformed cultural products by absorbing politically resistant manifestations into cultural debates. In the Uruguayan context, where the media had less power, the cultural debate did not center on the television screen. Artists built more direct and tolerant relationships with one another, respecting their differences and leaving room for different levels and types of resistance.

I have used the labels “counter-cultural” and “politically engaged” to situate musicians within a cultural and political field, though they may be just as easily applied to artists as to their cultural products. These terms were used to facilitate the above analysis, but in most cases, counter-culture and political engagement should be conceived of as points on a continuum along which artists or products may be placed. For example, the **Tropicalistas** collaborated with rock groups and protest musicians, but their output could only be situated in the Tropicalia

camp. **Tropicalia** on the other hand combined cultural and political resistance. [My underlines. Totally unclear what she means here. Maybe one of them should read “beat”? RE] In Uruguay, Daniel Viglietti was unquestionably a member of the protest song movement, but some of his songs incorporated both rock and contemporary music. These two examples reflect the fact that most artists fell somewhere in the middle of the continuum and expressed combined elements of cultural and political resistance. Furthermore, the network of relationships among the musicians from both countries also complicates distinctions. At another level, it is possible to interpret artistic expression as either culturally or politically resistant independently of the artists’ intentions. Considering that none of the artists adhered to one movement only throughout the period under discussion, and taking into account the intrinsic fluidity of the movements, any effort to categorize can only provide a rough guide to the relationships between state, artists and media institutions.

The cases analyzed above not only illustrate the fluidity among expressive categories, but also the way in which boundaries can develop given specific circumstances. The concern with building a national sound and links with left-ist nationalist movements limited counter-cultural expression and produced a strong barrier against innovation in politically committed music. Artists created more freely if they were willing to cross this divide, but then they ran the risk of being rejected by audiences seeking not only political resistance, but also strong nationalist identification. In contexts of severe political crisis and violence, activists and their supporters will exclude cultural resistance and rebellion, viewing it as superficial compared to political resistance involving actual physical risk. Relationships with media industries, including those required by musicians’ material necessities and reputation must be hidden lest they also be interpreted as detracting from the political goals of a movement with which these artists identify.

Pierre Bourdieu points out the **opposition between pure and commercial art** “**which acts** both objectively, in the form of a space of antagonistic positions, and within minds, in the form of schemas of perception and appreciation which organize all perception in the space of producers and products” (1992: 166). [Which acts? What does she mean? Maybe delete this whole sentence? RE] Artists seek a space between the two extremes of exclusively producing for the market and sustaining absolute independence from the market (Bourdieu 1992: 141). That space is not only open to criticism, but shapes the perception of cultural products. Boundaries for the growth and interrelation of artistic movements are determined both by audience feedback and by the spaces opened up by media industries and closed by the state. This comparative perspective of art under authoritarianism reveals the interaction of these entities and their impact

on cultural and political resistance among the musicians themselves. The intersections produced by the media and structured by the state set different types of stages for the emergence and development of movements that resist, whether culturally or politically, and, in one way or another, provide a voice for societies struggling to breathe under the stifling blanket of authoritarianism.

NOTES

1. This and all quotes originally in Spanish or Portuguese have been translated by the author.
2. This had taken place from the 1964 coup through the 1960s, while severe cultural repression developed from Institutional Act 5 onward.
3. The Sol's is and was the most important and formal auditorium in the country.
4. See Pinto (2002: 72) for some examples of this attitude.

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