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# THE RUSTY BUTLER ARCHIVE: REVELATIONS OF CULTURAL REPRESSION DURING THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

## *O arquivo Rusty Butler: revelações da repressão cultural durante a ditadura militar brasileira*

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**ABSTRACT**

The twenty-one years of military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985) were marked by severe repression as government censors sought to control media and artistic production. During these tense years, as has been well documented, journalists, academics, writers, and artists at times struggled to voice their opposition to oppressive military control. Many turned to protest theater as a way to speak out against the dictatorship's abuses. Unsurprisingly, many plays produced at this time were either heavily censored or shut down entirely. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a young Brazilianist scholar from the United States, Ross "Rusty" Butler, befriended, interviewed, and conducted field research on authors of protest theater and their works. When Butler was preparing to return to the United States after being threatened himself by government officials, a few of his new friends asked him to take their works—including some plays that were unpublished and in manuscript form—out of the country in order to avoid censorship. Now, fifty years later, those plays and manuscripts, along with Butler's other research materials, are finally coming to light through the Rusty Butler Archive. The Rusty Butler Archive demonstrates the complex relationship between the military dictatorship, censorship, and cultural production during the 1960s and 70s.

**KEYWORDS:** Brazil; military dictatorship; censorship; protest theater; Rusty Butler

**RESUMO**

Os vinte e um anos da ditadura militar no Brasil (1964-1985) foram marcados por severa repressão, pois os censores governamentais procuravam controlar a mídia e a produção artística. Durante esses anos tensos, como tem sido bem documentado, jornalistas, acadêmicos, escritores e artistas às vezes lutaram por dar voz a sua oposição ao controle militar opressivo. Muitos se voltaram ao teatro de protesto como forma de denunciar os abusos da ditadura. Não é surpresa que muitas peças produzidas então foram ou pesadamente censuradas ou foram fechadas por completo. No fim dos anos 1960 e no início dos 1970, um jovem pesquisador brasilianista dos Estados Unidos, Ross "Rusty" Butler, fez amizade, entrevistou e conduziu pesquisa de campo sobre autores de teatro de protesto e suas obras. Quando Butler se preparava para voltar aos Estados Unidos, depois de ter sido ele mesmo ameaçado por oficiais do governo, alguns de seus novos amigos pediram-lhe para levar suas obras – incluindo algumas peças inéditas e em manuscrito – para fora do país de modo a evitar a censura. Agora, cinquenta anos depois, essas peças e manuscritos, com outros materiais de pesquisa de Butler, estão vindo finalmente à luz através do Arquivo Rusty Butler. Esse arquivo demonstra a relação complexa entre a ditadura militar, a censura e a produção cultural durante os anos 1960 e 1970.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Brasil; ditadura militar; censura; teatro de protesto; Rusty Butler



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In a letter to his wife, Austrian-born author Stefan Zweig contemplated, "Truth to tell, we are all criminals if we remain silent" (qtd. in Green xv, 2010). At the height of the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985), numerous artists, writers, playwrights, and academics understood this critical posture pondered by Zweig. In fact, many suffered great persecution, including arrest, torture, exile, and even death, as they lifted their voices in the face of censorship to denounce the abuses of the political regime. Recently, a new archive from this period has come to light, providing materials written by courageous playwrights who risked their lives to speak out against the military junta. The Rusty Butler Archive gathers materials collected by a young Brazilianist, Ross "Rusty" Erin Butler, Jr., a doctoral student from the University of Arizona who in the late 1960s and early 1970s undertook several extended trips to Brazil for the purpose of conducting dissertation research on Brazilian theater.

During the course of his research, while working primarily in Rio de Janeiro, Butler became acquainted with a community of leftist playwrights who opposed the military regime and criticized (both openly and obliquely) the government in their works. Over time, Butler developed a real bond with a few members of this community, namely Plínio Marcos and Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and he became intimately aware of their political activism. Butler studied their work, and his new friends offered their insights in the form of personal interviews. As Butler's friendship with this group of playwrights and actors grew, he developed increasing levels of trust with them. One evening at a party with an extended group of playwrights and artists in Rio de Janeiro, Butler overheard the whisperings of a plan to bomb a bank in São Paulo. It was not until a few days later when a bank was bombed that Butler became truly alarmed. Butler thereafter unexpectedly discovered that he was on a government watchlist based on his association with these playwrights, and he was even warned by an acquaintance in Rio de Janeiro who worked for the U.S. embassy and who was a CIA operative that he should leave the country as soon as possible.

Fearing for his life, Butler endeavored to leave the country but was detained at the airport, where military officials questioned him for several hours and confiscated his passport. Butler was released and he immediately appealed for assistance from his acquaintance from the U.S. embassy. Within a few days, his passport was returned and he was instructed to leave the country and not return. Before he left, however, his friends in the theater community gave him copies of several plays—in some cases in unpublished manuscript form—hoping their work might survive the hands of government censors.

Upon returning to the United States, Butler was understandably shaken and disturbed by his close encounter with the Brazilian dictatorship. He finished his dissertation and subsequently published an article based on his research. He obtained a faculty position at the University of Victoria, but after only a few years, he left academia to pursue a career in business in order to better support his growing family. His documentary notes, research materials, and the manuscript plays once entrusted to his care were boxed up and left in his garage where they sat for years. Over forty years after returning home from Brazil, Butler met Rex Nielson, a professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Brigham Young University (BYU), through a chance encounter. They talked at length about Brazil and Butler's time there, and Butler confessed that he still had in his possession a collection of plays, manuscripts, interviews, magazines, and newspapers related to his research. Butler decided it was time for the plays to receive a proper home where they could be studied, and he offered his collection to Nielson. In 2019, Nielson and Calla Knapp, a graduate student at BYU, began the process of organizing the collection. Under Professor Nielson's mentorship, Knapp catalogued the contents of the Rusty Butler Archive and created a finding aid.

Rusty Butler's collection of materials, comprising interview records, research notes, newspaper and magazine articles, and both published and unpublished plays, now constitutes a rare archive that provides insights into the systematic processes of how censorship operated during the Brazilian dictatorship. The archive and its unique history provide additional understanding of the complicated relationship between the dictatorship and censorship and how both affected cultural production during the 1960s and 1970s.

## THE THEORY OF CENSORSHIP

At its core, censorship seeks control. It justifies its behavior by both blaming the victim and alleging that it acts in the interests of that victim, and as in any abusive relationship, the oppressor claims as its own the sole right to judgement. Similar to convicting an individual prior to trial, censorship silences before there can be representation. Censorship often disguises itself, regulating media and other output in the name of protection. Often, censorship operates in the dark, hidden from public view. Censorship follows the belief that "the ends justify the means," as political leaders weigh the cost of censoring individuals and institutions for the purpose of maintaining power, often in the name of peace. The root objective remains the same: control. Censorship preserves ignorance, and ignorant people do not rise up against their leaders. Despite assertions regarding the positive effects of censorship on preserving domestic peace and social stability, censorship works against the principles of free speech, democracy, and citizenship. By its very nature, censorship stifles freedom. It promotes a hierarchical structure of power by which the government asserts control over citizens. Censorship suppresses a diversity of voices that think and create and make a nation culturally rich.

As has been well documented, the Brazilian military government actively developed a culture of censorship in order to consolidate and preserve power. Shortly after the AI-5 decree of 1968, which intensified censorship and repression of dissent, the military quickly began to extend control over various publishing agencies. Pery Cotta, a former employee of the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper, gave his account of the censors' takeover: "Estão invadindo todos os jornais e ocupando estações de radio e TV. Bloquearam o telex dos Correios e censuram as linhas telefônicas. Até os correspondentes estrangeiros e as agências internacionais estão entrando na dança" (COTTA, 1997, p. 45) [They are invading all the newspapers and occupying the radio and TV stations. They blocked the Post Office's telex and are censoring the telephone lines. Even the foreign correspondants and the international agencies are taking part in the dance]. Gary Neeleman, a U.S. journalist who worked for UPI (United Press International) and was based in Brazil during the dictatorship, explained that two government censors plagued his and other newspaper publishing offices at all times to review pieces before they were published (NEELEMAN, 2021). Sometimes, Neeleman noted, newspaper articles would never even make it out the door: "I had two censors in my office. They were both lieutenants, both of them armed, and they sat there, very nice guys. And I was able to get along with them, but every piece I wrote had to be censored by them, had to be looked at and then they made a decision as to whether they would let it go out" (NEELEMAN, 2021). Not uncommonly, a military official would appear at a newspaper early in the morning and confiscate an entire print run before it could go out to the stands. Especially for small printing offices, this loss of time and resources and lack of daily sales revenue could send a newspaper into bankruptcy. At one publishing office, the *Correio da Manhã*, the designated

censorship colonels were switched out every few days by their superiors in order to prevent fraternizing and friendships between the censors and the journalists. These accounts show the extreme measures the military dictatorship was willing to take to assert dominance over the news media.

Censors also exercised control over cinema production, television, radio, and literary fiction. Rusty Butler explains in his article on protest theater, "The later Second Institutional Act intensified the purges [of communists] and abolished all political parties setting up an artificial two-party system, the government party and the opposition. At this time, actors, artists, and intellectuals in general became suspect and measures were taken to control them" (BUTLER, "Artistic Exploitation," p. 10). In the years since the end of the dictatorship, historians and cultural critics have catalogued numerous ways in which censorship functioned across a wide array of Brazilian media, music, television, and literature.[1] In recent years, scholars have worked to better understand what kinds of cultural products were censored to provide evidence of the government's oppression and to expose the abuses of the military regime. This work is important given the fact that one consequence of censorship was the concealment of the undemocratic, unjust, and even violent acts of the government. Official reports were filed "of people being 'run over,' 'committing suicide,' and 'being killed while attempting to escape' — when in reality they had been killed, often under torture, after capture and imprisonment" (ARCHDIOCESE OF SÃO PAULO, 1998, p. 55). Even now, more than thirty-five years after the end of the dictatorship's power, many deny the torture and oppression committed by the military government against the people of Brazil. The legacy of silenced whistleblowers and disappeared protesters persists to the present day. Although many Brazilian citizens who experienced the dictatorship years have only good memories of a time when people lived happily and felt cared for, as more suppressed accounts of the dictatorship's abusive measures surface, it is clear that many Brazilians were deliberately deceived about the military regime's dark underbelly, proof of the dictatorship's success in controlling the media.

As the dictatorship extended through the second half of the 1960s, it actively lobbied for the public's attention. With television and satellite transmissions becoming the new modes of communication, live production suffered. The dictatorship used transmission media to control and distract the public from demonstrations and live performances calling for liberation. AI-5 initiated a new repressive period for the dictatorship, one which assured that only information and entertainment sanctioned by the regime would be distributed. As *Time Magazine* correspondent Kay Huff explained to Rusty Butler in an interview in March 1971, "The '30s & '40s fascists are very much in power. Concerned with a re-birth of a moral Brazil. They see the family as the basis. The threat to this is the artist who are [sic] idols of youth. They believe the artist (in gen.) is a kind of dupe of the communist who will make fun of families, traditions, moral ties. So control of the artist is necessary for control of morals" (BUTLER, "Interview with Kay Huff"). The scholar Tânia Pellegrini adds, "Thus began the 'witch hunt,' with professors, musicians, and theater directors being imprisoned or forced into exile and books, plays, movies, and songs being censored. Discordant voices were silenced; all that remained were the TV images, stronger than ever" (PELLEGRINI, 1994, p. 59). By simultaneously stifling opposition and intensifying pro-dictatorship transmissions, the military regime tightened its grip on the narrative being conveyed to the Brazilian public.

1 For a thorough review of books censored by the dictatorship, see Sandra Reimão, *Repressão e resistência: censura a livros na ditadura military* (EDUSP, 2011).

Continuing through the 1970s and as noted above, censorship controlled the output of cultural materials in two ways: (1) editing or denying publication of content deemed critical of the regime and even exiling and imprisoning the producers of such content, and (2) encouraging pro-dictatorship (or at least not anti-dictatorship) publications through government subsidies and awards. Pellegrini observes that this dual pressure on producers of cultural products forced them into "neutral, socially aseptic aesthetic formulations, choosing to be 'introspective' with the approval of the regime, no longer questioning the foundation of the power structure under whose patronage they were free to cultivate that 'introspection'" (60). Many creators opted for the neutral space of self-preservation rather risk their careers by actively opposing the regime.

## OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME

Considering the oppressive tactics used by the dictatorship to maintain power, it is unsurprising that some Brazilians sought outlets for protest. Before AI-5, numerous demonstrations occurred to protest the military junta. In 1968, the student movement organized what is known today as the "Passeata dos cem mil" [March of the One Hundred Thousand]. Thousands of students, artists, and intellectuals united to peacefully protest the military regime, carrying banners that read, "Abaixo a Ditadura. O Povo no Poder" [Down with the Dictatorship. The People in Power]. Also in 1968, the theater community took to the streets to protest the increasingly repressive censorship of their works: "Estamos nas ruas porque acreditamos que o homem deve ser livre para dizer o que pensa e na rua permaneceremos até que a alta missão da arte e da cultura possa ser ampla e livremente exercida no Brasil" ("Artistas voltam às ruas em movimento contra a Censura") [We're in the streets because we believe that man should be free to say what he thinks and in the streets we will stay until the noble mission of art and culture can be widely and freely exercised in Brazil]. However, with the imposition of the oppressive AI-5 decree, some who opposed the regime were forced to exercise subtlety in their protests.

After 1968, many creatives used their art to oppose the dictatorship in the form of protest theater. As a genre, protest theater is unique because it not only seeks to inform but also to transform. Author and playwright Augusto Boal described the theater space as "um espelho de aumento que revela comportamentos dissimulados, inconscientes ou ocultos" (BOAL, *Teatro do oprimido,* p. 25) [a magnifying mirror that reveals covert, unconscious, or hidden behaviors]. Protest theater actively involves its audience, blurring the line between spectator and actor. This dramatic genre pursues change in its audience members, particularly those who may unknowingly be oppressors themselves. Protest theater acts as a revelatory vehicle, inviting introspection on the part of the audience member and community as the spectator desires to ally themselves with the side of the oppressed.

Rusty Butler was particularly interested in the work of Boal, and he collected several of his plays. One Boal's plays in Rusty's possession, *Arena conta Zumbi*, "tells the story of a Brazilian slave, Zumbi, and acted as a thinly veiled metaphor for the experience under military rule" ("Performing Opposition Through Theater."). At one point in *Arena conta Zumbi*, the slave owners chant, "Nós os brancos comerciantes Resolvemos ems anta união dar fim ao povo rebelde exterminar a subversão" (BOAL; LOBO, *Arena conta Zumbi*, p. 8) [We, the white businessmen Resolve without holy union to put an end to this rebellious people and exterminate subversion]. It is surely not coincidental that Boal chose to use "subversion," one of the military dictatorship's favorite terms to describe opposition,

to express the rebellion in *Arena conta Zumbi*. Comparing the dictatorship's suppression to slavery is just one of the many ways playwrights used their art to oppose the military junta. As Boal himself explained, "teatro é uma arma. Uma arma muito eficiente … uma arma de liberação" (BOAL, *Teatro do oprimido*, p. 11) [theater is a weapon. A very effective weapon … a weapon for liberation]. Though indirect, protest theater in this way quietly worked to oppose the military dictatorship, fanning the flame of discontent in its audiences.

The tensions present in the theater of the oppressed in Brazil date back to the colonization of Latin America with the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. In the era of colonization, exclusion was determined by race, status, gender, etc., and those excluded were regarded as the inferior "other". This "other" was soon forced into subordination, prevented from governing, defining, or expressing itself. The power struggle of colonization is alarmingly similar to that of the dictatorship and the oppressed public in that both solidify a relationship of dominance and suppression of rights. Therefore, protest theater can be viewed as an exercise of decolonization. In dictatorship-era Brazil, the voices protesting via the theater sought the right to self-expression and the production of culture under a regime that stripped them of both. The 1960s were a period that "provided a new theatrical infrastructure for the marginalized, the oppressed, and the repressed. (…) There was renewed hope that Latin America, theatrically as well as politically, would find acceptance not as an inferior other but as a revitalizing, revolutionizing self" (TAYLOR, 1991, p. 47). Protest playwrights in Brazil worked through a medium of immediacy that facilitated access to the public but also risked exposure to their oppressors. Taylor explains that theater groups in the 1960s encouraged grassroots movements, emphasizing "leadership, unity, mass mobilization, and combined force. This theater manifested the wide-spread preoccupation with war, either reaffirming or decoding military terminology. Augusto Boal, for example, speaks of theatre as a 'weapon' in overthrowing systems of oppression" (49). If dominant power is granted to those strong enough to take it, and if protest theater is a "weapon," then it stands to reason that one of the goals of protest theater is not only to educate and change its audience, but also to invert the systemic self/other dynamic. Protest theater seeks to challenge the body exercising control, dethrone it, and place the marginalized in greater positions of authority.

## THE RUSTY BUTLER ARCHIVE

The Rusty Butler Archive serves as another example of the real-life consequences of censorship and repression. The archive is divided into 5 sections: (1) Published Books, (2) Loose Notes and Interviews, (3) Butler's Files, (4) Manuscripts, and (5) Butler's Publications. The books contained in Section 1 appear to be those that Butler gathered over the course of his field work in Brazil. Most, if not all, are published plays, including *A navalha na carne* [1968] by Plínio Marcos, *Roda viva* [1968] by Chico Buarque de Hollanda, and *O pagador de promessas* [1967] by Dias Gomes, among others.

Section 2 of the archive contains various handwritten notes by Rusty Butler, which are organized by theme. These notes also include summaries of different protest plays and some magazine articles. For example, Butler made notes about an article published in *Realidade* magazine, "17 coisas que fazem a felicidade do brasileiro" [17 things that make for Brazilian happiness], including coffee, soccer, and feijoada. Butler's notes track the presence of these happiness-makers in the plays he studied.

But, significantly, this section also significantly includes Butler's handwritten notes from the numerous interviews he conducted with various playwrights, directors, and news correspondents, who offered firsthand details about their work and the dictatorship.

The third section is composed of a series of files on protest plays which Butler compiled during his research. These include photocopied pages, Butler's notes, newspaper and magazine clippings, and a few manuscripts. Each file contains notes and materials for different categories. For example, a few of the files contain Butler's materials for singular plays like *Arena conta Zumbi* and *O pagador de promessas*. Another file contains all of Butler's items on Plínio Marcos, namely his questions and answers from interviews, various other notes, and a few manuscripts. Another file contains materials solely on favela theater.

The fourth section in the Rusty Butler Archive contains nine plays in manuscript form, some of which include Butler's handwriting in the margins. Some of these plays eventually appeared in print but others have never been published.

The final section of the archive includes the academic writing Butler produced upon his return to the United States, specifically, material relating to his doctoral dissertation, a couple conference publications that Butler participated in, and an academic article he published.

Finally, the archive also includes a finding aid that details the contents of the archive, as well as a transcription of a personal interview with Rusty Butler conducted on 12 September 2019.

The Rusty Butler Archive includes twelve original manuscript plays produced during critical dictatorship years, as well as the years leading up to the coup d'état. These plays, several of which remain unpublished, constitute a valuable record of governmental censorship and repressions. Most of the manuscripts were written in the late 1960s. A few were published later in 1978, such as *Homens de papel* and *Dois perdidos numa noite suja* written by Plínio Marcos. A few others, *Balbina de Iansã* by Plínio Marcos and *A derradeira ceia* by Luiz Marinho, were performed soon after being written (1970 and 1961 respectively), but they remained unpublished until 2017 and 2019 respectively. One of the plays, *Enquanto se vai morrer* by Renata Pallotini, was written in 1967 but not performed until 2002; it was finally published in 2006. Most interestingly, seven of the manuscripts in the Rusty Butler Archive remain unpublished: *Allegro Desbundaccio (Se o Martins Penna fosse vivo)* by Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and Armando Costa, *O cavalo e o santo* by Augusto Boal, *Filha moça* by Augusto Boal, *Um grito de Liberdade or Liberdade por amor* by Sérgio Viotti, *Laio se matou* by Augusto Boal, *Se eu não me chamasse Raimundo* by Fernando Melo, and *O trágico fim de Maria Goiabada* by Fernando Melo. Written in 1972, *Allegro Desbundaccio* and *Um grito de Liberdade or Liberdade por amor* were performed immediately after their composition in 1972 but never published. Vianna Filho died young, in 1974, and Viotti passed away in 2009 after enjoying a long career as an actor and director, so we can only speculate as to why these pieces never appeared in print. As for the works produced by Fernando Melo, they were performed in the early 1970s but also never published. Unfortunately, few published records exist regarding the playwright Fernando Melo. The Augusto Boal plays exist in the form of photocopies of typewritten text, housed in the library at the Escola de Comunicações e Artes da Universidade de São Paulo. However, they have never been published. Our research indicates the following publication information, as outlined in Table 1:

**Table 1** – Manuscript Publication Information in the Rusty Butler Archive

| Play Title | Author | Year Written | Year of First Known Production | Year of First Known Publication |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Allegro Desbundaccio*[1] *(Se o Martins Penna fosse vivo)* | Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and Armando Costa | 1972[2] | 1972[3] | Unpublished[4] |
| *Balbina de Iansã* | Plínio Marcos | 1970[5] | 1970[6] | 2017[7] |
| *O cavalo e o santo* | Augusto Boal | 1954[8] | 1954[9] | Unpublished[10] |
| *A derradeira ceia* | Luiz Marinho | 1960[11] | 1961[12] | 1973[13] |
| *Dois perdidos numa noite suja* | Plínio Marcos | 1966[14] | 1966[15] | 1978[16] |
| *Enquanto se vai morrer* | Renata Pallottini | 1967[17] | 2002[18] | 2006[19] |
| *Filha moça* | Augusto Boal | 1956[20] | 1956[21] | Unpublished[22] |

1 Original title was *Allegro desbundaccio*, but military censors changed it to *Allegro desbum* (Braga, 2000, p. 44).

2 Guimarães, Carmelinda. *Um ato de resistência: O teatro de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho*. São Paulo: MG Editores Associados, 1984. p. 148.

3 Guimarães, Carmelinda. *Um ato de resistência: O teatro de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho*. São Paulo: MG Editores Associados, 1984. p. 148.

4 Vianna Filho, Oduvaldo. *Allegro desbundaccio*. Comédia. 36 fI. mimeo. UNI-RIO

5 "Balbina De Iansã." *Plínio Marcos - Sítio Oficial*, pliniomarcos.com/teatro/balbina.htm.

6 "Balbina De Iansã." *Plínio Marcos - Sítio Oficial*, pliniomarcos.com/teatro/balbina.htm.

7 Marcos Plínio; Alcir Pécora. *Plínio Marcos: Obras Teatrais*. Funarte, 2017. v.6.

8 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

9 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

10 Razuk, José Eduardo Paraíso. "Muito além do Teatro do Oprimido: um panorama da obra dramatúrgica de Augusto Boal." *Academia.edu*, 2019, p. 56, www.academia.edu/39017030/MUITO_AL%C3%89M_DO_TEATRO_DO_OPRIMIDO_Um_panorama_da_obra_dramat%C3%BArgica_de_Augusto_Boal.

11 Marinho Filho, Luiz; Anco Márcio Tenório Vieira (Org.). *Teatro De Luiz Marinho - Peças Regionalistas*. CEPE Editora, 2019. v.1. p. 211-212.

12 Marinho Filho, Luiz; Anco Márcio Tenório Vieira (Org.). *Teatro De Luiz Marinho - Peças Regionalistas*. CEPE Editora, 2019. v.1. p. 211-212.

13 Marinho, Luiz. "A derradeira ceia." *Cadernos De Teatro*, 1973, p. 13-31. *O Tablado*, otablado.com.br/Cadernos?page=6.

14 "Dois perdidos numa noite suja." *Plínio Marcos - Sítio Oficial*, https://pliniomarcos.com/teatro/2perdidos.htm.

15 "Dois perdidos numa noite suja." *Plínio Marcos - Sítio Oficial*, https://pliniomarcos.com/teatro/2perdidos.htm.

16 Marcos, Plínio. *Dois perdidos numa noite suja:* São Paulo: Global, 1978.

17 "Os espetáculos que o brasileiro não viu porque a censura não deixou." *Jornal do Brasil*, 8 Apr. 1979, p. 9.

18 Pallotini, Renata. *Teatro completo*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006. p. 268. (Col. Textos, 18).

19 Pallotini, Renata. *Teatro completo*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006. (Col. Textos, 18).

20 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

21 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

22 Razuk, José Eduardo Paraíso. Muito além do Teatro do Oprimido: um panorama da obra dramatúrgica de Augusto Boal.*Academia.edu*, 2019, p. 56, www.academia.edu/39017030/MUITO_AL%C3%89M_DO_TEATRO_DO_OPRIMIDO_Um_panorama_da_obra_dramat%C3%BArgica_de_Augusto_Boal.

**Table 1** – Cont.

| Play Title | Author | Year Written | Year of First Known Production | Year of First Known Publication |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Um grito de liberdade* ou *Liberdade por amor (a história de D. Pedro I)* | Sérgio Viotti | 1972[23] | 1972[24] | Unpublished |
| *Homens de papel* | Plínio Marcos | 1967[25] | 1967[26] | 1978[27] |
| *Laio se matou* | Augusto Boal | 1958[28] | 1958[29] | Unpublished[30] |
| *Se eu não me chamasse Raimundo* | Fernando Melo | 1970[31] | 1972[32] | Unpublished |
| *O trágico fim de Maria Goiabada* | Fernando Melo | 1971[33] | 1973[34] | Unpublished |

23 Lebert, Nilu. *Sérgio Viotti: o cavalheiro das artes*. São Paulo: Cultura-Fundação Padre Anchieta; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2004. p. 104. (Col. Aplauso. Série Perfil). https://aplauso.imprensaoficial.com.br/edicoes/12.0.812.956/12.0.812.956.pdf

24 Lebert, Nilu. *Sérgio Viotti: o cavalheiro das artes*. São Paulo: Cultura-Fundação Padre Anchieta; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2004. p. 105. (Col. Aplauso. Série Perfil). https://aplauso.imprensaoficial.com.br/edicoes/12.0.812.956/12.0.812.956.pdf

25 Marcos Plínio; Alcir Pécora. *Plínio Marcos: Obras Teatrais*. Funarte, 2017, v. l. p. 2006.

26 Marcos Plínio; Alcir Pécora. *Plínio Marcos: Obras Teatrais*. Funarte, 2017. v.1.

27 Marcos, Plínio. *Homens de papel.* São Paulo: Global, 1978.

28 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

29 "Peças." *Instituto Augusto Boal*, augustoboal.com.br/pecas-e-publicacoes/.

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31 Melo, Fernando. *Se eu não me chamasse Raimundo*. 1970. Box 2, Series 4, Folder 41. *Rusty Butler Archive.* Unpublished. Held by Rex P. Nielson.

32 "O que há para ver." *Jornal do Brasil*, 23 March 1972, p. 6.

33 Melo, Fernando. *O trágico fim de Maria Goiabada*. 1971. Box 2, Series 4, Folder 39. *Rusty Butler Archive.* Unpublished. Held by Rex P. Nielson.

34 "Maria Goiabada de trágico fim." *Jornal do Brasil*, 23 Oct. 1973, p. 4.

The Rusty Butler Archive provides a unique perspective into the reality of the dictatorship years. The censorship and repression exercised by the military regime during the 1960s and 1970s controlled the narrative of that period and left behind a one-sided legacy that continues to be perpetuated. This archive provides not only additional evidence of protest in the form of creative plays, but it also includes personal interviews with various artists, detailing the realities of censorship.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CENSORSHIP AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Cultural production is synonymous with freedom. It embodies deep thought, questioning, and making sense of the world. Creators seek to explain the world as it currently is and envision a better world. Many creative and cultural products produced during the 1960s and 70s in Brazil contradicted the agenda of the military regime, and in response the dictatorship waged war on artists. As Caetano Veloso explained in an interview before his exile from Brazil, "I guess they don't like what we do. They just don't seem to be able to stand anything open-ended … Anything that they can't force and control" (NOVITSKI, 1969, p. 8). Censorship does not change culture; it simply controls the representation of culture. During the military dictatorship, many artists (the producers of cultural media in Brazil) were imprisoned, tortured, or exiled. If they were incarcerated, forced abroad, or disappeared, they could not contribute to the opposition. In his notes regarding censorship, Rusty Butler observes, "the Brazilian author's hands have become so tied that he cannot freely produce works whose themes the public wished to see most, according to the well-known Brazilian theatre critic, Bárbara Heliodora; that is, lack of liberty, social injustice, and the foreign domination of the Brazilian economy" (BUTLER, "Social Themes" 1). They could not distribute opinions and world views that contradicted the regime's agenda.

The effects of censorship are deep and lasting. Cultural production is one area of society that suffered greatly during the dictatorship due to censorship for a few reasons. First, censorship limits the representation of culture to one perspective and worldview. Varied perspectives among a nation's population are one of the beautiful elements of diversity. The rich and the poor experience life in different ways, as do different genders, races, sexual orientations, etc. Sharing differing opinions and perspectives offers cultural diversity and fosters an environment for growth and progress. However, AI-5 severely restricted variation in cultural production. During the era of the military dictatorship, the junta alone held the power to curate the cultural products in Brazil, limiting representation only to those products that fit their agenda. Though the dictatorship maintained various strategies as it controlled the nation, "the twin goals of the 1964–1985 regime were security and development" (SMITH, 1997, p. 24). Smith further explains that while the dictatorship changed and adapted as time went on, "it remained authoritarian and maintained the goals of security — meaning control and absence of conflict — and development — meaning economic growth at any cost" (SMITH, 1997, p. 24). In the name of security, the military dictatorship actively eliminated any left-wing influence that might threaten conservative values. For this reason, religion and the traditional nuclear family were celebrated, while sexual content and anti-regime commentary were silenced. In the mind of those leading dictatorship, security meant avoiding a communist revolution, and so, it preserved the status quo by censoring the voices that rang contrary. Unfortunately, this included marginalized voices, those of the poor, of people of color and of the LGBTQ+ community. Representation was left to government curators to decide what products could gain access to the cultural space. Augusto Boal

addresses this phenomenon as he describes cultural products, specifically the theater, being taken over by the dominating classes: "No principio, o teatro era o canto ditirâmbico: o povo livre cantando ao ar livre. O carnaval. A festa. Depois, as classes dominantes se apropriaram do teatro e construíram muros divisórios" (BOAL, 2019, p. 127) [In the beginning, the theater was a dithyrambic song: free people singing into the open air. Carnival. Celebration. Later, the dominant classes appropriated the theater and built divisive walls]. By granting itself the power to censor cultural products, the military dictatorship took over free expression, changing the rules of output and dividing the communities attempting to express themselves.

Censorship also particularly affected live production during the military regime. Recorded and printed media and government-controlled satellite transmissions could be highly regulated. However, the immediacy and spontaneity of live performances could more easily escape government censorship. For this reason, following 1968, the military regime made a priority of trying to limit and control live culture. Live culture—or rather, fluid, evolving culture—certainly did not align with the military's goal of national security; it was too high-risk. As noted by Schwarz, "apesar da ditadura da direita há relativa hegemonia cultural da esquerda no país" (SCHWARZ, 1978, p. 62) [despite the right-wing dictatorship, there is a relative left-wing cultural hegemony in the country]. Perhaps the regime recognized the strength that accompanies community. If the military junta controlled the cultural narrative to such a degree that the left-wing cultural majority felt as though it was the outlier, the minority right-wing dictatorship could preserve national and cultural security for the greater good.

Additionally, censorship affected cultural production because it intimidated artists into self-censoring their works. In defining self-censorship as a subcategory of censorship, Smith considers that in the process of self-censorship, "there is something to say, you know it, and you don't say it. This is not the silence of ignorance or poor judgement, but rather of cognizant withholding" (SMITH, 1997, p. 118). She continues, expounding upon the dangers: "The results for the public are similar to censorship in terms of the manipulation of knowledge and understanding, but often with the added element of the public's not even knowing that they are being denied information" (SMITH, 1997, p. 118). Self-censorship is an understandable consequence of censorship, especially in the realm of cultural production. Realistically, it can take years to write, edit, and publish a book. There is serious time and creativity invested into that process. For creatives to painstakingly produce content, ensuring precision in every word, only to have sentences or large sections censored or the entire work denied altogether, must exact an immeasurable emotional toll. In this case, self-censorship is merely an act of self-preservation. Self-censorship is difficult to trace, since the "original" never makes its way out of the creative mind and if it does find a way onto paper, it is usually confined to private, unpublished writings. However, certainly self-censorship occurred during the military dictatorship era, and it was propelled by fear. One can only imagine how many more works might have been produced during this time had creatives not been terrorized into self-censorship.

## CENSORSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF THE RUSTY BUTLER ARCHIVE

Given the ways censorship directly affects cultural production, the Rusty Butler Archive sheds light on the intricate relationship between the two by presenting a special set of materials that serve as an untouched time capsule from the dictatorship era. The collection includes not only original

manuscript plays but also newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and one-on-one interview notes from creatives directly affected by the regime's censorship. As such, it is uniquely poised to offer greater insight into the relationship between cultural production and the censorship applied during the dictatorship, particularly following the AI-5 declaration.

The Rusty Butler Archive affords representation for the communities and perspectives silenced by the dictatorship. Although Butler himself acknowledged that protest theater does not generally fall in the category of mainstream contemporary Brazilian literature, it is nevertheless an important genre of study because of its ability to expose social realities through a truly Brazilian lens (BUTLER, "Social Themes", 9). Many of the contents in the archive are manuscripts and materials that were sent with Rusty out of Brazil to avoid censorship. With this detail in mind, the Rusty Butler Archive provides a platform for voices and opinions that were marginalized by the dictatorship. Censorship of these materials would have been almost guaranteed, either because of the status of their authors or because of the potential underlying threats of their messages. Knowing that their works would have been censored, the producers of this cultural content have provided us with tangible examples of how censorship limits the representation of culture to one world view.

Remembering that one of the main goals of the dictatorship was security, the Rusty Butler Archive can be analyzed for themes that would threaten the regime's ideals. One play in the Rusty Butler Archive that serves as an example is *Roda Viva* by Chico Buarque. While this particular play was published in 1968, it was censored in later productions for treating the topic of religion too lightly. Considering the traditional, conservative values being "secured" by the military junta, it is unsurprising that this play was forbidden entry into the cultural collection compiled by government curators.

Other themes in the Rusty Butler Archive that threatened the dictatorship's goal of security include criticism (open or metaphorical) of the regime. One musical play in the archive, *Balbina de Iansã* by Plínio Marcos, contains strong themes critical of authoritarianism. The setting of this work opens on a Brazilian candomblé terreiro. Balbina is about to be punished by the macumba leader, Mãe Zefa, for protecting Zeninha's cognitively deficient daughter, Boba, from being "purified," implying physical abuse at the stake. Balbina invokes her protector saint, Iansã, to deliver her from danger and the tension resolves. Later, Balbina gets into trouble again after allowing a visiting man, João, from another candomblé group into the terreiro. The situation escalates and a physical fight ensues. Balbina is subsequently "cleansed" at the stake. Zeninha and Boba offer to heal her if in return, Mãe Zefa will welcome them back into the macumba group. Balbina however, asks them to go find João, who she has fallen in love with, so he can help rescue her. Balbina reminds Zeninha how terrible Mãe Zefa has always treated her. In fact, Mãe Zefa is the reason Zeninha's daughter was born with deformities, since Zefa sent her to be "cleansed" at the stake while she was pregnant. Convinced, Zeninha goes to find João, but not before Mãe Zefa enters and intervenes. Mãe Zefa shouts, "Sou tua mãe de santo. Sei das coisas e falo pro teu bem" (MARCOS, *Balbina de Iansã*, 30) [I am your *mãe de santo*. I know all things and I speak for your good]. Another fight breaks out. The play ends with Balbina and João denouncing their respective saints and leaving the life of candomblé, relying on their love instead: "A gente agarra na nossa gamação. E isso que é nossa valia, Balbina. Com gana a gente levanta um mundo" (MARCOS, *Balbina de Iansã*, 38) [We will cling to our love. And that's what matters, Balbina. With love we lift the world]. Marcos' critique of the military regime is palpable in this metaphorical representation. Mãe Zefa

is a ruling figure who commands authority over her cult-like group of followers based on her ability to know what is best for them. She even uses disguised methods of torture to prevent uprisings. Perhaps the figures of Balbina and João are the author's way of suggesting another point of view; Mãe Zefa's perspective, or rather, the dictatorship's perspective, is not the only answer. Taking the metaphor one step further, perhaps Marcos is suggesting that love and tolerance are the true antidotes to fear and control.

Another protest play in the archive is *Filha moça* by Augusto Boal. Though *Filha moça* does not appear to condemn the organization of the military regime as much as *Balbina de Iansã*, its discussion of traditionally immoral themes did not align with the conservative ideals the dictatorship sought to preserve. *Filha moça* tells the story of a strained family—an unhappy mother, an angst-filled teenage daughter, and an abusive father. This play brings to the forefront the themes of extramarital sexual relations as the mother longs to be adored by someone and as the teenage daughter begins navigating a serious relationship with her fiancé. By subverting the traditional morals of fidelity and chastity, this play protests the military regime and its ideals. As such, *Filha moça* was censored in its entirety because its production company chose plays "que ofendem a moral e os bons costumes para apresentar aos seus sócios, pessoas humildes e sem a devida compreensão" (BOAL, "Filha Moça") [that offend morals and good manners to present to their associates, simple people that lack proper understanding]. Augusto Boal's website provides further insight to read between the lines of the censor's reason: "de acordo com a censura, o teatro deverá ser um modelo de comportamento e o modelo deverá ser a família branca, de classe média, ocidental e cristã. O resto será proibido e censurado" (BOAL, "Filha Moça") [according to the censor, the theater ought to be a model of behavior and that model ought to be a white, Western, Christian, middle class family]. *Filha moça* and other plays like it protested the military dictatorship by offering representation to those populations that the regime was actively trying to keep on the margins. By pushing the boundaries for "acceptable" behavior, the theater became a space for opposition.

The Rusty Butler Archive thus offers a vivid example of the military regime's silencing of living culture. As noted above, live performance is unpredictable and in the eyes of the dictatorship, it posed a liability. As such, live theater was heavily censored and prohibited from taking the stage. Most of the plays in the Rusty Butler Archive were originally censored by the regime. Some were published in following years, but for some like *Enquanto se vai morrer* by Renata Pallottini, publication did not come until decades later. In a personal interview with Rusty Butler, notes from which reside in the archive, local Brazilian actress Ilva Niño reported the censorship of a play she was in. Rusty's note from their interview reads: "censors not only must check the piece but also must see the actual performance before it is publicly presented. One piece [Ilva] was in was approved all the way then after the opening performance with censors closed it down (almost) by whim" (BUTLER, "Interview with Luiz Mendonça"). A few other interviews offered to Rusty Butler during his research mention the frustration and persecution felt by artists at the hand of the censor. When asked about the future of social criticism in Brazil, playwright Fernando Melo is cited by Rusty's notes as explaining, "If the censorship would let up it would be limitless. But with the problems today it can't be answered." (BUTLER, "Interview with Fernando Melo"). Lance Belville, an American playwright for Brazilian theater at the time is quoted in Rusty's notes, "The censorship is styfulling [sic]" (BUTLER, "Interview with Lance Belville"). The dictatorship focused its efforts on areas of perceived threat. Based on the comments made by playwrights to Butler, the Rusty Butler Archive provides evidence of the dictatorship's feeling

threatened by their living culture. Opinionated artists could not be trusted to leave politics out of their productions. The regime felt compelled to control the output and ensure their audiences were only consuming sanctioned content.

Self-censorship through the lens of the Rusty Butler Archive is more difficult to identify. There remain seven manuscripts that research suggests were never published. The natural question that follows is why? While it is possible that the playwrights responsible for these works were permanently silenced by censors, it is equally plausible that they never tried to publish for fear of retribution. Perhaps after witnessing the repression of the regime in the lives of their fellow playwrights, these authors decided to quietly stay off the radar. If this is the case, then the military's fear tactics did their job—they intimidated their citizens into silencing themselves instead of revolting against the injustices taking place. Assuming these unpublished works are remnants of self-censorship, we are left to wonder just how many other works were left in the idea phase and never made it into manuscript form? Commenting on censorship in one of his notes from 1973, Butler wrote, "[censorship is] whimsical but very pronounced now; no political dramas at this time; authors probably have manuscripts, but won't release them" (BUTLER, "Monday May 14, 1973 São Paulo"). Unfortunately, when dealing with self-censorship, we are left with ambiguity.

## CONCLUSION

The Rusty Butler Archive represents a unique set of evidence from an era in which the official narrative were actively manipulated. As such, it offers a refreshingly raw perspective of the human experience during the military dictatorship in Brazil. We now have the opportunity to examine it to learn in greater detail how the dictatorship operated and how it affected the cultural output of the 1960s and 70s. Understanding the particular history of Rusty Butler's experience in Brazil provides further evidence of the dictatorship's abuses and serves as a warning about the harmful consequences of censorship on democratic society. Moving forward, academics and artists must continue to use their voices, being vigilant in ensuring the repressive tactics introduced during Brazil's dictatorship era are not resurrected.

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