

Musical and Other Cultural Responses to Political Violence in Latin America

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Paper abstracts

‘New Song, New Time: Peruvian Marxisms and Music in a Revolutionary Era’ – Jonathan Ritter (University of California, Riverside)

As with many countries in Latin America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a “new song” movement emerged in Peru among primarily middle-class university students and leftist activists that linked revolutionary politics, social commentary, and various types of folk music. The political context that framed *nueva canción*’s trajectory in Peru, however, differed substantially from that of its neighbours, transitioning in less than a decade from the leftist military dictatorship of Gen. Velasco (1968-75) which sponsored the first tours by Southern Cone *nueva canción* musicians to the country, through the massive social uprisings that accompanied the rightward turn of the regime of Gen. Morales (1975-80), to the Shining Path insurgency in the 1980s that would indirectly prove the song movement’s undoing. Musically, throughout this period *nueva canción* musicians in Peru also had to compete for listeners and legitimacy with already-existing folk music styles, especially the popularity of the *wayno* among Andean migrants to the city of Lima, which made more obvious claims on working class and national/provincial identity than did the Chilean repertoire usually performed by new song groups. In this paper, I trace the rise and fall of *nueva canción* in Peru within this social and political context, focusing in particular on the careers of two groups: Tiempo Nuevo (“New Time”), Peru’s first *nueva canción* group, founded with state support in 1974 at the National Conservatory of Music, and the Duo José María Arguedas, which pioneered a fusion of *nueva canción* aesthetics with *wayno* music from Peru’s Ayacucho region—forming an early model for the testimonial song movement that erupted in the midst of Peru’s internal armed conflict in the 1980s and 90s, and thus standing as one of *nueva canción*’s most important legacies today.

‘The Violent Andes: Crisis and Cultural Difference in Narratives of Peru’s Internal Armed Conflict’ – Daniel Willis (University of Manchester)

Studies of the narratives constructed around The Shining Path’s conflict with the Peruvian state have primarily focused on the ‘pacification myth’ of the 1990s, and have emphasised the ways in which the Fujimori administration utilised its suppression of insurgency to justify authoritarian rule. Research by Conaghan and Crabtree has shown that the state’s corrupt control of mass media played a major role in legitimising state violence and Fujimori’s Presidency, which ended in 2000. However, a deeper reading of the coded aesthetics of Peruvian cultural production highlights a wider range of narratives. One, represented by the film *Vidas paralelas* (Rocío Lladó, 2008), supports the idea that Sendero Luminoso were criminals and terrorists, whilst the second, represented by the novels of Cueto and Roncagliolo (*La hora azul* [2005] and *Abril rojo* [2006]), shows violence as an unavoidable result of structural inequality in Peru; as Drinot argues, they place their censure of political violence within a censure of Peruvian society as a whole. The second, and most dominant narrative within forms of cultural production, presents violence as a resurgent echo of Peru’s

past. Mario Vargas Llosa's novels and the film *Bajo la piel* (Francisco Lombardi, 1996) criticise military abuses but also evoke fears of the Andean Other, with motifs of human sacrifice, superstition and cannibalism ever present. This narrative of violence is consistent from the Fujimori era to the present as it represents indigenous communities as an inherently violent, internal enemy, an idea which persists in Peru today. This paper will therefore illustrate that President Fujimori's downfall has not brought an end to the constructed myths about Peru's Shining Path. By focusing on the languages and symbolism used in cultural representations of violence, it is possible to see that the deep cultural divides which precipitated violence in Peru have been replicated and reproduced through violence and cultural production.

'Singing a Change: Rephrasing White Upper Class Identity through Fusion Music in Post-war Lima' – Fiorella Montero (Royal Holloway)

In the early 1980s, latent social conflicts in Peru erupted unleashing a brutal clash between the State and two terrorist groups: MRTA and the Shinning Path. The violence paralyzed and traumatized the country (1980-2000), deepening class, ethnic and racial segregation. Peace following the violence made room for musicians in Lima to establish common ground or "liminal space[s]" (Turner 1967: 93-111) in a deeply divided city, where intersocial, interethnic and interracial empathetic interaction could be fostered through "musicking" (Small 1998: 13). Part of the young white upper classes ('the alternatives') yearn for inclusive togetherness, for many of them the main reason is the desire to feel included themselves in a diverse, 'more real' Lima, which has become a predominantly Andean mestizo city. In the process of *becoming* (Frith 1987), white upper class musicians link their wishes and dreams to their ordinary life, enabling themselves and their audiences to change their hierarchical worldview and act accordingly, to move beyond shock and mourning. In this paper, I will focus on two upper class fusion bands: Bareto and La Mente, who acknowledge the influence of the conflict and its aftermath on their music making. Through their experiences, I explore the role of music, dance and lyrics as a post-war resistance tool "where asymmetrical power relations are defied, political hegemony is critiqued and can be subverted, and conflict and violence can be combated" (Morgan O'Connell et. al. 2010: 245). I argue that these young musicians critique their own class privilege, distance and social role during the war, turning music into a technology of self-transformation, a means for the white upper classes to counteract the underlying causes of the violence, which were never eradicated.

Enrique Lihn's *El Paseo Ahumada* (1983) and the Mapping of Violence – Constanza Ceresa (University College London)

El Paseo Ahumada (1983) by the Chilean poet Enrique Lihn can be conceived as a radical poetic cartography of a city under siege. Emulating the sensationalist tone of the press, *El Paseo Ahumada* was designed as a 28-page newspaper with news and photographs concerned with day-to-day life on Paseo Ahumada, an iconic public site of Pinochet's dictatorship's 'economic miracle'. Based on an ethnographic work about the pedestrian precinct from the time of its 'opening', this collaborative project included the input of the comic book artist Germán Arestizábal and the photographer Paz Errázuriz, amongst others; and it was launched by a performance made by the poet to the pedestrian strolling around. Taking into account the means of production, this paper will explore how this poetic cartography carries out a critique

of the neoliberal fantasy by exposing the violence underlying the luxury arcades, big department stores, illuminated signs and gigantic fountains of this artificial paradise. *El Paseo Ahumada* maps the territory through the delirious movement of its rhetorical plot to the point of collapsing the discursive organization of social space by means of its own contradictions.

‘Is there a Politics in the Sounds of Raul Ruiz? The Case of *La Maleta* (1963)’ – Laura Jordán (Université Laval) and Nicolás Lema (Australian National University)

Raul Ruiz’s cinema has only scarcely been analysed from a political perspective. Despite the fact Ruiz began making cinema as part of the artistic-political movement now known as “New Chilean Cinema,” his films and poetics have frequently been highlighted as experimental endeavours in the language and narrative of cinema. We believe there is a specifically political edge in Ruiz’s cinema; an edge that cannot be detached from his innovative explorations regarding a poetics or language. In this paper, we would like to propose that Ruiz’s pre and post 1973 cinema explores what we may call a “politics of bodies in struggle,” which signals Ruiz’s attempt to give an artistic account of the conflicts in the highly politicized Chile of the 60s and 70s. On this occasion, we would like to focus on the film *La Maleta* (1963), shot during the 60s, but only recovered and screened in 2008 with a new experimental soundtrack approved by Ruiz and developed by Jorge Arriagada. We propose to interpret the soundtrack of the film in a political vein. The music and sounds of the film establish a “phantasmagoric” relationship with the images of bodies signaling, amongst other things, a certain violence applied onto moving bodies. We can thus say that the film becomes more ‘politicized’ with its new soundtrack. Therefore, as in several other of his films such as *Dialogo de Exiliados* (1975) and *L'hypothèse du tableau volé* (1979), Ruiz shows his poetic and political acuteness regarding events consisting precisely of the destruction of bodies as one of the main drivers of Pinochet’s dictatorship.

‘Quem cala morre contigo [He who stays silent dies with you]: Clandestine Movements, Musical Activism, and the Lyricists of the Clube da Esquina in Dictatorial Brazil’ – Holly Holmes (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Though composer-performers Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque are often cited as the prototypical sound of protest during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-85), Milton Nascimento and his collaborators—dubbed the Clube da Esquina [Corner Club]—also created and performed a vast array of songs of dissent. Unlike Veloso and Buarque who often penned their own lyrics, the Clube da Esquina’s revolutionary lyrics came from three principle lyricists—Márcio Borges, Ronaldo Bastos, and Fernando Brant. This paper juxtaposes evidence from these lyricists—including ethnographic interviews, oral histories, and personal memoirs—with data from intensive archival research of the DOPS (Department of Political and Social Order) collection of the public archive of Minas Gerais state. Using the internal documents of this regime-era police agency, I trace the activities of a particular cell of clandestine operatives in the capital city of Belo Horizonte that included the integral participation of current President Dilma Rousseff, a childhood friend of lyricist Márcio Borges. The lyricists of the Clube da Esquina were never directly involved with this cell, but while their musician friends played gigs and rehearsed, the lyricists ate, drank and debated with operative-intellectuals—historians, philosophers, poets, journalists, and lawyers—at various gathering spots throughout Belo Horizonte. I do not seek to authenticate the use of protest themes in Clube da Esquina lyrics; rather I show persuasive evidence that these

themes did not come from a safe and sanitized gaze, but from intimate and traumatizing experiences of dictatorial Brazil. I suggest here that for these lyricists their collaborations with musicians provided an outlet to express personal feelings of grief and frustration as well as hope. Expressing dissent through music afforded a (potentially) safer lifestyle than their clandestine counterparts while providing a means for an otherwise apolitical component of their fan base to engage with political issues.

‘The Power of the Song: Forbidden Singing in an Argentine Prison’ – Michael Chanan (University of Roehampton)

Filmed in Córdoba, Argentina in 2013, this is drawn from a longer film, *Interrupted Memory* (*Memoria interrumpida*) about memory and politics in Argentina and Chile. This extract is the story of Ana Mohaded, who arrived in Cordoba to go to school in 1969, three months before the uprising known as the Cordobazo; seven years later she was arrested for subversive activity and spent seven years in prison, until the fall of the dictatorship in 1983. Here she recalls her first Christmas in prison, where it was forbidden to sing but there was singing all the same. A teaser for the complete film can be watched at www.putneydebater.com/interrupted-memory-teaser.

‘Cinema Sundays in a Maximum Security Prison in Córdoba, Argentina’ – Ana Mohaded (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina)

You knew it was Saturday because the sounds were different. Then it was time to prepare the ‘reels’ of the film chosen for ‘projection’ the following day. From the peephole of my cell I announced the programme. On Sunday afternoon the large corridor in the maximum security wing, with about forty political prisoners sitting on the floor, was filled with sounds and images by each person’s imaginings. Crouched beside the thick iron door, the compañeras listened to the story that — half remembered, half invented — I unfolded over a couple of hours. The films had the grey and yellow colours of the pavilion, imagined music overcame the squeaks of the bars, we were transported to places that melted the walls, and the narrow cells of the prison of San Martín, Córdoba, in Argentina, was populated by fictional characters and sometimes multitudes. However, I cannot say that in these two hours we distanced ourselves from the condition of prisoners of the military dictatorship which ruled the country from 1976 to 1983, but on the contrary, it confirmed it. But it changed its meaning. In that place, which tried to tame and break us, the oral audio-visual story was a mode of resistance whatever the film was about, just bringing it alive in a place where practically everything was forbidden, including art, of course.

‘Musical Commemorations of the Fortieth Anniversary of Pinochet’s Coup’ – Katia Chornik (University of Manchester)

An unprecedented number and variety of commemorative events have taken place this year around the fortieth anniversary of the onset of Augusto Pinochet’s seventeen-year dictatorship, coinciding with major changes in the ways in which Chilean society remembers this period and its legacy, particularly in relation to abuses to human rights. Using recent personal interviews and footage, and drawing on revival theory, this paper examines the re-founding and performance of a choir of political prisoners (originally formed in 1976 in Tres Álamos detention centre) at a memorial in Villa Grimaldi, one of the most notorious torture

chambers in Pinochet's Chile. The paper also discusses the carnivalesque performance of "Los diablos rojos de Víctor Jara" (a 70-piece troupe of musicians and dancers dressed up as devils) at a multitudinous street rally in Santiago.

'Culture and freedom? Creative responses to political violence in Medellín, Colombia' – Theresa Bean (University of Leeds), Jez Collins (Birmingham City University) and Ruth Daniel (University of Manchester)

Medellin was once regarded as the most violent city in the world, with murder rates peaking at 381 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 1991. During the 80s the rise of drug gangs, and right wing paramilitaries coupled with political corruption and clientelism in the city resulted in the weakening of state authority, especially in terms of justice and law and order. Based on research visits and interviews, this paper will explore the emergence of community creative processes in the barrios of Medellín as a response to violence and the withdrawal of the state. It will argue that against this backdrop, local communities sought their own creative responses, utilising culture as a means of resistance to violence and to provide an alternative for young people living in poverty and with limited prospects. To illustrate the current cultural community led practices, the paper will focus on three arts organizations operating in the barrios of Medellín: *Cultural y Libertad*, a network of hip hop schools founded by young people, *Lluvia de Orion*, a community organization that promotes the reconstruction of historical memory of the victims of Colombia's armed conflict through the medium of art and *Nuestra gente*, a community arts organization in the north east of Medellín. Using audio and visual material the paper will examine how, through diverse art forms, these organizations address the themes of resistance, prevention, commemoration, historical memory and human rights in a city that continues to experience episodes of violence. It will conclude by discussing their effectiveness and the wider significance of these cultural groups. In addition to this, the paper will showcase the In Place Of War digital platform which documents some of these creative responses to violence in Medellín and other sites of conflict around the world.

'Vinegar: A Brazilian Anthology of Poetry against Oppression' – Rosane Carneiro Ramos (King's College London)

In June and July of 2013, millions of people went to streets in Brazil – firstly in main capitals, as Porto Alegre, São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro, but quickly the demonstrations swept the entire nation, as an old and repressed outcry. The initial reason was the increase of the bus fare, but right way several other complains arose, related to quality of life (corruption, police brutality, dire public services, high prices), and to expenses of the World Cup, which will take place in 2014 – people complain the amount of £9 billion spent on the event should be addressed to everyday problems that population has to face. *Vinagre: uma antologia de poetas neobarracos* ('Vinegar: an anthology of neo-shanty poets' – playing with the word 'neo-baroque' and the similarity in Portuguese 'baroque' has to word 'barraco', that means shanty) was created and edited by three poets from São Paulo. As soon as the violence emerged against the demonstrators, the writers decided to bring together authors from around the country through Facebook. The publication gathered 158 participants (this researcher is included). The anthology was made in the heat of the moment, and protested especially against the repression of the police and the Estate over the crowds – a legacy from the days of

dictatorship in Brazil. The liquid vinegar was a strong symbol of fight, because it was largely used by protesters to defend themselves from effects of tear gas. Even being just an on-line issue until now, *Vinegar* has been since then discussed in literary environment, as a renovated way poets are stating themselves in history, in a nation that fights also against illiteracy. This paper intends to expose *Vinegar*, presenting some translated poems, and also to discuss the renewed impact of poetry in Brazil's political life.

‘Complicity and Responsibility in the Aftermath of the Pinochet Regime: The Case of “El Mocito”’ – Michael Lazzara (University of California, Davis)

Forty years after the Pinochet regime, the theme of civilian complicity is just beginning to be discussed publicly in Chile. This lecture will emphasize the importance of this little-discussed topic by examining the case of Jorgelino Vergara, known in Chile as “El Mocito,” a man who as an adolescent served coffee to the ex-head of Pinochet's secret police, General Manuel Contreras, and carried out other horrifying tasks in the torture centre located at number 8800 Simón Bolívar Street. Accused in 2007 of killing well-known Communist leader Víctor Díaz, Vergara emerged from a clandestine life and testified in court to clear his own name. Thanks to his testimony, 74 former secret police agents were convicted and the remains of three disappeared militants were found. Despite these positive developments, Vergara's truth has had limits. How does the accomplice construct his truth? How does society approach and frame the truth of the accomplice? To answer these questions, this talk will compare representations of “El Mocito” in film, print journalism, and on television. What political and ethical questions arise from these very different framings of complicity?