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The Influence of the Brazilian Dictatorship on Brazilian Music:  
A Rhetorical Analysis of Protest Songs

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Abstract

In 1964, Brazil suffered a military coup that established a dictatorship in the country until 1985. During this period, the armed forces used unrestrained violence to suppress the opposition, and the government placed a heavy censorship on the media and the arts. Music was a targeted area due to its great influence on society, especially on the youth, and many songwriters and singers were exiled. In order to escape from the censors and still be able to convey a revolutionary message to the people, they had to use different literary devices and create new methods of writing. It was in this context that a new and unique segment in Brazilian music emerged—the so-called “protest songs.”

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“The meaning of a word is completely determined by its context” (Bakhtin and Voloshinov, as cited in Silva, 2004, p. 133). Words do not only have multiple meanings—such as “bat,” which can mean “flying mammal” or “to strike”—but they can convey connotative and denotative meanings as well. Connotation is the suggestive meaning of a word, while denotation is its literal meaning. The word “heart,” for instance, literally means “a hollow muscular organ of vertebrate animals,” but it is often used with a suggestive meaning, such as “the human source of emotions” (Merriam-Webster online, 2007-2008).

Through the analysis of context, it is possible to interpret the meaning of a word. The context can range from a phrase to a certain location to a specific period of time. The socio-historical context in which Brazilian “protest songs”—songs criticizing the government—emerged will be the main guide used for the analysis of the songs’ lyrics. As Silva (2004) stated, “Protest songs and their socio-historical context are connected to each other and reveal each other.” Because of this, considerable attention will be given to the context of the 1964 dictatorship before an analysis of the songs can be provided. Contextual information will include: a general overview of the factors that led to the coup of 1964, aspects of the dictatorship that are relevant to understanding how protest songs emerged—such as torture and censorship—and an explanation of the growth of Brazilian music and its influence during that time.

## Literature Review

*The Coup of 1964*

The Brazilian military started to play the role of an influential and powerful force in Brazilian politics in 1889, when it ousted Emperor Dom Pedro II and opened the way for Brazil to become a republic. From then on, it assumed the task of “moderating power.” This was evident in the twentieth century, when the military intervened “directly to change the course of government” in 1930, 1945, 1954, 1955, 1961, and 1964 (Vincent, 2003, p.64).

The coup of 1964 took place on April 1, when leaders of the Brazilian army ousted President Jango Goulart and sent him into exile in Uruguay (Levine, 1999). As Thomas G. Sanders (Sanders & Handelman, 1981) explained, this military intervention differed drastically from the previous ones. “Until 1964 intervention was always short-term: the military stepped in, restored civilian government, and then withdrew” (p. 147). In 1964, however, the officers took power themselves and did not withdraw until 1985.

This long occupation by the army happened due to three main reasons. First, the officers were divided into two groups based upon their beliefs regarding the army’s role in Brazilian politics—the “hard line” (*linha dura*) and the moderate faction (Vincent, 2003). Thomas E. Skidmore (1967) explained the main goals of the hard line in *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy*.

The extremist military [hard line] were now anxious to seize control of Brazilian politics. In their view the recurrent interventions of the military since 1945 had solved nothing. They were determined not to repeat the mistake of delivering power to another subgroup of the political elite who might lead Brazil back to the cul-de-sac of “corruption” and “subversion.” There would be no presidential election before the military “revolutionaries” could make certain that the political rule had been changed to their satisfaction. (p. 307)

The moderate faction differed from the hard line in that it viewed the army's role as one of "guardian of political equilibrium" and could not "contemplate the vision of a Brazil governed indefinitely by men in uniform" (p. 304). Nevertheless, the young hard line officers—aided by a series of factors in Brazilian politics and economy that were taking place at that time—influenced their senior moderate colleagues to take a more aggressive position (Skidmore, 1967).

Second, a number of aspects in Jango Goulart's presidency, especially his leftist inclination, did not please the military (Vincent, 2003). It is important to mention that communist activities in Latin America were carefully monitored by FBI and CIA agents during the Cold War, which was going on during Goulart's administration, and that many historians believe the United States was involved in the 1964 coup (Leffler & Painter, 2002). The main aspect of Goulart's administration that pointed to communist tendencies was the increased influence of the masses on the political system. Besides, Goulart proposed a program for social change, known as "basic reforms," which received great support from unionized workers. Labor unions developed a large capacity for mobilization, and workers began to organize a structure called the General Worker's Command (CGT), "seen by forces opposed to the Goulart government as a warning sign that a communist revolution was imminent in Brazil" (Dassin, 1998, p. 46). On top of this, Goulart faced an economy plagued by hyperinflation and debt (Vincent, 2003).

Third, the military disliked certain characteristics that had been present in Brazilian politics for a while, such as corruption, extravagant promises to win elections, and economic indecisiveness. They believed radical measures were needed to solve these

problems, and that it was their duty to fix Brazil and rescue it from corruption and communism (Sanders & Handelman, 1981; Skidmore, 1967). They also believed, as Sanders (1981) put it, “that Brazil required a series of drastic changes which could not be carried out in a year or two” and that their occupation would bring about the “economic, financial, political, and moral reconstruction of Brazil” (p.148). Nevertheless, their administration took a rather dark path.

### *The Fifth Institutional Act*

During the dictatorship, Brazil was ruled by Castelo Branco (1964-1967), Costa e Silva (1967-1969), Médici (1969-1974), Geisel (1974-1979), and Figueiredo (1979-1985). The period between 1968 and 1974 was the most repressive, marked by torture and censorship since the adoption of the Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5) (Vincent, 2003).

AI-5 was passed down in 1968 by Costa e Silva in order to suppress dissent. Numerous public protests and strikes were taking place, and the dictator, who seemed relatively moderate at first, soon resorted to radical measures. The Act gave dictatorial powers to the president, closed both Congress and the state legislatures, imposed censorship, and eliminated the right of habeas corpus. Nevertheless, as Vincent (2003) noted, AI-5 was not completely able to stop the opposition.

Surely one of the most Machiavellian measures in Brazilian history, [the Act] probably encouraged rather than discouraged dissent, since anyone in opposition to the government was made to feel that the only alternatives were either complete submission or open revolt. (p. 65)

Indeed, open revolt was carried out by urban guerrillas, whose main strategies consisted of robbing banks, stealing weapons from military facilities, and kidnapping foreign diplomats (Vincent, 2003). Joining them in a “disguised revolt” were

professionals in the media and arts. Peter Flynn (1978) explained the repression AI-5

imposed on the media.

[AI-5] hit particularly hard the press and other media, with Article 34, for example, stipulating two to four years imprisonment for “moral offense to anyone in authority, for reasons of factionalism or socio-political differences,” the sentence to be increased by half if the offense were committed by means of the press, radio, and television. (p. 424)

It was in this context of repression that the Brazilian popular music (MPB) experienced its period of greatest growth (Carocha, 2006a).

### *The Brazilian Music Boom*

In the late 1950s, radio and television stations and universities promoted numerous music festivals in the main metropolitan areas of Brazil. These festivals reached their golden era in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when multitudes, composed mainly of middle class university students, filled stadiums and auditoriums in what was considered a national phenomenon (Napolitano, 2004).

The festivals, which served the function of revealing new singers and songwriters to the public, generated a boom in Brazilian popular music, making it an important part of people’s lives. Some of the greatest names of MPB emerged from them, such as Elis Regina, Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Milton Nascimento, and Gilberto Gil (Kirschbaum, 2006).

Along with the festivals, the 1960s saw a great development in the Brazilian phonographic industry and the popularization of television, and by 1968 TV was the main mass communication medium in large Brazilian cities. Because its low prices made it affordable even to the lower classes, television became an important medium for



divulging Brazilian popular music, with several stations broadcasting the festivals to a large audience (Carocha, 2006a; Zan, 2001).

All of these factors helped to propagate Brazilian popular music, which began to exert a great influence on society and, for this reason, to receive special attention from the censors during the 1964 dictatorship (Carocha, 2006a). It was at this time that Brazilian popular music experienced its period of greatest growth and of greatest repression. In fact, a unique segment in MPB emerged during the dictatorship, the so-called “protest songs” (also known as *canção engajada*). Before exploring these songs, it is important to understand the repressive system of the dictatorship in greater detail for a clarification of the meaning of the songs’ lyrics and of the songwriters’ motivation in writing them.

### *Torture*

During Médici’s administration (1969-1974), Brazil went through its most repressive and violent period since becoming a republic. When the dictator took office with the motto “Security and Development,” numerous security units were created to carry out the suppression of civil liberties. “Thousands of Brazilians were sent to prisons, and torture and killing by the state became routine” (Dassin, 1998, p. 53).

Most of the people who were tortured by the government fell into one of the following groups: leftist organizations, union leaders, journalists, politicians, or religious workers. “These groups were singled out by the military regime as special targets for repression largely because they represented broad areas of resistance to the authoritarian government” (p. 102). Nevertheless, people from different walks of life were also tortured, and this was mainly due to their participation in one of three activities: support

of Goulart's government; the spread of subversive propaganda; or criticism of the authorities. In general, security agents abducted and detained those whom they suspected to be involved in political activities against the government (Dassin, 1998). In *The History of Brazil*, Levine (1999) explained how the military violated human rights.

Because civil rights, including the habeas corpus, had been stripped by the AI-5, citizens could be unceremoniously dragged out of their homes and led away; relatives often had to spend months or years relocating their family members, sometimes to learn they had died (...) agents performed brutal forms of torture, resulting in the deaths of many. Extralegal vigilante groups, often composed of off duty policemen, also used violence against their victims, persons they decided were subversive or criminal and could be more efficiently dealt with by assassination than through the judicial process. (p. 135)

Two important groups of political repression were the DOI-CODI units (Information Operations Detachment-Center for Internal Defense Operations), which operated on the national level, and the DOPS (Department for Political and Social Order), which operated on the state level (Dassin, 1998). The SNI (National Information Service) was established in 1964 to "oversee and coordinate intelligence activities throughout national territory, in particular those that pertained to National Security" (p. 64). Its pyramid structure consisted of various interrogation chambers run by the security units at the base, with the National Security Council at the top. The countless security units were connected with the army, navy, air force, and/or the federal and state police. Besides these units, there was the infamous "death squad," composed of off-duty policemen and military who summarily executed suspected subversives (Vincent, 2003).

### *Censorship*

The repressive system of the dictatorship was not restricted to espionage and torture by the security units. It also acted in the areas of public entertainment censorship,

political propaganda, and print media censorship. An important censorship unit was the DCDP (Public Entertainment Censorship Department), whose main areas of control were music, theater, movies and television shows.

Because Brazilian legislation allowed for prior censorship of public entertainment material, the DCDP censors had enormous control over public activities. In music, for example, the songwriter had to send his or her song to the DCDP, where usually three censors analyzed it to decide whether it could be published or not (Carocha, 2006a). Documents indicate that in 1973, 159 songs were registered as censored; in 1976, 198 songs, and in 1980, the final phase of the dictatorship, about 458 songs (Carocha, 2006b). Several musicians, such as Chico Buarque, Geraldo Vandré, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil were exiled.

The DCDP defended its actions by claiming they were conducted for the preservation of “morality and good traditions” (Carocha, 2006a). Its censors were indeed ultra moralists, but they were also anti democrats and anti communists (Napolitano, 2004). While they paid attention to morally degrading material, they also focused attention clearly on political dissent. As Carlos Fico explained (as cited in Carocha, 2006a, p. 204), “[Political censorship] was treated in a secretive way, and it caused discomfort to the DCDP censors, differently from moral censorship, which was proudly acknowledged by the department.” Because moral censorship of public entertainment had been taking place in Brazil for years, a great part of the Brazilian population considered it normal, and even supported it. Many citizens wrote letters to the DCDP complaining about materials they found offensive and asking the department to take action (Carocha, 2006a).

The DCDP censors investigated artists in several ways. They attended events and social environments that were associated with dissent, such as music festivals, and kept record of the artists' and the audience's words and actions (Carocha, 2006b). Through constant communication with the different units that composed the regime's repressive system, such as the DOPS, they collected and produced documents containing information about artists, including song lyrics, performances, and public declarations (Carocha, 2006b; Napolitano, 2004). There were four types of documents used in the investigations of musicians: biographical data, *fichas-conceito* (data on public and professional behavior), *prontuário* (record of the suspect's activities), and *juízo-sintético* (the agent's judgment of the suspect).

To the censors and agents, the following factors were a high indication that an artist was involved in subversive actions against the regime: 1) participation in events promoted by the student movement; 2) participation in events connected with civil opposition campaigns or entities; 3) participation in the "MPB movement," and in the music festivals of the 1960s; 4) declarations and song lyrics against the government (which were not explicit most of the time); 5) direct connection with someone considered "subversive" by the security units; and 6) mention of the artist's name by a political prisoner. Even if the prisoner simply said that he liked the artist, the agents thought it was enough evidence to investigate him or her (Napolitano, 2004).

The first activity, participation in events promoted by the student movement, shows the attention the censors paid to students (especially high middle class college students), who were the main MPB audience. The student movement had been one of the main supporters of Goulart's "basic reforms" before the coup of 1964, and from then on

the military officers began to associate students with the left. Students carried out several public manifestations against the regime, protesting not only against its repressive system, but also against the decline in education. For these reasons, any event involving MPB artists and students received maximum vigilance from the security units (Napolitano, 2004). It was in this context that the “protest songs” appeared.

### *Protest Songs*

In the late 1960s, as has already been mentioned, the music festivals were a national phenomenon. The most important festivals were held by newly established TV stations, such as Record, Excelsior, and Tupi. These stations did not censor left-wing content in spite of the dictatorship (Kirschbaum, 2006).

The II Festival of MPB, broadcast by TV Record, was one of the highest moments for the festivals. It happened after a series of student manifestations against the regime, called “*setembradas*,” and was marked by the competition of two songs, “Disparada” (“Herd of Cattle Bolt”) by Geraldo Vandré and Théo de Barros (1966) and “A Banda” (“The Band”) by Chico Buarque de Hollanda (1966). Both songs got first place honors (Napolitano, 2004).

The authors of “Disparada” made an analogy between the harsh treatment of the oxen by the herdsmen and the dictatorship’s repressive system. The song also talked about political awareness and about an awakening to what was happening in society. In “A Banda,” Chico Buarque showed “the hopelessness that was present in society and talked about sad, fearful, and lonely people. The song is a juxtaposition of hope and hopelessness” (Costa & Serogl, 2007, p. 37).

Verses from “A Banda”

Estava à toa na vida	It was another down day
O meu amor me chamou	But then my love called to me
Pra ver a banda passar	A band is passing this way
Cantando coisas de amor	Such loving music they play
A minha gente sofrida	People forgot all their pain
Despediu-se da dor	They came to hear and to see
Pra ver a banda passar	A band is passing this way
Cantando coisas de amor	Such loving music they play
(...)	(...)
Mas para meu desencanto	But then the end of it came
O que era doce acabou	For all the sweetness and light
Tudo tomou seu lugar	The world became as it was
Depois que a banda passou	Before the band that passed by
E cada qual no seu canto	I had been singing of love
Em cada canto uma dor	Now I was singing of pain
Depois da banda passar	After the band that moved on
Cantando coisas de amor	My life was empty again

(Jordan, 2003-2008, 1)

In the year following the II Festival of MPB, the secret police appointed TV Record as a venue of “psychological action over the public, developed by a group of singers and songwriters with communist inclinations” (Napolitano, 2004, p. 28).

Censorship of the communication media worsened in 1968 with the introduction of AI-5,

so artists had to find a new way of promoting their songs. They did this by travelling throughout Brazil and singing on university campuses in what was known as “University Circuit.” The circuit gave an opportunity for the artists to have direct contact with their public (Napolitano 2004).

The TV and university festivals were the main venues for the politically conscious musicians to carry out messages against the regime. These artists believed in their role as promoters of social change and favored the content of the lyrics over form and harmonic features. Through protest songs, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the political and social context of Brazil during the dictatorship (Costa & Serogl, 2007; Kirschbaum, 2006).

According to Levine (1999), the military period gave rise to three distinct forms of popular expression in Brazilian music.

The first, represented by the singer Roberto Carlos, avoided political themes completely, selling millions of records, influenced by soft American rock, about love and middle-class concerns. The second group was made up of protesters openly contemptuous of the military (...) The tropicalists made up the third wave. Their music used outlandish performance art and relied on esoteric allusions and confusing lyrics to make powerful statements condemning both the complacent left and the military right, attacking commercialism, populist politics, and American imperialism. (p.134)

The protest songs fall into the second group. Some of the main interpreters and songwriters associated with this group were Geraldo Vandré, Chico Buarque, and Edu Lobo. The common factor of all protest songs was their content. They were all filled with criticisms of the repressive system. Aesthetically, they varied greatly, but the musicians tried to stick to the roots of Brazilian music to be as nationalistic as possible (they avoided foreign influences in melody and rhythm, and even in the use of instruments) (Costa & Serogl, 2007). In this way, protest songs revolutionized MPB by redefining its

political and ideological role as well as its identity. Although the artists focused on content over form, their search for a more nationalistic approach brought a higher quality to MPB and helped to define its identity (Napolitano, 1998).

By limiting songwriters in their freedom of expression, the censorship forced them to explore new ways of writing songs. To escape from the censors and still be able to communicate messages against the repressive system to the public, they used such devices as made-up words, metaphors, analogies, and antitheses (Carocha, 2006a; Napolitano 2003). Chico Buarque, who had about 40 of his songs vetoed by the censors, explained how the limitations imposed by the censorship affected the process of writing a song. “The artist had to do incredible ‘gymnastics;’ using metaphors that seem really silly now” (Costa & Serogl, 2007, p. 38).

A common literary device used by Chico Buarque in his protest songs was the antithesis. Many of his lyrics talked about a “free tomorrow” that could not happen because of a “repressive today;” a utopian world different from the harsh reality of the dictatorship; hope and hopelessness (as seen in “A Banda”). Past, present, and future aspects of time were constant themes in his songs (Napolitano, 2003; Sousa, 2004).

In “Sabía” (“Ornith”), for instance, Buarque (1968), referring to his exile, talked about his desire to go back to his nation—a nation that was nothing like the nation that he knew before the dictatorship. He criticized the current situation of Brazil by contrasting it with the past, showing that everything he missed in his nation did not exist anymore (Costa & Serogl, 2007, p.37).



Verses from “Sabia”

Vou voltar	I will return
Sei que ainda vou voltar	I know I will return
Vou deitar à sombra	I will lie under the shadow
De uma palmeira	Of a palm tree
Que já não há	That doesn't exist anymore
Colher a flor	Reap the flower
Que já não dá	That doesn't flourish anymore

(Jordan, 2003-2008, 1)

In an attempt to identify the main linguistic strategies used by the songwriters to refer to the dictatorial government, Silva (2004) analyzed 20 protest songs and observed the following strategies: direct nominal form, pronominal form with an explicit referent, metaphorical nominal form, pronominal form with no explicit referent, and verbal form with an implied referent.

By using the *direct nominal form*, the songwriter designated the government in a direct, explicit way. In other words, he or she openly revealed about whom and to whom he or she was talking (Silva, 2004). This strategy was not used to confuse the censors, but to confront those in authority, such as in parts of the song “Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores” (“Just so You Won't Say that I Didn't Speak about Flowers”) by Geraldo Vandré (1968):

Há <u>soldados armados</u>	There are <u>armed soldiers</u>
Amados ou não	Beloved or not



Não tem discussão                      There's no discussion

(...)    (...)

Apesar de você                              In spite of you

Amanhã há de ser                              Tomorrow will be

Outro dia    Another day

(I.R. of "you": government, censorship, military officers)

(Silva, 2004, 139)

The *verbal form with an implied referent* is a verbal form which designates the referent implicitly. Both textual and contextual analyses are necessary to interpret the referent. "Opinião" ("Opinion") by Zé Keti (1964), contains this strategy:

Podem me prender                              (You) can imprison me

Podem me bater                                      (You) can beat me

Podem até deixar-me sem comer              (You) can even leave me without food

Que eu não mudo de opinião                      I won't change my opinion

(I.R. of the underlined verbs: military officers)

(Silva, 2004, 138)

In "Revaluation of samba in Chico Buarque's critic song," Sabrina Lastman (2006) discussed how the composer revaluated the Brazilian musical genre *samba* through protest songs, turning it into "a critical tool to express social and political ideas through a renewal on its lyrics" (p. 82). Lastman's main argument is that Buarque used "a new poetic and critic language in a musical genre already known and spread in Brazil: *samba*"

(p. 85). By doing this, Buarque was able to synthesize cult poem and popular music in the creation of protest songs, another factor that redefined Brazilian music.

### Method

For a better understanding of the strategies used by the songwriters to escape from the censorship and to persuade the people to speak up, an in-depth analysis will be provided for parts of the lyrics of important protest songs. The purpose is to interpret the lyrics, verse by verse, while identifying the literary strategies used by the songwriters.

The interpretation of each song will be done by the researcher, who will base them upon the socio-political context given in the previous sections, having as a premise the fact that these songs were written to criticize the dictatorship and to bring a political awareness to Brazilians. Without the context, the lyrics could be interpreted with a different meaning. Key concepts to keep in mind are a repressive system, a military government, and violence.

### Results

The songs that will be analyzed are “Cálice,” “Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores,” and “Apesar de Você.”

“Cálice” (“Cup” or “Chalice”) by Chico Buarque and Gilberto Gil (1973)

Pai, afasta de mim esse cálice	Father, take this cup from me
Pai, afasta de mim esse cálice	Father, take this cup from me
Pai, afasta de mim esse cálice	Father, take this cup from me
De vinho tinto de sangue	Of red wine of blood
Como beber dessa bebida amarga	How to drink from this bitter drink

Tragar a dor, engolir a labuta	Gulp the pain, swallow the toiling
(..)	(...)
De que me vale ser filho da santa?	What do I get from being son of the saint?
Melhor seria ser filho da outra	It would be better to be son of the other
Outra realidade menos morta	Another less deadly reality
Tanta mentira, tanta força bruta	So much lie, so much brutal force
(Jordan, 2003-2008, 1)	

The songwriters disguised this song under an apparently religious theme, using Jesus's prayer at Gethsemane (Luke 22:42) as the refrain. The word *cálice* (cup) and the word *cale-se* (imperative form of "to be quiet") are homophones in Portuguese. By writing "cup," the writers were actually referring to the command to be quiet. An undisguised version of the song would be, "Father, take away this censorship and this repression from me."

"Of red wine of blood" points to the violence of the military regime. By strategically using the words "wine" and "blood" together, the songwriters continued to hide their political criticism under a religious theme—Jesus's crucifixion (wine represents Jesus's blood in the Lord's Supper). "Blood" is an allusion to the tortures and killings that took place during the military regime. In the verses "How to drink from this bitter drink/Gulp the pain, swallow the toiling," the words "bitter drink," "pain," and "toiling" are still referring to the military regime and its repressive system.

The verses "What do I get from being the son of a saint/It would be better to be the son of the other/Another less deadly reality/So much lie, so much brutal force" can be read as saying, "What do I get from standing for what is right and opposing a repressive

system full of lies and violence? It would be better to support the regime and enjoy the benefits and protection of silence.” The word “saint” helps to keep the song’s religious appearance. The main literary devices used in this song are the metaphor and a disguised analogy.

“Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores” (“Just so You Won’t Say that I Didn’t Speak about Flowers”) by Geraldo Vandré (1968)

Caminhando e cantando	Walking and singing
E seguindo a canção	And following the song
Somos todos iguais	We are all the same
Braços dados ou não	With tied arms or not
Nas escolas, nas ruas	In the schools, in the streets
Campos, construções	Fields, constructions
Caminhando e cantado	Walking and singing
E seguindo a canção	And following the song
Vem, vamos embora	Come, let’s go
Que esperar não é saber	For waiting is not knowing
Quem sabe faz a hora	The one who knows makes the hour
Não espera acontecer (2x)	Doesn’t wait for it to happen (2x)
Pelos campos há fome	Through the fields there is hunger
Em grandes plantações	In big plantations
Pelas ruas marchando	Through the streets marching
Indecisos cordões	Indecisive strings
Ainda fazem da flor	Still make from the flower

Seu mais forte refrão	Their strongest refrain
E acreditam nas flores	And they believe the flowers
Vencendo o canhão	Can win from the cannon
(...)	(...)
Há soldados armados	There are armed soldiers
Amados ou não	Beloved or not
Quase todos perdidos	Almost all of them lost
De armas na mão	With guns in hand
Nos quartéis lhes ensinam	In the quarters they are taught
Uma antiga lição	An old lesson
De morrer pela pátria	Of dying for the nation
E viver sem razão	And living with no reason

(Jordan, 2003-2008, 1)

Geraldo Vandré was more direct than Chico Buarque in his criticisms to the regime. Although he did use figures of speech, his main strategy was rhetoric or “the art of speaking or writing effectively; the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion” (Merriam-Webster online, 2007-2008). Through his songs, Vandré did not seek only to criticize the government; he also attempted to persuade the Brazilian people, especially the youth, to take an active stand against the regime. “Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores” became known as the “hymn of resistance against the dictatorship” (Costa & Serogl, 2007).

In the first verses of the song (from “Walking and singing” to “Doesn’t wait for it to happen”), Vandr  was making an appeal for the entire society to unite in one voice against the dictatorship. “Schools, streets, constructions and fields” represented the society as a whole. When Vandr  said, “We are all the same/With tied arms or not,” he meant that despite the differences, all Brazilians were the same; they were all living under a repressive system that violated their rights and did not let them express their opinions (except, of course, for those in the military and those who supported the regime). The refrain (“Come, let’s go/For waiting is not knowing/The one who knows makes the hour/Doesn’t wait for it to happen”) clearly shows the songwriter’s use of words as tools of persuasion (rhetoric). Here, he was calling on people to take action and change their country’s history at the same time that he was criticizing those who had been passive.

Through irony, Vandr  exposed the socio-economic conditions of Brazil during the dictatorship in the verses “Through the fields there is hunger/In big plantations.” How can there be hunger in a place where there is plenty of food? For those who knew the nation’s socio-economic conditions of that time, they would have found the answer in the economic disparities and social inequality (Ferreira, 2000).

In the verses that follow (“Through the streets marching/Indecisive strings/Still make from the flower/Their strongest refrain/And they believe the flowers/Can win from the cannon), Vandr  used a metaphor to rebuke those who believed in diplomacy and other peaceful measures (“flowers”) instead of armed fighting as conciliatory means to end the dictatorship. For Vandr , it was impossible to “talk about flowers to those who attack with weapons.” The battle against a violent and oppressive system could not be



won by peaceful means (Costa & Serogl, 2007, p. 37). Vandr  expressed his belief in armed fighting in another song, called “Cantiga Brava” (“Brave Song”):

O terreiro l� de casa	My house’s terrain
N�o se varre com vassoura	Is not swept with a broom
Varre com ponta de sabre	It is swept with the end of a spear
E bala de metralhadora	And with the bullet of a machine gun

(Studio Sol Comunica o Digital, 2003-2008, 1)

In the last verses of “Pra N o Dizer que N o Falei das Flores” there is a direct criticism of the military officers. There are no figures of speech; Vandr  explicitly confronted them.

“Apesar de Voc ” (“In Spite of You”) by Chico Buarque (1970)

Apesar de voc�	In spite of you
Amanh� h� de ser	Tomorrow will be
Outro dia	Another day
Eu pergunto a voc�	I ask you
Onde vai se esconder	Where you will hide
Da enorme euforia	From the great euphoria
Como vai proibir	How will you prohibit
Quando o galo insistir	When the cock insists
Em cantar	On singing
�gua nova brotando	New water springing
E a gente se amando	And all of us loving
Sem parar	Without stopping

Quando chegar o momento	When the moment arrives
Esse meu sofrimento	My suffering
Vou cobrar com juro, juro	Will be charged with interests, I swear
Todo esse amor reprimido	All of this repressed love
Esse grito contido	This refrained scream
Este samba no escuro	This <i>samba</i> in darkness
Você que inventou a tristeza	You, who invented sadness
Ora, tenha a fineza	Please have the kindness
De desinventar	To “uninvent” it
Você vai pagar e é dobrado	You will pay and it will be doubled
Cada lágrima rolada	For every tear that was shed
Nesse meu penar	In my suffering

(Jordan, 2003-2008, 1)

Chico Buarque used a pronominal form (“you”) with no explicit referent in this song. “You” can be interpreted as referring to the military regime because of the rest of the song, which is disguised under a love fight by such phrases as, “And all of us loving/Without stopping” and “All of this repressed love” (Napolitano, 2004). The phrases “In spite of you/Tomorrow will be/Another day” revealed Buarque’s common theme of hope for a free tomorrow. Even though the dictatorship brought much suffering and injustice, Buarque knew that it would soon come to an end, and it was about this moment that he spoke in the entire song. The song also shows Buarque’s use of the antithesis (between what happens today and what will happen tomorrow) (Lastman, 2006).

In the verses that begin with “I ask you” and end in “Without stopping,” Buarque was noting how Brazilians’ dissatisfaction with the regime had come to a limit and how they would soon carry out a revolution that the government would not be able to control (“How will you prohibit/When the cock insists/in singing”).

The following verses describe a revenge to all those in the military regime who tortured, killed, and repressed thousands of people (“My suffering will be charged with interests;” “You will pay and it will be doubled/For every tear that was shed/In my suffering”). The phrases “You, who invented sadness/Please have the kindness/To ‘uninvent’ it” show Buarque’s skill in playing with words. He was asking the military officers to rebuild and restore everything they had destroyed: peace, freedom, justice, and joy.

In an interview for “O Globo (1979),” Buarque discussed what motivated him to write “Apesar de Você.”

I only came to the realization of what was going on in Brazil when I came back (from exile) in 1970. Things were really tough (...) It was a shock to arrive here and find a reality that I wasn’t expecting to find. In a one and a half year absence, I could notice. Those cars filled with stickers saying, “Brazil, love it or leave it,” or “love it or die...” But there wasn’t another choice. I knew that this was the new scenario (...) I thought, “Well, it’s here where I will live.” I was really back. So I wrote “Apesar de Você.” (Martins, 2005, p. 13)

## Discussion

### *Conclusion*

“Cálice,” “Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores,” and “Apesar de Você” were all censored during the dictatorship, and their songwriters—Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil, and Geraldo Vandré—were exiled. Nevertheless, the songs reached the public through the festivals (except for “Apesar de Você”). “Cálice” was interpreted by Chico Buarque and

Gilberto Gil in the Phono 73 Festival. During their performance, their microphones were turned off several times as ordered by a censor who was at the event.

“Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores” made it into the finals of the III International Music Festival (FIC) with “Sabiá” by Chico Buarque. Because of the song’s open confrontation of the military regime, the censors pressured the jury not to give it first place, so “Sabiá” was the winner. Because “Apesar de Você” seems to refer to a love quarrel, the song was liberated by the censors, and the single containing it sold 10,000 copies. Later on, when the censors realized what the song was really saying, they forbade the selling of the single (Napolitano, 2004).

The strategies used by these songwriters to confuse the censors and to persuade the people to take a stand against the regime brought an innovation to MPB. The limitations imposed by the censorship caused them to think carefully about each word of their lyrics. No words could be wasted because that was their opportunity to expose what was going on “behind the scenes” of the dictatorship and to possibly mobilize a group of people to fight for democracy, a fact that happened in 1984 when different sectors of the Brazilian society gathered in a public manifestation for the return of direct elections. This movement became known as “*Diretas Já*” or “Direct Elections Now” (Lincoln, 2001).

Besides being an instrument for bringing consciousness to society during the dictatorship, the protest songs are very important documents of Brazilian culture and history. Culturally, they brought prominence and a new quality to Brazilian music (both in content and aesthetically, as has been previously mentioned), and opened the doors for future songwriters to use their lyrics as a means of spreading political and social

consciousness. Historically, they function as valuable documents of the Brazilian dictatorship.

*Recommendation for Future Research*

Although many scholarly articles have been published on music censorship during the military government and on the music festivals, few studies have provided a rhetorical analysis of protest songs. Because of the importance of these songs in Brazilian history and culture, future research should attempt to explore the songs' writing techniques and the meanings of their lyrics more in depth. Also, researchers should focus on identifying, in greater detail, the changes brought to MPB by protest songs. A study of how these songs helped to create awareness in the people and to bring the dictatorship to an end should also be conducted, showing the influence that music exerts in society.

On a larger scale, future research should identify similar characteristics between protest songs from different cultures and periods of time. It would also be interesting to compare the influence of protest songs in different societies.

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