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Songs of Exile: Music, Activism, and Solidarity in the Latin American Diaspora

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Abstract

This article addresses the long-standing connection between music and social activism in Latin America, centering on a discussion of 'the music of exile' as a cultural artifact of historical and conceptual significance for diasporic Latin American communities. The music produced by artists who were persecuted during the years of military rule was characterized by an engagement with social and political affairs, and often helped bring people together in the struggle for democratization. Despite censorship laws and other repressive measures enacted by the dictatorships, the music not only endured but traveled across nations and continents, carried by the millions of people who were displaced due to State-sponsored violence. Now distributed through new media platforms, such as YouTube, this music functions as a repository of memory and an emblem of solidarity that connects dispersed Latin American communities. Using Cultural Studies as a theoretical framework and employing an interpretive methodology, this study focuses on a selection of songs written between 1963 and 1992, presenting an analysis that centers on their lyrics and connects their meanings to larger social processes.

Contributor Note

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Introduction

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, brutal military dictatorships ruled most countries in Latin America, with political prosecution being accompanied by detentions, torture, relegation, banishment, and death. Thousands of people were killed and millions were forced into exile, as repression tightened and economic opportunities narrowed throughout the region. The exile of political dissidents was commonly mandated by the State and announced through mainstream media (i.e., radio), so the measure served both as punishment and deterrent for other people's political involvement. Passage into exile, when granted, was accompanied by the threat of torture and death, and for every formally exiled person, hundreds of others were killed or forced into hiding (Dorfman 1991). Exile implied social uprooting, economic insecurity, and existential anguish, and as the years wore on, its consequences rippled through territories and generations (Roniger 2009).

In the case of musicians and artists, banishment included a prohibition to feature or distribute their work to the public. As local media were shaped by the forces of censorship and self-censorship, the 'music of exile' that flourished beyond national borders and was played surreptitiously within the affected Latin American countries became interwoven with testimonies of resistance (Balabarca 2013). Many musicians, such as the Chilean bands Inti-Illimani and Illapu, wrote songs that delved into the experience of banishment, and these songs were picked up by others, such as the Argentine Mercedes Sosa, and sung in activist gatherings. Furthermore, the

exiled artists who continued their careers abroad produced work that referenced their countries of origin, so they helped raise awareness about human rights abuses and increase the international community's pressure on the dictatorships. Artists from other nations joined in solidarity, echoing their plight and working with non-profit organizations, such as Amnesty International, to support democratizing initiatives.

This article delineates how politically-engaged music became a tool for social activism and a repository of historical memory for Latin American people, having a tangible influence on the democratization efforts and acquiring intense meaning for communities abroad. The discussion focuses mainly on the work of musicians from Chile and Argentina – two countries that had particularly harsh dictatorships – and pays attention to the way in which music helps us understand the experience of social struggle, uprooting, and re-connection with our cultural heritage, uniting people in solidarity for a common cause. The starting point for this study is an interest in the process that underlies the development of a musical repertoire that is linked to the fate of contemporary Latin America and its people. As Martín-Barbero argues, it is by paying attention to 'the process' and considering 'the way in which people communicate' (Barbero 2012: 78) in everyday life that we can arrive at conclusions that have grassroots validity and convey the particularities of the communicative context of Latin America.

Using Cultural Studies as a theoretical framework and taking into account writings by ethnomusicologists and scholars investigating transnationalism,

this study seeks to understand both the meanings conveyed by the songs and the significance that they acquired over time. The methodology used is interpretive and the research process followed qualitative protocols. After gathering and reviewing 257 songs, 14 were selected for this analysis because they have common features: they were written between 1963 and 1992, when repression prevailed in many places in Latin America; their writers and performers were politically 'marked' and/or persecuted because of their art; the songs were re-interpreted by other musicians and embraced by the public as symbolic expressions of historical importance; the songs are still widely known and have a presence in digital media platforms. During the analysis, songs that speak about the experience of exile and political struggle were given particular attention, though some that illustrate more broadly the connection between music, activism, and voice are also included. All songs were written by Latin American musicians and lyricists, except for two that were written by European artists who have collaborated with Latin American musicians. All song excerpts were obtained from original records (from either the initial releases or later compilations), with the lyrics being cross-referenced with the archives posted on www.music.com and www.letras.com. The review of the original songs was accompanied by multiple online searches that revealed their notable presence on venues such as YouTube and other music websites. The analysis was conducted in Spanish in order to capture nuances of meaning, and the lyrics' excerpts were then translated for inclusion in this article. Finally, the analysis benefited from the fact that the author is bilingual (Spanish/English), was born and raised in

Chile during the time of Pinochet's military dictatorship, and has been living abroad for more than fifteen years.

Music, Politics, and Revolution

The legend says that in the wake of the Chilean *coup d'état* of September 11, 1973, Víctor Jara – the folklorist and member of the faculty at the Universidad Técnica del Estado – sat on the steps outside his house and waited. A friend came to alert him to the brutal repression that was sure to engulf leftist political activists and urged him to go into hiding or seek political asylum. His songs in support of the poor, the marginalized, and the revolution were well-known and would not be welcomed by the military regime that had just taken over the government. 'Don't you know that they will be looking for you?' they say the friend asked, alarmed. 'I know', Jara responded, 'and they will find me here'.

The next day, Jara, like thousands of others, was detained at his workplace and taken to the Estadio Nacional, which had been originally built to serve as a venue for international soccer games. There, he became a political prisoner and was subject to interrogation and torture. He wrote his last song in a little piece of paper that was smuggled out of the place by someone else. Then, his torturers crushed and burned his hands, before killing him with 44 bullets (Krajnc 2008). This was meaningful, as the image of Víctor Jara and his guitar was already connected to a creative movement – the *Nueva Canción* – that sought to challenge social, political, and economic oppression (Schechter 1999; Balabarca 2013). Not long before the *coup d'état*, Jara had written *Manifiesto*, declaring in

a prescient manner that the power of music transcended the life of any individual:

*Yo no canto por cantar
Ni por tener buena voz
Canto porque la guitarra
Tiene sentido y razón*

*Tiene corazón de tierra
Y alas de palomita
Es como el agua bendita
Santigua glorias y penas*

*Aquí se encajó mi canto
Como dijera Violeta
Guitarra trabajadora
Con olor a primavera*

I don't sing just because
Or because I have a good voice
I sing because the guitar
Has meaning and reason for being

It has an earthen heart
And the wings of a little dove
It's like holy water
It blesses joys and sorrows

Here is where my song cuts deep
As Violeta has said
This is a working guitar
With the scent of springtime

Martín-Barbero (2000) argues that folklore, seen through the lens of media and popular culture, is 'mediatized' or transformed in a way that puts it in conversation with various social realities and historical elements. As such, it becomes an anchor of cultural memory, its importance given by the manner in which it intertwines with people's lives. Víctor Jara's music is an example of this, with his life and work forever linked to the emergence of a type of music that has been a source of inspiration for

people in various places for decades (Krajnc 2008).

Jara's approach to folklore was built on a Latin American tradition that sees music as connected to social and political stirrings (Bernard 2014). In the peasant tradition, 'popular culture' and 'popular music' are not media artifacts of massive appeal. Instead, music carries *la voz del pueblo* (the voice of the people). Like storytelling, it is an authentic expression of what moves people and is imprinted with shared hopes, dreams, traumas, and concerns (Storey 2010). Bernard explains that, from as early as the 16th century, a connection between the concept of 'a people' and particular musical tropes has existed, with music functioning as a device for sharing emotions and identifications (Bernard 2014: 24).

In the 1970s, musical movements that sought to reclaim and revitalize folk traditions emerged throughout Latin America. These movements were rooted in locality, but also had a transnational scope (Schechter 1999). Thus, the *Nueva Canción* or *Canto Nuevo* in Chile, the *Nuevo Cancionero* in Argentina, and the *Nueva Trova* in Cuba and Central America shared an interest in collecting traditional tunes and producing lyrics that spoke of social realities, political commitments, and change. The artists in these movements thought music had the power to stir up social consciousness and give voice to the oppressed, rejecting the idea that its purpose was mere entertainment. In the words of Schechter, '*Nueva canción* composers and performers, then, presented music that addressed current social problems, expressing outrage at unprovoked violence and injustice, and seeking to provoke change' (Schechter 1999: 433).

For example, the Cuban Silvio Rodríguez explained this in the lyrics of *La Maza*, in which he metaphorically speaks of the guitar, the singer, and the song as being intertwined and bound to a higher calling. Artists from different countries embraced both a traditional heritage and opportunities for innovation, and often collaborated and sung each other's songs, which led to the development of a shared musical repository rich in social content.

The revitalization of the folk roots of Latin music had begun in the 1950s and 1960s, with artists, such as Violeta Parra (in Chile) and Atahualpa Yupanqui (in Argentina), undertaking a systematic effort to research, catalogue, and feature songs, instruments, and tunes from rural traditions, enriching them with their own compositions (Schechter 1999). This involved an attempt to capture the essence of oral traditions that were being lost to urbanization and foreign influence. It also represented a search for authenticity that challenged the idealized, bucolic, and tamed version of folklore that was offered by elite bands in the salons of the capital. In Parra and Yupanqui's renderings, popular songs and folklore emerge as a site of denunciation, protest, and lament, portraying the struggles of those outside the circles of power. In *La Carta*, which speaks of solidarity and distance, Violeta Parra sings:

*Me mandaron una carta
Por el correo temprano
Y en esa carta me dicen
Que cayó preso mi hermano
Sin lástima con grillos
Por las calles lo arrastraron, sí*

*La carta dice el motivo
Que ha cometido Roberto*

*Haber apoyado el paro
Que ya se había resuelto
Si acaso esto es un motivo
Presa también voy, sargento, sí*

*Yo que me encuentro tan lejos
Esperando una noticia
Me viene a decir la carta
Que en mi patria no hay justicia
Los hambrientos piden pan
Plomo les da la milicia, sí*

I got a letter in the early mail
And in that letter they tell me
That my brother is in jail
Without pity they dragged him in
cuffs
Through the streets, yes

The letter explains the crime
That Roberto has committed
To have supported the strike
That was already resolving.
If that is enough reason
Take me to jail also, sergeant, yes

Me being so far away
Awaiting any news
The letter comes to tell me
That there is no justice in my
country
The hungry beg for bread
And the military gives them bullets,
yes

As Ureña explains, when approached in this way, folklore 'becomes a unifying identifier for a society, one that transcends past and present, having the capacity to project itself toward the future, and allowing popular culture to evolve without losing its essence' (Ureña 2013: 52). Latin American peasant traditions have always included *cantores*, people who play the guitar, sing, and create music intuitively, and who learn their craft by imitating others. In rural

communities, they are held in high esteem and are called-in for weddings, funerals, and other events, where they help conjure up an emotional tone. Their craft is a mix of native elements (music was an important part of ritual for indigenous communities) and instruments and styles (like the guitar and accordion, suitable for melodies such as the *tonada*) brought to the New World by the Spanish conquistadors (Bernand 2014; Moreno Chá 1999).

This cultural heritage was called forth by musicians from the *Nueva Canción* movements, and the link was embodied by them: Víctor Jara's mother was a *cantora* and the family came from a rural and impoverished environment, but his educational achievements gave him a platform for his work as a folklorist (Krajnc 2008). His activism was informed by his background and, in his songs, he often invites the listener to identify with those who suffer. Jara's songs articulate what could be defined as a politics of solidarity, which makes them particularly meaningful. One of his enduring songs is *Te Recuerdo Amanda*:

*Te recuerdo, Amanda
La calle mojada
Corriendo a la fábrica
Donde trabajaba Manuel*

*La sonrisa ancha
La lluvia en el pelo
No importaba nada
Ibas a encontrarte con él
Con él, con él, con él, con él*

*Que partió a la sierra
Que nunca hizo daño
Que partió a la sierra
Y en cinco minutos
Quedó destrozado.*

*Suena la sirena
De vuelta al trabajo
Muchos no volvieron
Tampoco Manuel*

I remember you, Amanda
On the wet street
Running to the factory
Where Manuel worked

The wide smile
The rain in your hair
Nothing else mattered
You where going to meet with him
With him, with him, with him

Him, who went to the *sierra*
Who never hurt anyone
Who went to the *sierra*
And in five minutes
He was destroyed

The siren rings
Time to get back to work
Many never got back
Neither did Manuel

This kind of music was tied to a political project: the Leftist movement that embraced the utopian promise of revolution and gained ground in the 1960s and 1970s. The Cuban revolution and the success of the Cuban *Trova* helped fuel the desire for artistic and cultural work that would be emancipatory, speaking up against injustice, imperialism, and oppression (Ureña 2013). As a foundational statement for the *Nuevo Cancionero* explains (Biografía 2016):

El Nuevo Cancionero acoge en sus principios a todos los artistas identificados con sus anhelos de valorar, profundizar, crear y desarrollar el arte popular y en ese sentido buscará la comunicación,



el diálogo y el intercambio con todos los artistas y movimientos similares del resto de América. (...) [El Nuevo Cancionero] Afirma que el arte, como la vida, debe estar en permanente transformación y por eso, busca integrar el cancionero popular al desarrollo creador del pueblo todo para acompañarlo en su destino, expresando sus sueños, sus alegrías, sus luchas y sus esperanzas.

The *Nuevo Cancionero* welcomes all artists who identify with its desire to value, deepen, create, and develop the popular arts, and in that sense it will seek communication, dialogue, and exchange with all artists and similar movements throughout America. [...] [The *Nuevo Cancionero*] states that art, like life, must be in constant transformation and hence seeks to integrate the popular repository of songs to the creative development of the people, to accompany them in their destiny, expressing their dreams, their joys, their struggles, and their hopes.

The music that emerged from these movements was essentially activist. Because it was collaborative and sought to articulate a continental popular consciousness, it was transnational in nature, affirming local heritages but striving to find commonalities in experiences across postcolonial Latin America (Bernand 2014). These movements were also anti-imperialist and anti-elitist, rejecting both the influence exercised by the United States in the affairs of smaller nations and the control of local governments by entrenched political elites (Balabarca

2013). In this context, the role of the musician and the artist was that of an intellectual connected to *el pueblo* and engaged in *la lucha* (the struggle) for a just world (Krajnc 2008). These political and social commitments demanded musicians' involvement in current affairs, which determined that the right-wing dictatorships viewed them as innately subversive.

Carrying the Torch of Memory and Hope

The military dictatorships that took power in many countries in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s established strong censorship rules, exercised tight control of the media, and greatly limited social gatherings (Balabarca 2013). They outlawed political parties, shut down non-governmental organizations, ransacked the buildings of the popular press, and infiltrated the ranks at major universities. Movies, music, theater, literature, and art exhibits that were deemed to be inappropriate by the regimes were banned, and their authors were prosecuted. For years after the *coup d'états* had taken place, political dissenters were mercilessly tortured, murdered, or forced into hiding or exile, as the public sphere froze and social agents were demobilized (Dorfman 1991; Bucciferro 2009). In Argentina, the military regime (1976-1983) killed about 22,000 people and sent tens of thousands more into exile; in Chile, during Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990) about a million people were forced into exile, more than 50,000 were subject to torture, and nearly 3,000 were detained and disappeared.

Within this context, music – connected as it is to matters of voice and emotion –



becomes a repository of memory and a mediator of solidarity. As Shaw states, 'Song can help give voice to a people who otherwise are not heard, can help amplify that voice, and can help create solidarity' (Shaw 2013: 1). After all the potentially incriminating books were burned or buried (including works by Dostoyevsky, Dorfman, and Neruda), when all political activities ceased and the official curfew forced everyone to stay inside, and when speech was laced with fear, a melody had the power to stir an awakening. The guitar – which had always been imbued with symbolic and spiritual powers in the countryside – became an instrument of healing and of political reactivation (Bernand 2014). Tied to an oral tradition that could not be suppressed, and emerging during small, simple, furtive gatherings, the songs that belonged with artists who had been banished endured, speaking in metaphors of transformation. *Como La Cigarra*, with lyrics by María Elena Walsh and often sung by Mercedes Sosa, is illustrative:

*Tantas veces me mataron
Tantas veces me morí
Sin embargo estoy aquí
resucitando
Gracias doy a la desgracia
Y a la mano con puñal
Porque me mató tan mal
Y seguí cantando.*

*Cantando al sol como la cigarra
Después de un año bajo la tierra
Igual que sobreviviente
Que vuelve de la guerra.*

So many times they killed me
So many times I died
And yet here I am, resuscitating
I give thanks to the misfortune
And to the hand with the knife

Because it killed me so badly
That I kept singing

Singing to the sun like a cricket
After a year underneath the earth
Just like a survivor
Who comes back from war

Despite the systematic efforts undertaken by the military regimes, music kept alive not only the banished artists' voices, but also their vision for a different society. Carried forward by local singers and international artists, eventually echoing in living rooms, concert halls, and political gatherings within and beyond Latin America, their songs became emblematic of the struggle against fear and political oppression (Krajnc 2008). León Gieco's *Sólo le Pido a Dios* is an example:

*Sólo le pido a Dios
Que lo injusto no me sea
indiferente
Que no me abofeteen la otra
mejilla
Después que una garra me arañó
esta suerte.*

*Sólo le pido a Dios
Que la guerra no me sea
indiferente
Es un monstruo grande y pisa
fuerte
Toda la pobre inocencia de la
gente.*

*Sólo le pido a Dios
Que el engaño no me sea
indiferente
Si un traidor puede más que unos
cuantos
Que esos cuantos no lo olviden
fácilmente.*

Sólo le pido a Dios



*Que el futuro no me sea indiferente
Desahuciado está el que tiene que
marchar
A vivir una cultura diferente.*

I only ask God
That I may not be indifferent to
injustice
That they don't slap me on the
other cheek
After a claw ripped my luck

I only ask God
That I may not be indifferent to war
It's a big monster that tramples
over
All of people's poor innocence

I only ask God
That I may not be indifferent to
deception
If a traitor is more powerful than
many others
May the others not forget it so
easily

I only ask God
That I may not be indifferent to the
future
Disempowered is the one who
must go
To live in a foreign culture

Roniger explains that 'exile is an institutionalized mechanism of political exclusion' (Roniger 2009: 83) that implies a systematic effort to marginalize certain people from the public sphere of particular nations. Exiled people lose not only their right to live in their country, but also their capacity to exercise citizenship and participate in local debates. Along with the personal and collective challenges brought on by uprooting, exiled people often struggle to retain their voice, yet their perspectives are fundamental for articulating the

vision for an international community. Within this context, the power of song as a beacon of hope and a mediator for the conceptual negotiation of the self vis-à-vis the nation is important. As the people displaced by the dictatorships traveled to other territories and formed diasporic communities, music helped them maintain emotional and conceptual ties to each other and to their homelands. A user named Salvador explains this in a YouTube post offered in response to a video by Los Jaivas:

*Donde quiera que me encuentre,
muy lejos de mi patria, teniendo
música de Los Jaivas no me
sentiré solo, tendré un pedazo de
mi tierra, esa patria llamada Chile.
Un abrazo al pueblo y a mis
músicos que ya son universales.*

Wherever I may find myself, far away from my homeland, as long as I have music by Los Jaivas, I won't feel alone, I will have a piece of my country, that land called Chile. A hug to the people and to my musicians who are by now universal.

Within the context of political persecution, art became a preferred venue for expressing emotions that were otherwise difficult to discuss. As Dorfman says, even within the confines of the torture centers kept by the dictatorships, 'the prisoners discovered the importance of art and culture as a means of drawing a line between the oppressors and themselves' (Dorfman 1991: 137). Music could capture the essence of an experience in verses and melodies, and musicians produced poetic lyrics that spoke of loss and change. The song *Cambia Todo Cambia*, written by Julio Numhauser, one of the founders of the

Chilean band Quilapayún, also speaks of growth and love beyond boundaries:

*Cambia el sol en su carrera
Cuando la noche subsiste
Cambia la planta y se viste
De verde en la primavera*

*Cambia el pelaje la fiera
Cambia el cabello el anciano
Y así como todo cambia
Que yo cambie no es extraño*

*Pero no cambia mi amor
Por más lejos que me encuentre
Ni el recuerdo ni el dolor
De mi pueblo y de mi gente*

*Y lo que cambió ayer
Tendrá que cambiar mañana
Así como cambio yo
En esta tierra lejana
Cambia, todo cambia*

The sun changes its usual run
When the night persists
The plant changes and it puts on
Green in the springtime

The coat of the fierce beast
changes
The hair of the elderly man
changes
And as everything changes
It is not strange that I do, too

But my love doesn't change
No matter how far I am
Nor the memory or the pain
Of my people and my kin

And what didn't change yesterday
Will surely change tomorrow
Just as I, myself, change
In this faraway land
It changes, everything changes

Through the song, those displaced by the dictatorships were able to sort through issues of identity, nostalgia, uncertainty, and change – music created a realm of experience that was at once personal and shared, historical yet timeless. Many songs were highly metaphorical, but others tackled historical conjunctures (Ureña 2013). The song *Para que Nunca Más en Chile*, by the band Sol y Lluvia, invokes the power of memory and solidarity to counteract the effects of State-sponsored violence:

*Al contemplar tu mirada tan triste
Vuelvo a pensar en ayer
Que caminaba sin miedo a tu lado
Sin preguntar el por qué
Donde se oían todas las voces
Y el canto de todos se hacía
escuchar*

*Hay que apretar el presente con
brazos
Y voces que puedan cantar
Para que nunca más en Chile
Para que nunca más*

*Para que nunca más en Chile los
secretos calabozos
Vuelvan a morder la humanidad de
mi pueblo
Para que nunca más en Chile
El hambre vuelva a estar en la
boca de mi humilde pueblo
Para que nunca más en Chile
La sangre hermana sea derramada
Y no se deje florecer la libertad*

When I contemplate your very sad
gaze
I think about yesterday again
When I walked without fear by your
side
Without asking why
Where all the voices were listened
to

And everyone's song could be heard

We have to hold on to the present
With arms and with voices
That can still sing
So never again in Chile
Never again

So never again in Chile
The secret dungeons
May bite again my people's
humanity
So never again in Chile
Hunger may be in the mouth of my
humble people
So never again in Chile
The blood of kin may be spilled
And liberty may not be allowed to
flourish

For years, music was a territory of contention where real-world struggles got played out. In fact, the dictatorships counteracted the efforts to use music for emancipatory purposes by turning it into an instrument of torture: in the concentration camps, some songs were played loudly, again and again, so as to disrupt the detainees' sleep and muffle their screams. Former detainees say that their ability to enjoy some pieces of music was lost forever, as the tunes became too intertwined with painful memories.

Abroad, music served as an anchor for activism for those who worked to raise awareness about the human rights violations taking place in Latin America. Solidarity concerts were organized in various countries in the 1980s, and European and U.S.-based artists broadened the scope of these events. Sting, Peter Gabriel, Tracy Chapman and Joan Baez were among those who participated in these efforts, earning both

a loyal Latin American audience and the scorn of the military regimes. Protected by their foreign citizenship, these singers could be very explicit in their lyrics: in the song *They Dance Alone*, Sting called Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet by name and asked him about how his own mother would feel if his son was detained and disappeared:

They're dancing with the missing
They're dancing with the dead
They dance with the invisible ones
Their anguish is unsaid
They're dancing with their fathers
They're dancing with their sons
They're dancing with their
husbands
They dance alone

It's the only form of protest they're
allowed
I've seen their silent faces, they
scream so loud
If they were to speak these words,
they'd go missing, too
Another woman on a torture table,
what else can they do?

Hey, Mr. Pinochet,
You've sown a bitter crop
It's foreign money that supports
you
One day the money is going to stop
No wages for your torturers
No budget for your guns
Can you think of your own mother
Dancing with her invisible son?

Songs like this reached European audiences that knew little about the dictatorships, while suggesting to Latin American people that their struggles were being observed by the international community. Thus, they became mediators of solidarity both conceptually and materially. As the democratization

efforts increased in the 1980s, the music produced by artists in exile, along with the songs that had been banned because of their links to Leftist political causes, provided a backdrop for various civic campaigns. In Chile, during the 1988 plebiscite, the campaign that said 'no' to Pinochet staying in power represented a broad coalition of political parties and made creative use of the media. Showcasing artists and intellectuals who dared to openly declare their stance against the dictator, the campaign included a catchy song and a video inviting people to shake off fear and stand together for a better future:

*Porque nace el arco iris después
de la tempestad
Porque quiero que florezca mi
manera de pensar
Porque sin la dictadura la alegría
va a llegar
Porque pienso en el futuro voy a
decir que no*

*Vamos a decir que no, con la
fuerza de mi voz
Vamos a decir que no, yo lo canto
sin temor
Vamos a decir que no, vamos
juntos a triunfar
Por la vida y por la paz*

*Terminemos con la muerte
Es la oportunidad de vencer a la
violencia
Con las armas de la paz
Porque creo que mi Patria necesita
dignidad
Por un Chile para todos, vamos a
decir que no*

Because the rainbow is born after
the storm
Because I want my way of thinking
to flower

Because without the dictatorship,
joy will come
Because I'm thinking of the future, I
will say no

We are going to say no, with the
power of my voice
We are going to say no, I sing it
without fear
We are going to say no, all together
we will triumph
For life and for peace

Let's end the death toll
This is the opportunity to defeat
violence
With the weapons of peace
Because I believe that my country
needs dignity
For a Chile for everyone, we are
going to say no

Upon the long-awaited return to democracy in Chile in the year 1990, a major concert was organized by Amnesty International in Santiago, bringing together artists from around the world and uniting everyone in celebration. The locale was the National Stadium, where Peter Gabriel joined Inti-Illimani in singing *El Arado* and Bruce Springsteen sung *Manifesto*, both famous songs by Víctor Jara. Thirty one years after Jara's death, in 2004, a stadium in Santiago was re-named after him.

Music and Diasporic Experiences

The practice of using exile as a form of punishment and a tool for political control dates back centuries in Spain and Latin America (McClennen 2004). References to the experience of exile also appear in ancient songs and poems. In fact, *El Cid*, a foundational piece of Spanish literature, begins with the hero

weeping as he marches into exile. During the 20th century, numerous writers and artists produced work inspired by their experiences abroad. In the analysis of Silvia Spitta (1995), transnationalism and displacement have been part of the Spanish and Latin American cultural map for as far back as the history of conquest and colonization goes. The result is the emergence of diasporic awareness and hybridity, which becomes apparent in various cultural artifacts (Roniger 2009). Furthermore, different forms of art combine to produce multilayered meanings, as it happens when certain themes cut across song and literature. For example, the song *Sube a Nacer Conmigo Hermano* by Los Jaivas is a musical rendering of a poem by Pablo Neruda, the Nobel Prize-winning poet and diplomat who died soon after the Chilean *coup d'état*. The song speaks of a kinship that transcends ages and enables the living to speak for the dead:

*Señaladme la piedra en que caíste
Y la madera en que os crucificaron
Encendedme los viejos pedernales
Las viejas lámparas, los látigos
pegados
A través de los siglos en las llagas
Y las hachas de brillo
ensangrentado.
Yo vengo a hablar por vuestra boca
muerta*

*Contadme todo, cadena a cadena
Eslabón a eslabón, paso a paso
Afilad los cuchillos que guardasteis
Ponedlos en mi pecho y en mi
mano
Como un río de rayos amarillos
Como un río de tigres enterrados
Y dejadme llorar
Horas, días, años
Edades ciegas, siglos estelares*

Show me the stone you fell over
And the wood on which they
crucified you
Light up the old flints for me
The old lamps, the whips still stuck
Through the centuries in the
wounds
And the bloody axes shining.
I come to speak for your dead
mouth

Tell me everything, chain by chain
Link by link, step by step
Sharpen the knives that you kept
Put them in my chest and in my
hand
Like a river of yellow lighting
Like a river of buried tigers
And let me weep
Hours, days, years
Blind ages, astral centuries

The work created by artists in exile gives glimpses into the enduring impact of uprooting, capturing the anguish that accompanies the exile's journey and speaking of a socio-political context that is at once specific and universal (Spitta 1995). The song *Cantares* by Joan Manuel Serrat, a Basque/Spanish singer-songwriter, builds on verses originally written by the poet Antonio Machado, who was persecuted by Franco's regime:

*Hace algún tiempo en ese lugar
Donde hoy los bosques se visten
de espinos
Se oyó la voz de un poeta gritar
'Caminante no hay camino, se hace
camino al andar'
Golpe a golpe, verso a verso*

*Murió el poeta lejos del hogar
Le cubre el polvo de un país vecino
Al alejarse, le vieron llorar*



*'Caminante, no hay camino, se
hace camino al andar'
Golpe a golpe, verso a verso*

In a time past, in that place
Where the forests are now turning
to thorns
They heard the voice of a poet
scream
'Wanderer, there is no path, you
make the path as you walk'
Strike by strike, verse by verse

The poet died away from home
His body is covered by the dust of
a neighboring country
When he went away, they saw him
cry
'Wanderer, there is no path, you
make the path as you walk'
Strike by strike, verse by verse

Transcending time and place, and uniting people living in different countries and circumstances, music calls forth a collective experience. Since the 1990s, collaborations between artists who are legendary and musicians from younger generations have renewed people's interest in old musical traditions. As a response to the fragmentation of identity that has characterized the Latin American experience in recent decades (Martín-Barbero 2000), music offers a bridge that invites people to reclaim a shared cultural heritage. For example, in 2006, various Latin American bands joined in the performance of songs by Violeta Parra. Inti-Illimani and Los Bunkers played *La Exiliada del Sur*, which describes the lasting aftereffects of trauma and uprooting:

*Un ojo dejé en Los Lagos
Por un descuido casual
El otro quedó en Parral
En un boliche de tragos*

*Recuerdo que mucho estrago
De niña vio el alma mía
Misericordias y alevosías
Anudan mis pensamientos
Entre las aguas y el viento
Me pierdo en la lejanía*

*Mi brazo derecho en Buin
Quedó, señores oyentes
El otro por San Vicente
Quedó, no sé con qué fin
Mi pecho en Curacautín
Lo veo en un jardincillo
Mis manos, en Maitencillo
Saludan en Pelequén
Mi blusa en Perquilauquén
Recoge unos pececillos*

An eye I left in Los Lagos
In a moment of carelessness
The other one was left in Parral
In a run-down bar
I remember that much damage
My soul saw as a child
Miseries and wrongdoings
Tie up my thoughts
In between the waters and the
wind
I am lost in the distance

My right arm in Buin
Was left, my dear listeners
The other one in San Vicente
Stayed, I don't know why
My chest is in Curacautín
I see it in a little garden
My hands in Maitencillo
Greet everyone in Pelequén
My shirt in Perquilauquén
Collects a few little fishes

Many exiles went back to their homelands after the dictatorships ended, but others stayed in new territories, and others felt forever torn between two places. Some who did return encountered difficult circumstances –

their country changed while they were gone, and the memories were bittersweet (McClennen 2004). Sometimes, it was the children of the exiled who demanded a revisit of the journey because their identities had also been affected by it. The yearning for the homeland and the appreciation for foreign friendships is captured in Illapu's *Vuelvo Para Vivir*, which in some versions is preceded by the audio recording of the edict that expelled the band members from Chile:

*Vuelvo a casa, vuelvo compañera
Vuelvo mar, montaña, vuelvo
puerto
Vuelvo sur, saludo mi desierto
Vuelvo a renacer amado pueblo*

*Vuelvo, amor, vuelvo
A saciar mi sed de tí
Vuelvo, vida, vuelvo
A vivir en tí, país*

*Traigo en mi equipaje del
destierro
Amistad fraterna de otros suelos
Atrás dejo penas y desvelos
Vuelvo por vivir de nuevo entero*

I come back, I come back, my
partner
I come back sea, mountain, I come
back port
I come back south, I greet my
desert
I come back to be reborn, my
beloved people

I come back, love, I come back
To quench my thirst for you
I come back, life, I come back
To live in you, country

I bring in my baggage from exile

Friendship and fraternity from other
lands
I leave behind sorrows and
despairs
I come back to live again whole

The music of exile reaffirmed voices and experiences that had been marginalized and invited people to identify with them, challenging oppression everywhere. Born from a grassroots effort and embraced by Latin American people living in various territories, the songs traveled far and wide, and continue to be cherished (Shaw 2013). While in the past the *cancioneros* were sold on the street, now they are available online and new renderings have kept the music current. On digital venues such as YouTube, it is possible to find many of the original recordings, along with rare videos by various artists, archival footage, musical biographies, interview excerpts, and fan-developed content. No amount of censorship has been able to erase this music from history. Furthermore, the digital content is being viewed by people of all ages, from all over the world, as is evidenced in the comments posted in response to the videos. Many of these comments express nostalgia and solidarity. For example, Facundo Cabral's *No Soy de Aquí Ni Soy de Allá* has surpassed 13 million views on YouTube (as of July 2016) and speaks of the 'in-between' space inhabited by those who embrace a wandering destiny grounded by small pleasures:

*No soy de aquí, ni soy de allá
No tengo edad, ni porvenir
Y ser feliz es mi color de identidad*

*Me gusta el vino tanto como las
flores
Y los conejos y los viejos pastores*

*El pan casero y la voz de Dolores
Y el mar mojándome los pies*

I'm not from here, I'm not from
there
I don't have age, or any future
And being happy is my color and
identity

I like wine as much as flowers
And rabbits and old shepherds
Homemade bread and Dolores's
voice
And the sea wetting my feet

Several of the musicians who were representative of the music of exile have died in recent years, while others are still performing but are slowly retreating from the musical scene. As the songs are taken up by younger artists, their links to a particular historical period weaken, and their meaning shifts to encompass broader experiences. But even as people's lives are shaped by the new social configurations that accompany the forces of globalization, music continues to be, as Carmen Bernard states, '*un puente entre los pueblos*' (a bridge between people) (Bernard 2014: 27).

Conclusion

Lauren Shaw argues that 'Song, with its ability to put into words a particular moment in time and the experience of a whole collective of people, accesses and articulates the feelings of individuals who might otherwise consider their plight a singular struggle' (Shaw 2013: 5). The music of exile emerged during a particular historical moment and carries within it the memory of people whose lives are interwoven not only with the fate of their countries, but also with that of other nations and other oppressed

groups. The musical movements that shaped it conceptualized musicians in the tradition of troubadours, as cultural agents who spoke of the events of their time (Ureña 2013). Although the sociopolitical and economic landscape of Latin America has changed, the issues raised during those years continue to influence current events. For example, it was only recently (in June 2016) that the man who killed Víctor Jara at the National Stadium was sentenced in court. This outcome was due in part to the work of numerous musicians who, along with Jara's family, kept his memory alive. Moreover, as this article is written, news of a *coup d'état* in Turkey covers the front pages of major U.S. newspapers, and State-sponsored oppression and politically-motivated displacement is a reality in many territories around the world. The themes explored by the songs of exile are as timely as ever.

During the years of political repression in Latin America, music played an important role both within and beyond national borders. Within the countries still under the grip of military rule, music helped maintain a sense of hope and kinship. Among Latin communities in exile, it helped connect people from diverse regions and unite them in the effort to raise awareness and push for social and political change. Today, this music still functions as an emblem of solidarity and a repository of diasporic memory, even as its meaning is perceived differently by younger generations. No longer attached to a specific political agenda, the lyrics resonate with people because they speak of fundamental human experiences involving oppression, struggle, and displacement, but also

hope and change. As Jesús Martín-Barbero says:

En los medios se entrelazan formatos contemporáneos con modos de narrar, de imaginar y de expresar que tienen memorias de largo alcance

The media interweave contemporary formats with modes of narrating, imagining, and expressing that have long-lasting memories (Barbero 2000: 6).

Against the expectation that the music of exile would eventually become outdated and fade into oblivion, within the global mediascape it is alive and well, and it may be reaching more people than ever. Digital media platforms are helping to

keep it current: first, they show that the music is being re-imagined and rendered in novel ways by younger performers, whose work is appealing to a new generation. Second, by featuring original recordings and historical footage by artists from the 1970s and 1980s, which would otherwise be difficult to access, they keep the material in circulation. Finally, allowing people to post their own videos and recordings supports a sharing community in which there is no single authority determining what is available. In this sense, considering that the music of exile was once so heavily censored, perhaps the biggest testimony to its historical importance and enduring appeal is its ability to go viral.

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