

“Aquele Abraco”: Brazilian Protest Music in the Face of Repression

Kayla Nustad

May 1, 2023

University of Texas Department of History

knn595@utexas.edu

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between Brazilian popular music and the military dictatorship. By focusing on three singers Geraldo Vandré, Caetano Veloso, and Chico Buarque, the range of musicians' experiences confronting authoritarianism is seen through their responses to censorship and persecution. Censorship played a large role in the repression of culture and media during the Brazilian military dictatorship. Analyzing the experiences of musical artists provides a glimpse into both how leftist voices spoke out against oppression and how the military attempted to suppress them. Through public music festivals, new mass mediums, and innovative lyricism, artists of Brazilian popular music fought official censors to attempt to maintain connection to and hope within their audiences. Studying these interactions is pertinent because it is important to look at the ways censoring art can impact the artists and audiences, and how censorship was used to hide human rights violations.

Keywords: *censorship, Brazilian history, popular music*

Pop culture has always been a highly visible aspect of Brazil, even under the control of a heavily repressive military government. Under leftist President João Goulart, Cold War anti-communist sentiment from the military and conservative sectors of society led to the coup d'état of March 1964. The possibility of dealing with another revolutionary Cuba concerned elite military officers, and alongside the fear of communism, the lifestyle of 1960s counterculture fed a rising sense of “moral panic” within Brazil.¹ This panic rose in reaction to new and progressive ideas permeating Brazilian youth culture, including “free love” and Marxism, which opposed traditional and conservative values. Like most of the Western world at this time, popular culture in Brazil was undergoing an immense transformation due to the rise of television and radio. As progressive or liberating ideals became popular among young people, a new genre arose reflecting and driving this cultural change. This genre, *Música popular brasileira* (MPB), is known for its sociopolitical commentary and criticisms and had an eminent impact on the cultural expression of the Brazilian public.

This paper will explore the origins of MPB, its artists' purposes in creating protest music, and the efforts made by the government to censor these messages. Through looking at the cases of three artists, Chico Buarque, Geraldo Vandré, and Caetano Veloso, I will discuss the different factors that encouraged the popularization of MPB or attempted to restrict it. This paper argues that the military was unsuccessful in preventing MPB artists from raising political awareness in the Brazilian public through protest lyrics. Initial repression was undermined by profit motives of media industries that broadcasted leftist and oppositional performances. After censorship became unavoidable, MPB artists found ways to circumvent restrictions of their music through cleverly disguised lyrics and sounds representing national solidarity. Thus, government censorship may

¹ Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 73-74.

have paradoxically enhanced the artists' determination or ability to connect with the people. Through the particular cases of Vandr , Veloso, and Buarque, various aspects of media portrayals, festival controversies, censorship, and exile will be explored and analyzed.

The period in which MPB rose to prominence was marked by an unprecedented surge in mass media platforms. Beginning in the 1930s and 40s, Brazil witnessed a golden age of music catalyzed by the invention and popularization of radio in the early twentieth century. Boosted by U.S. recording companies arriving in Latin America, radio took the nation by storm. It aided in the spread of regional sounds to other parts of the country, such as samba—native to Rio de Janeiro—frevo, maracatu, and forr , originating mainly from Recife and other northeastern regions.² As time went on, samba would be cemented as the popular representative sound of Brazilian identity, which led to the rise of the genre of bossa nova. Bossa nova contained elements of samba, and though it unified regional styles considered “truly Brazilian,” there were still criticisms of its middle-class appropriative tendencies. This was a step in between popular music from the golden age and MPB, connecting musical styles, shift in media, and national music with more global styles.³

Within the mid-twentieth century, according to historian Marshall C. Eakin, popular music could only become truly “popular,” if the term is understood as mass consumed, with the expansion of media such as radio and television. The conditions of creating “mass culture in an age of mass communications” provided protest artists with a unique ability to reach audiences that had only developed in the past forty years.⁴ Artists such as Geraldo Vandr , who became an

² Marshall C. Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians: Race and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 201.

³ Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians*, 205.

⁴ Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians*, 201.

icon of MPB protest music and created many anthems in opposition to the military, increased their popularity through television programs and festival competitions. The new atmosphere of commercialized culture, with music viewed as competition to be consumed, paved new avenues for spreading political messages widely amongst the masses. Globally, a massive development of popular culture materialized in this period, including a slightly ironic rise of an almost mainstream subculture. The expansion and “deepening” of popular culture in Brazil paralleled the large increase in population: from approximately 50 million in the 1950s to around 125 million in the 1980s.⁵ Aspects of subculture, such as the appearance of hippies, sexual liberation, and changing gender norms were selectively embraced by the young population in Brazil, including many students.⁶ With over half of Brazilians under the age of 20 in 1970, changes in pop culture and the effects of media expansion were felt through a large portion of the population.⁷

Additionally, rapid urban growth and industrialization played a catalytic role in the massification of culture. The economic boom brought on by foreign investment and import-substitution in the Brazilian economy considerably expanded the middle and working classes and their ability to engage in consumerism. The use of televisions grew from 598,000 in 1960 to 4,584,000 in 1970.⁸ Because of this, television became one of the most important media for the spread of mass culture, including MPB. The new phenomenon of television programs with musical performances became commonplace just a decade earlier, and saw artists, both iconic and unknown, battling for the most screen time, with TV Record as a prominent

⁵ Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians*, 207.

⁶ Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 64.

⁷ João Yunes, “The Population of Brazil,” *Revista de Saúde Pública* (February 1972).

⁸ Denise Milstein, “Revival Currents and Innovation on the Path from Protest Bossa to Tropicália,” *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (December 2013).

broadcasting station.⁹ An important new aspect of this television era was the artists' image, marketability, and the formation of "personality cults" surrounding an artist. For example, Chico Buarque held a certain appeal as an attractive, young new artist breaking out onto the scene, and the press framed him as a carefree musician singing about Carnaval.¹⁰ He was described by Caetano Veloso as "the fabulous and seductive composer-singer and, for the students who filled the theaters and the festivals, the perennial star."¹¹ Buarque's public image contrasted with the older, more serious image of Geraldo Vandré and was even used to fabricate a feud between the two.¹² In his autobiography, Caetano Veloso also speaks to some of the negative aspects of these new media portrayals, saying "a few seconds on the air and suddenly millions of people think they know you."¹³

In the mid-1960s, MPB festivals emerged as a new phenomenon of artistic expression and communication with fans. In his study of Brazilian popular music, Charles Perrone described the festivals as "public forums," giving people the opportunity to speak and debate on issues that were restricted in the "normal channels" by the government.¹⁴ These events brought in unimaginably large audiences, and artists would perform meaningful, poetic, and political music that often became popular protest anthems. Quoted in Marshall Eakin's chapter, one journalist said "In no soccer stadium does one see so much enthusiasm and passion, which suggests the immense importance attributed by Brazilians to music, its composers, and its singers."¹⁵

Brazilian TV stations would host these festivals, including Record, Excelsior, Tupi, and Globo.

⁹ Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians*, 210.

¹⁰ Krista Brune, "Subversive Instruments: Protest and Politics of MPB and the Nueva Canción," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 33 (2002): 136.

¹¹ Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, trans. Isabel de Sena (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 106.

¹² Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 136.

¹³ Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, 95.

¹⁴ Charles A. Perrone, "Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics in Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music," *Luso-Brazilian review* 39, no. 1 (2002): 69.

¹⁵ Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians*, 210.

These stations, being private businesses, did not self-censor leftist sentiment, especially when it became popular among the audiences, until the passing of Institutional Act no. 5, which officially censored much of public media. Broadcasting popular content meant higher ratings; therefore, the censorship of progressive, oppositional ideas would mean loss of profits. Vandré, already well-established as an MPB artist, performed his song “Pra não dizer que não falei das flores” (So they don’t say that I never spoke of flowers), also known as “Caminhando,” at Rio’s 1968 International Song Festival, hosted by TV Globo.¹⁶ Due to the song’s public popularity and the controversy over its second place award at the festival, it became an instant hit as an anthem of the student protest movement of the late 1960s. “Caminhando” was later banned by censors due to its lyrical call to action:

*Caminhando e cantando e seguindo a canção
Somos todos iguais braços dados ou não...
Caminhando e cantando e seguindo a canção
Vem vamos embora que esperar não é saber
Quem sabe faz a hora não espera acontecer
//*

Walking and singing and following the song
We are all equal arm in arm or not...
Walking and singing and following the song
Come, let's go, waiting is not knowing
Those who know make the moment, don't wait for it to happen¹⁷

The song’s style, lyrics, and cadence fit a style similar to a march, further imbuing the essence of protest within the people. Though the song was zealously chanted at protests, Vandré refused to adhere to the label of protest singer because he felt his music was directly connected to people and the reality of life in Brazil, where “everything was protest.”¹⁸

The organization of MPB festivals was unique, with an artist-audience-jury setup that allowed audiences to influence which music was preferred and would win contests through

¹⁶ Perrone, “Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics,” 73.

¹⁷ Brune, “Subversive Instruments,” 134, 143.

¹⁸ Brune, “Subversive Instruments,” 134.

applause and vocal support. Then juries, typically consisting of critics, journalists, and musicians, would select the winners.¹⁹ Because recording companies were excluded from the decision-making process, festivals influenced the market for musical styles and artists chosen to record. However, this style of promoting music soon created problems for the military. Its goal to suppress the spread of oppositional ideas was undermined by these large events, and between 1964 and 1968, strict censoring of public media was not yet written into law. At Rio's International Song Festival in 1968, Vandr  performed "Caminhando," and based on the audience's approval, was the obvious choice for first place. Unbeknownst to the audience, military representatives intervened backstage and prohibited Vandr  from receiving first place, instead giving the song second place to the great disapproval of the crowd. The military justified later banning this song due to its "Mao Tse-Sung [sic] like cadence," and its likelihood of co-opting by the student movement as a protest slogan.²⁰ Vandr  fled Brazil after the implementation of A-I 5 because of harsh persecution, bringing an abrupt end to his career, though not without leaving his mark as an innovator of protest in MPB and the leftist student movements. He was eventually able to return in 1973 after spending time in Uruguay, Chile, and France.²¹

Arguably, the most influential aspect of the MPB festivals was that they could now be televised. Due to the aforementioned large increase in ownership of televisions in the 1960s, millions of families could tune in to the showing of these performances. Since festival censorship before 1968 was rare, TV audiences would see what the real-time audiences were seeing and receive the increasingly political messages displayed in performances. Collectively, thousands of

¹⁹ Charles Kirschbaum, "Organizational Design for Institutional Change: The Case of MPB Festivals, 1960 to 1968," *BAR, Brazilian administration review* 3, no. 2 (2006): 57–67.

²⁰ Perrone, "Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics," 73.

²¹ Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 130.

people would influence the progressive ideas and messages promoted in these forums, and then thousands more would witness the free expression from their homes. The influence of songs such as “Caminhando”—which urged people to stand, march, and sing together *now*—alarmed the military in their efforts to maintain control. In consequence, the economic boom that promoted consumerism in the Brazilian middle and working classes fostered greater opportunities for artistic consumption and production, while heightening political awareness on a larger scale than before.

Ushering in the most heavily oppressive years of the regime, the passing of the Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5) removed numerous civil liberties and suspended Congress. Persisting in its reign of oppression, the military also used AI-5 to enact strict censorship of much of the media, including press, artists, musicians, and filmmakers. With strong restrictions of “subversive” types of music and lyrical content, artists such as Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque faced daunting new challenges. Veloso, famously a controversial and provocative figure, faced heavy persecution after the implementation of this law, and eventually was sent into exile. Having avoided official exile (later leaving on a self-exile), Buarque creatively evaded censorship restrictions using symbolic words and poetic language within his music. He and other artists continued to send messages to people in opposition to the military regime using not only new methods of media, but also clever variations of mainstream protest.

The festival participation that provided young Brazilians with a sense of community and solidarity quickly turned into an event devoid of controversial ideas and debate. AI-5, enacted in December 1968, resulted in the banning of protest songs and electric guitars from festivals, along with the exile and severe censorship of many artists, completely changing the game for the once

politically spirited events.²² With such strict restrictions on media and disbanding of leftist/oppositional organizations, little was left to give Brazilian citizens hope of fighting against the oppression and violence of the military.

One musical genre negatively affected by AI-5 was the Tropicalist movement. Spearheaded by Veloso, Tropicalismo represented an anarchist offshoot of MPB that leaned into the style of American and British rock and roll. This was highly controversial at the time, with criticisms coming from both the political left and right over the use of the electric guitar. Conservatives found the use of the electric guitar to be vulgar and immoral, while leftists decried the influence of cultural imperialism of the United States. Veloso's movement rejected both sides of the political spectrum in more ways than one, with his performances and music dangerously, in his opinion, refusing to adhere to the ideals of the left or the right.²³ Veloso curated a very particular image to portray to the public, one that was meant to instigate criticism and protest because it went against many gender norms. Veloso often performed adorned with jeans and sandals, symbols of hippie culture and youth leisure, alongside his iconic head of long curly hair.²⁴ This aspect of Tropicalia, its controversial sound and performers' appearance, is what made Veloso and his comrades heavily targeted by the government. The director of the Tropicalists' television program, *Divino Maravilhoso* (Just Divine), encouraged and understood the importance of the movement's image and messages, "...because if the Tropicalist performers are discussed, that is a sign of their popularity. If they are attacked, it's because they communicate more forcefully. If they irritate, cause confusion, it's because they communicate outside of the accepted codes."²⁵ Cultural studies theorist Lorraine Leu mentions the surprising

²² Lorraine Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 36-7.

²³ Roberto Schwartz, "Political Iridescence: The Changing Hues of Caetano Veloso," *New Left Review* 75, no. 75 (2012).

²⁴ Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 46.

²⁵ Fernando Faro, quoted in Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 46.

fact of this program having been allowed by censors at all, with its core values centering around anarchy and individual freedoms.²⁶

Caetano Veloso was very different from other MPB artists in that he outwardly criticized the intellectual leftist elites, commenting on their use of working class people as guinea pigs for their socialist theory. He defended working class autonomy from socialist movements that claimed to be in their best interest. Veloso questioned whether the laborers would want to be “dubbed ‘proletarians’” when they would never have learned that word in the way that theorists and leftist elites used it. He also questioned whether socialism could be considered the only true solution to the issues seen in Brazil. This led, according to Roberto Schwartz, to Veloso’s epiphany concerning populism, referring to the left’s romanticization of working class suffering and resistance: “bearing the brunt of social injustice, and therefore the subject and necessary ally of a politics of liberation.”²⁷ Veloso’s public switch to libertarianism placed himself against the conservatives and leftists altogether. From this idea, Tropicalia was born. Building this new movement based on the idea of questioning established national and cultural ideas and attitudes, Veloso, along with a few others dubbed the Tropicalistas, created intensely provocative music and performances to get their message across.²⁸ The ideology behind Tropicalismo involved provoking thought within the audience “to elevate the question of individual choice to central importance, as a way of reacting to social and political events of the time.”²⁹ It was a way to criticize the conservative opposition to new, experimental cultural phenomena and intellectual elitism from the left simultaneously. Alongside claims of Tropicalismo’s “corrupting influence

²⁶ Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 47.

²⁷ Schwartz, “Political Iridescence.”

²⁸ Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 47.

²⁹ Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 27.

on the young,³⁰ progressive critics bashed the avant garde as being disconnected from MPB and even supporting the regime.³¹ Veloso's actions were also often provocative towards audiences, particularly during festival performances, including erotic dances that undermined gender roles and resulted in slurs thrown at the androgynous artist.

After the implementation of AI-5 and its ramifications became widespread, many artists were either legally exiled or retreated to self-exile. Buarque, for example, left Brazil in 1970 on a self-imposed exile and spent time in Italy, continuing to play his music to raise awareness of the dire situation in his home country. Artists who were exiled formally included Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, who ended up living and producing music in London. The two artists were arrested in São Paulo prior to their exile as a result of a contentious stunt pulled on their television program, *Divino Maravilhoso* (Just Divine). The night before, performing the song of a samba composer popular during the 30s and 40s, Assis Valente, who reportedly committed suicide due to persecution for being homosexual, Veloso sang with a gun pointed at his head.³² Furthering the moral criticism, this performance representing the pressures Valente felt that drove him to suicide, was done on Christmas Eve. As Veloso later noted: "They just don't seem to be able to stand anything open-ended, anything they can't fore [sic] and control."³³ *New York Times* journalist Joseph Novitski describes Gil's performance and his deep connection with his audience just prior to his and Veloso's arrest: Gil looks to the audience and greets them with the words "Aquele abraço," which Novitski calls an "untranslatable Portuguese phrase transmit[ing] a special Brazilian warmth and affection."³⁴ This interaction meaningfully depicts the personal

³⁰ Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 47.

³¹ Perrone, "Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics," 70.

³² Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 47.

³³ Joseph Novitski, "Composer, Forced into Exile, Sings his Farewell to Brazil," *New York Times*, July 29, 1969.

³⁴ Novitski, "Composer, Forced into Exile."

connections MPB artists developed with their fans, and the importance of their aligned political stance with the people. Soon, the two artists were seemingly inexplicably sent into exile, and the Tropicalist movement came to an end.

Official censorship could be enacted from multiple different state agencies that had control over news media, literature, music, film, art, and theater. Mainly, the Division of Censorship of Public Entertainment (DCDP), which was operated and controlled by the military police, was responsible for reviewing music and other art before its dissemination.³⁵ Censors tended to target anything the conservative leadership found to be morally detrimental or damaging to Brazilian society, much like other twentieth-century fascist regimes, though the Brazilian military denied being fascist. Notably, authoritarianism was “most visibly frayed and deteriorated,” according to Benjamin Cowan, when it came to the centralized organization of censorship.³⁶ Due to conflicts between leadership of censorship institutions, the accuracy and effectiveness of sanitizing what they considered morally abhorrent materials was greatly affected. Censors were sometimes highly technically trained, while others were not, and miscommunications on resources needed for advising on censorship was common. These resources, such as authority from higher up officers, were not commonly available and often the ability to translate media in other languages than Portuguese was lacking as well.³⁷

Analysis of a film censorship form from the Department of Federal Police: Division of Censorship of Public Diversions, collected by film historian Robert Stam, yields more insight into what content censors identified as subversive.³⁸ The form asks for “yes or no” answers to

³⁵ Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 213.

³⁶ Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 213.

³⁷ Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 213-14.

³⁸ Robert Stam, “Censorship in Brazil,” *Jump Cut*, no. 21 (1979): 20.

each of the several questions pertaining to positivity and morality of the evaluated piece. The questions on the subject of positivity posit whether the piece promotes consolidation of the family unit, social equilibrium, community education, consolidation of democracy, cultural expression, and entertainment.³⁹ It is unclear whether positive expressions of democracy would be considered a negative trait, due to the nature of the regime's claim to power.

On the subject of morality and "good manners," the form asks whether the piece is constructive, dealing with generational conflicts, promoting free love, or including shocking and immoral scenes. Interestingly, there is already an apparent contradiction between the seemingly positive aspect of promotion of the family unit and dealing with issues of generational conflict. The family unit, according to the censor form, may only be portrayed in a specific way that demonstrates the absence of conflict between the members. Other questions the form poses include the existence of violence in the piece, Marxist/socialist propaganda, and representation of social and racial problems. Most relative to music censorship, at least for the artists in question, would be emphasis on serious social problems, opposition to the police and military, and socialist ideas. The last portion of the form includes a list of time periods, one of them being "free," indicating the timeframe for a piece to be allowed to be published.⁴⁰

In their mind, the federal police's enforcement of censorship aimed at preservation of Brazilian society. They found subversive materials and media to be "undermining the roots of Brazilian society so as to destroy it."⁴¹ This is curious when compared to the idea that most protest artists believed themselves to be connecting deeply to the Brazilian people, their fans, through styles and sounds that were meaningful to the nation. This also points to the

³⁹ Stam, "Censorship in Brazil," 20.

⁴⁰ Stam, "Censorship in Brazil," 20.

⁴¹ Cowan, *Securing Sex*, 217.

controversial aspects of Tropicalia, and Vandr e's emphasis on needs of structural reform within rural Brazilian areas, something that would be viewed as heavily progressive and against traditional values. MPB artists were creating music relatable to the public, resembling the rough issues in their lives, and suggesting alternatives for a brighter future.

Not only were censors coming from the conservative regime, but from the other side of the political spectrum as well. The intellectual left often brought criticism against songs from MPB artists known for protest, expecting profound political and social commentary. Often, this led to experiences of self-censorship for the artists themselves. To push away this tendency to self-censor, Chico Buarque devised his own shows and performances to deliberately stand against the injustices happening in Brazil. In a 1974 interview, Buarque said, "I am stubborn and I saw that staying in the hills was assuming an attitude of self-censorship with my work..."⁴² Buarque felt that succumbing to the pressure to remain silent on the tragedies occurring in Brazil was self-censorship, and chose to continue to sing.

Though he left Brazil on a self-exile in 1970, Chico Buarque continued to make music and perform in Italy to raise awareness of the situation in Brazil. Hailing from the urban center of Rio de Janeiro, popular samba instruments and beats appear predominantly in his music, along with messages that represent the population of the city. According to Caetano Veloso, Buarque was "the embodiment of the best of best in the history of Brazilian music, and that is how everyone saw him."⁴³ His songs featured messages surrounding widespread issues in urban life, such as financial stressors and poverty, which eventually breached the threshold of subversion for the military-run government. Touching the quotidian experiences for regular people was

⁴² Chico Buarque, quoted in Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 137.

⁴³ Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, 107.

prominent in Buarque's music, especially emphasis on the "suffering daily existence of the worker, the underemployed, the common people and the disinherited in general."⁴⁴ He balanced this expression of issues with nostalgic, traditional sounds of samba that exemplified the hope for return of happiness for Brazilians.

With regards to music and MPB, the government, specifically the DCDP, worried that "music could sway the poor and illiterate masses and thus serve as a weapon of the left in the political, cultural, and ideological struggles of the 1960s and 1970s."⁴⁵ This is why government agents considered discussion of issues such as poverty and reform subversive and banned them from radio and production. Artists discovered ways to cleverly disguise their oppositional ideas within symbolized words. For example, a popular song by Buarque called "Cálice" (1973) was overtly a religious song about a chalice, yet plays on the homophone *cálice* (chalice) and the term *cale-se* (shut up) to surreptitiously denounce the regime's oppressive censors. Evidently, even songs that passed censors with minor changes often had palpable criticisms and messages that were still understood by listeners. MPB, acting as an agent to bring people together, gave the middle and working classes a voice of hope, a voice to rally behind. Many songs in particular were effective as unofficial anthems of certain movements, such as the student movement, like the aforementioned Geraldo Vandré song, "Caminhando."⁴⁶ "Apesar de você," [In Spite of You, 1970] by Chico Buarque became an incredibly popular protest song before it was banned from the radio for its oppositional message.⁴⁷ Buarque's "you" within the song was not specifically identified, though the message to continue to live with hope "in spite of" the crimes and sins of this "you" made the intent of the song clear. The lyrics read:

⁴⁴ Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 136.

⁴⁵ Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 128.

⁴⁶ Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 134.

⁴⁷ Brune, "Subversive Instruments," 136.

Você que inventou esse estado,
Que inventou de inventar toda a escuridão,
Você que inventou o pecado,
Esqueceu-se de inventar o perdão,
Apesar de você amanhã há de ser outro dia
//
You who invented this state
Who invented to invent all the darkness
You who invented sin
Forgot to invent forgiveness
In spite of you, tomorrow will be another day

Focused on sin and irredeemability, the song calls out the injustices and human rights violations perpetrated by the government.

Despite its ban, the song continued to breed a sense of hope for justice within the people, and lyrics that translate to “tomorrow is another day” appeared on many protest placards. The attached photo, for example, comes from an election rally in 1974 where the main banner of the marchers proudly displays Buarque’s defiant lyrics, denouncing the unjust election system under the regime.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Perrone, “Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics,” 72.



Fig. 1, Artur Franco, *Manifestação em São Paulo*, Photograph, (São Paulo: Editora Abril, 1974). The lyrics "Amanhã há de ser outro dia," *Tomorrow is another day*, appear on the protesters' main banner.

MPB appeared in Brazil at a time of political chaos and turmoil, as well as a time of great cultural shifts. Notwithstanding the repressive efforts of the political right and the government, the voices of artists who claimed to represent the people remained unsilenced, though not without hardship and struggle. The stories of Caetano Veloso, Geraldo Vandré, and Chico Buarque illuminate the experiences of persecution for these artists, but also their refusal to give in to the forced suppression of progressive expression. After the period of intense oppression and violence from the late 60s through the early 80s, 1985 marked the beginning of Brazil's political opening, and the return of the republic. Some albums were able to be re-released, such as Buarque's album that included "Apesar de você." Other songs could be released with original lyrics, or works that had been denied publication by censors entirely, displaying what censors

had attempted to strip from MPB.⁴⁹ Although MPB was overtaken by rock in terms of popularity, and the prominence of these artists slowly faded (as they aged), their lasting imprint in fighting against cultural and political repression remains in the historical memory.

⁴⁹ Perrone, "Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics," 72-3.

Bibliography:

Brune, Krista. "Subversive Instruments: Protest and Politics of MPB and the Nueva Canción."

Studies in Latin American popular culture 33 (2015): 128–145.

Chico Buarque. *Apesar de você*. 1978. Universal Music Ltda, digital recording.

Cowan, Benjamin A. *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil*.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Eakin, Marshall C. *Becoming Brazilians: Race and National Identity in Twentieth-Century*

Brazil. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Franco, Artur. *Manifestação em São Paulo*. Photograph. São Paulo: Editora Abril, 1974. From

Memorial da Democracia.

<http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/vai-passar-a-noite-da-ditadura-militar>

(accessed April 30, 2023).

Leu, Lorraine. *Brazilian Popular Music: Caetano Veloso and the Regeneration of Tradition*.

London, UK: University of Bristol, 2016.

Milstein, Denise. "Revival Currents and Innovation on the Path from Protest Bossa to

Tropicália," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Caroline Bithel, et al,

418–441. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Novitski, Joseph. "Composer, Forced into Exile, Sings his Farewell to Brazil." *New York Times*,

July 29, 1969.

Perrone, Charles A. "Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics in Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music." *Luso-Brazilian review* 39, no. 1 (2002): 65–78.

Schwarz, Roberto. "Political Iridescence: The Changing Hues of Caetano Veloso." *New Left review* 75, no. 75 (2012): 89–127.

Stam, Robert. "Censorship in Brazil." *Jump Cut*, no. 21 (November 1979): 20.

Veloso, Caetano. *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*. Translated by Isabel de Sena. Edited by Barbara Einzig. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.