

Underground Impulses: The Czechoslovak Artistic Field, 1948-1977

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Abstract

This paper examines the construction of the Czechoslovak Underground community in the 1970s through music as a social activity. I argue that the Underground was able to construct a community based on the historical trajectories of cultural resistance within Bohemia and by social positioning through atavistic techniques. Using Bourdieu's theory of practice within, I begin by discussing the reconstitution of the artistic field in Czechoslovakia following the communist take over in 1948. By looking at the imposition of Socialist Realism, I trace the inclusionary/exclusionary cultural policy practices of the socialist State and how musicians and artists engaged in a struggle of legitimation over proper/improper modes of expression. From a subversive and dominated position in the artistic field, I will show how the Underground created an alternative social and cultural space built upon heterodox impulses and resources of previous generations that coalesced into a community. The paper thus seeks to examine the relationship between symbolic community formations under oppressive conditions.

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Introduction

For many parts of the world, 1968 signaled unprecedented moments of revolution and freedom in the twentieth century. In Czechoslovakia, that year at once saw the height of a socialist thaw on censorship in music, film, and literature only to be later quelled by the Warsaw Pact invasion on August 21st, 1968. Following the invasion and subsequent Soviet occupation, among many who came under extreme attack from the new, neo-Stalinist regime were musicians. Faced with stringent social and cultural codes that sought to ‘normalize’ Czech society, many musicians who did not fit the newly implemented socialist archetype of musicianship were forced to the edges of society, into an existence underground. From this dominated position, they were subjected to stigmatization in the press for their ‘filthy and obscene’ lifestyle in addition to nearly complete exclusion from official Czechoslovak society. As a result, a community formed around these underground musicians in Prague that eventually led to the creation of a *parallel polis*¹ and a flourishing of artistic creation and consumption.

This thesis seeks to identify how the Czechoslovak Underground used music as a social activity in the process community formation and construction. I look for the answers to this question of community building through the investigation of internal and external forces of social, political, and cultural activity in the artistic field following the 1948 communist takeover in Czechoslovakia. I put forth that the Underground constructed their community by musically engaging themselves with a Czechoslovak historical trajectory of cultural resistance by arguing that the Underground was able to situate themselves in a social and cultural legacy of opposition against the socialist State

¹ Often used interchangeably with ‘*Druhá kultura*’ or, second culture.

by appropriating historically subversive cultural forms and resources. In doing so, I maintain that they placed their excluded social status in the historical continuum of oppression/resistance found in Bohemia. From this subversive and resistant position, I show how the Underground contributed to an alternative social and cultural space that allowed its members to create music, art, and literature free of the aesthetic confinements and restrictions of the political field. Furthermore, I analyze the external forces affecting community formation, specifically those of the socialist State and Anglo-American popular music, by looking at Czechoslovak cultural policy in the reformation of the artistic field following World War II.

I employ Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Cohen in tandem in my theoretical framework to explain the creation of fields and symbolic boundaries between the Underground, the State, and other official and unofficial musicians. By using Bourdieu's theory of practice, I will illustrate the relationship between cultural forms in the artistic field mediating social order through binary opposition by describing how excluded and subjugated cultural forms reconfigured the artistic field resulting in an alternative space for musicians to perform without the symbolic violence of the dominant position in the field.

Cohen's theory on the symbolic construction of community facilitates analysis of how the 'commonality' of form, i.e. music, allows those within a community to invest in it with 'ideological integrity' without being restricted or excluded by the commonality of content (1985 [2003]: 20). Stemming from British symbolic anthropology, Cohen's theories help me problematize the unity and in/exclusivity of the Underground precisely by asking where boundaries are marked through social interaction. In order to reconcile

Cohen and Bourdieu, I conceptualize the artistic field as comprising both official and non-official musicians in Czechoslovakia, and through social differentiation via the symbolic system of art, I explicate how excluded musicians within the artistic field formed a community.

While discussing community formation through music as a social activity, the pursuit of a sociologist of music is not to ascertain hierarchies within music (i.e., classical versus popular) but rather to explain how these hierarchies came to be as a result of social processes (Martin, 1995: viii). Music as a social phenomenon is then seen as a “perpetual conquest for cultural legitimacy...making claims on behalf of, or against, particular ways of doing things” (ibid). Martin (1995: 12) emphasizes, “[sociologists of music] must remain indifferent to the arguments of musicians, critics, and so on in their various debates and disputes....[a sociologist] must examine the perpetual process of conflict and negotiation in their own right.”

In order to explicate these conflicts and negotiations in music by the aforementioned theories of Bourdieu and Cohen, I use the descriptive case study method to explain the phenomenon of the Underground beginning in 1948 and concluding in 1977. Using the descriptive case study method, I view the formation of the Underground through the analytic construct of narrative: concerts, manifestoes, encounters between actors, and trials are viewed sequentially in order to understand the emergence and development of fields and symbolic boundaries. The creation of a narrative map also provides for the Underground to be placed in a wider sequential development with the external forces of this period; for example, Stalin’s death in 1953, the events of 1968, and the Helsinki Accords of 1975. My methodology creates a synthesis with my theoretical

framework of Bourdieu (1990: 98) in that he believes “properties [of practice] owe to the fact that [they are] constructed in time, that time gives them form, as the order of succession, and therefore, [their] direction and meaning.”. Indeed, the Underground was a highly dynamic community with changing borders and membership based on a disposition cultivated over generations, which ultimately affect its strategic actions over time.

I focus my study on the group The Plastic People of the Universe (PPU), their artistic manager Ivan Martin Jirous (also known as *Magor*), and poet/philosopher Zbyněk Fišer (pseudonym: Egon Bondy). While this triad is often the center of discussion on Underground activity, it is by no means the only influence; the Underground contained a plethora of artists, musicians, and writers such as the bands Umělá Hmota and Bílé Světlo, singer/songwriters Charlie Soukop and Svatopluk Karásek, poet Pavel Zajíček and his musical group DG-307, as well as a number of musical outfits that were cross-populated by these musicians².

My research and data gathering is constructed on four years of living in the Czech Republic, during which time I was able to attend several concerts of some of the aforementioned bands, commemoration ceremonies of these artists, and poetry readings of former Underground members. Furthermore, I was able to access such archives as Libri Prohibiti, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, and the Open Society Archives in Budapest. I also draw on a number of formal and informal conversations with Czech musicians, former Underground members, and those who were witness to the period of normalization in Czechoslovakia after 1968.

² See booklet *The Merry Ghetto* that accompanied the PPU release “Egon Bondy’s Happy Hearts Club Banned” for an overview of bands within the Underground.

Much has been written about music during socialist Czechoslovakia taking into account similar resources as I have, however these writings often distill the Underground as only a precursor or support to the dissident movement of *Charta 77*³. I wish to look at the Underground not just as an instrument of political use, but also as a relatively autonomous social phenomenon that used the cultural history and resources of its nation to create social and cultural change in Czechoslovakia. My research will not only contribute to the current body of work on the Underground, but it also seeks to assist in the “[enhancement] of our understanding of music and the general social contexts in which it is performed, heard, and created” (Martin, 1995: viii).

Moreover, it is not my intention to address the research question of what was the relationship between music and fall of communism in Czechoslovakia, as it has been taken up by others⁴; indeed, the literature concerning this question often reads rock music as “a political phenomenon” (Ramet, 1994: 1). I agree, rather, with Pekacz’s (1994: 45) assertion that rock music’s contest to the socialist State was not its “‘inherent capitalist ideology’ or subversive ‘political content’, but its challenge to...broader social norms.” Therefore, what is crucial, and how this work contributes to the existing literature, is the examination of the social forces at play within the artistic field and how this allows for an understanding of the conversion of cultural resources into capital through a temporally appreciated disposition to be used by agents in the field.

The chapters are organized according to internal and external forces and how these contributed to the production of cultural resources and forms on which the Underground would later be built. In Chapter 1, I examine the reformation of the artistic

³ See Skilling; 1981, 1989

⁴ See Ryback, 1990; Mitchell, 1992; Wicke, 1992; Pekacz, 1994; Vanicek, 1997

field in Czechoslovakia following the communist takeover in 1948. The following chapters are then concerned with looking at direct construction of the Underground firstly in its early formations from 1968-1974 then in its canonization in 1974-1976. I complete my study with the event of the signing of *Charta 77* by Underground members as it at once signposts a pinnacle of Underground formation as well as the erosion of community, signaling the beginning of two more distinct periods in Underground history⁵. The temporal limit of this study is partially guided by practical considerations in the scope of this thesis.

⁵ I delineate four distinct periods in the history of Underground: I) 1968-1974 (early Underground formation; II) 1974-1976 (canonization of Underground); III) 1976-1981 (dissidents and Underground merge to a degree); IV) 1981-1989 (forced emigration of key Underground agents; beginning of Second Generation Underground).

Theory of Practice and Symbolic Communities

In the following section, I will discuss the key concepts of Pierre Bourdieu and how they will benefit my research by illuminating power relations that occurred between agents within Czechoslovakia, 1948-1977. Bourdieu's concepts of the 'field of power', 'field' and 'habitus' serve as a framework in which I organize my data and additionally as a mechanism for conceptualizing the Underground's relationship to the transformation of the artistic field in 1948. In addition to Bourdieu, I will supplement and synthesize his theories with Anthony Cohen's concepts of the symbolic construction of community based on music as a social activity, formulated by Peter Martin.

Bourdieu's Field Theory

Bourdieu (1989: 40) lays out the necessary steps for proper analysis of a field: "one must 1) analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power; 2) map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for legitimate authority; and 3) analyze the habitus of the agents." The field of power may be defined as "a field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power" and as a "field of forces defined by the structure of the existing balance of forces between forms of power" (Bourdieu, 1992:76). In a similar fashion, Cohen describes the relational nature of boundaries between communities, as "the very nature of symbolism itself contains not merely the competence of discrimination, but the sense of negation" (1985 [2003]: 58). Clearly, both Bourdieu and Cohen recognize a relational sociology in definition of fields and communities, which allow them to be used in tandem in order to understand the relations between agents and fields embedded in the field of power.

I consider the Czechoslovak nation-state as the unit of analysis of the field of power. Bourdieu conceptualizes the field of power as

relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension. (1992: 229-230)

Within the field of power, I concentrate on two specific fields: the political field, which included both the socialist State and dissidents; and the artistic field, which I place official and unofficial musicians, such as those of the Underground. In both fields, the political and the artistic, we see struggles of power over legitimacy through the use of capital. Swartz (1997: 117) notes, “fields may be thought of as structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combination of capital.” Bourdieu (1992: 107) insists that the field “is primary and must be the focus of the research operations”. By turning my attention to the communist take over of Czechoslovakia in 1948, I am able to examine the discursive formation of both the artistic and political field through State power.

Regarding agents in the political and artistic field, both compete for the legitimation of the definition of how an individual is to live one’s life. We can view this struggle of legitimation in the field by how the Underground actively pursued what dissident Czechoslovak playwright Václav Havel (a critical agent in the political field) termed ‘Living in Truth’ which meant those who lived through true expression of their desires, interests, and values. The State, on the other hand, defined the proper way to live through their symbolic violence following the lines of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist political orthodoxy using their monopoly on economic capital in the form of institutionalized values, norms, and moral codes. The heterodox subversive strategies employed by the

Underground revolved around artistic expression in the form of poetry/literature, samizdat essays, and most importantly music.

Moreover, I also use Bourdieu to hypothesize the creation of capital (symbolic, cultural, economic) within the artistic field. Bourdieu (1992: 98) states “the value of a species of capital hinges....on the existence of a field in which its competency can be employed.” Firstly, I approach Bourdieu’s assertion by examining capital that was created, was present, and was active in the artistic field and how the agents of these fields used their capital in strategic manners to both produce and perpetuate their communities. As an agent’s relative force in the field depended on the volume and structure of the capital (Bourdieu, 1992: 98), I suggest that it behooved particular influential agents in the artistic field to exchange capital and use cultural legacy as capital. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1992: 99) discusses the strategic ability of agents in a field of power to conserve and increase their capital in order to “discredit the form of capital upon which the force of their opponents rests”. I will thus interpret the exchange of capital between dissidents and the Underground as strategies within the field for the struggle of legitimation against the socialist State.

Bourdieu’s concept of doxa also comes into play in the field of power as it “helps create the conditions for misrecognition of power relations and thereby contribute to the maintenance of the social order” (Swartz, 1997: 126). Doxa in Czechoslovakia is exhibited best by Havel’s description of the greengrocer:

The manager of a fruit-and-vegetable shop places in his window, among the onions and carrots, the slogan: “Workers of the world unite!” Why does he do this? [...] I think it can safely be assumed that the overwhelming majority of shopkeepers never think about the slogans they put in their windows, nor do they use them to express their own opinions. That poster was delivered to our greengrocer from the enterprise

headquarters along with the onions and carrots. He put them all in the window *simply because it has been done that way for years, because everyone does it, and because that is the way it has to be.*' (132; emphasis added)

Doxa thus distinguishes itself from the heterodoxy by symbolizing what is taken for granted or what appears as self-evident (Bourdieu, 1977 [1993]: 167). As Bourdieu demonstrates, doxa "goes without saying because it comes without saying." Thus, the greengrocer is an actor in the field of power who continues to legitimate social relations through his misrecognition.

A further necessary point in Bourdieu's analysis of field is the description of habitus in that, as Wacquant and Bourdieu (1989: 44) elucidate, habitus and field have an 'ontological complicity': they are mutually constitutive and structuring of each other. Through Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice*, habitus is presented as a strong analytic tool relevant to the Underground by its ability to bridge individual/society, which has been a difficult chasm to traverse when trying to employ symbolic interactionism as Cohen. Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides me to look at the actions of individuals in the Underground as situated and structured strategies based on sentiments that are produced through habitus.

Symbolic Construction of Community

I use Cohen to conceptualize the project of community formation by utilizing his definition of community as an "entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediate than the abstraction we call 'society'. It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home" (1985 [2003]: 15). When speaking of people acquiring culture or

learning to be social, it is asserting the acquisition of symbols, which will equip individuals to be social (1985 [2003]: 16). A community is thus seen as being transformed and translated through its members by their usage of shared ideas in the form of symbols and the individual's ability to interact through these symbols.

Cohen's primary task is to assist in conceptualizing symbolic boundaries of the community. By understanding boundaries as "symbolic receptacles...existing in the minds of their beholders" and "hing[ing] on consciousness" (ibid: 12, 13, 18), Cohen facilitates the conception of the Underground as a mentality, a disposition, a perception toward art and society based on social interaction. Through the usage of symbols, agents within the Underground are able to not only express meaning, but also gain the capacity to make meaning thus providing a malleable border that is subject to both space and time.

Sociology of Music

In regard to the sociology of music, I concur with Martin (1995: viii) that "the point [of the sociology of music] is not to join the partisans on one side or another of the 'mass culture debate' nor to attempt to formulate another definition of art, but to regard such debates and aesthetic conflicts as themselves a topic of discussion". In this light, the debate concerning the Underground does not rest in any meaning inherent in their music, but rather the meaning of the social context in which their music was embedded. In exploring different viewpoints of the construction of meaning within music, Martin (1995: 27) points out the empiricist notion of music viewing meaning as "inherent in [music] and so through our aural perception it is communicated to us" and the rational perspective as "the meaning of objects resides not in their ability to excite our senses, but in the nature of the means which we have to perceived". Concerning the music of the

Underground, I approach the social construction of musical meaning not from either of the aforementioned viewpoints but from the notion, as Martin (1995: 70) notes,

that the attachment of meanings to music occurs through the activities of individuals and groups as they seek to further their interests and or defend them, or seek to impose their views on others. Such struggles and negotiations are an inherent part of our everyday lives and, though they may only rarely escalate into overt conflict, they are nonetheless political.

Thus, the music of the Underground is seen as an two-fold engine in community formation: Firstly, as a performing art, it created a social and cultural space for members of the Underground to gather, meet, and mobilize through the performance ritual of concerts and rehearsals and thus coalesce into a community; and secondly, this social space socially constructed meaning in the music as a subversive cultural form.

Machovec (2006b: 11) describes music as “the one art that enabled the best gathering, being together, sharing of community life”. Music as a performed art thus provided a forum for the assembly of people of the Underground that ranged in content (poets, artists, and appreciators). While this exhibits music’s ability of mobilization *between* people, music also has the ability to mobilize ideas, values, identities, and opinions *within* a community [....](Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 11). Martin (1995: 70) illustrates music’s ability to mobilize ideas by asserting that “alternative forms of music...may be attractive precisely because they represent a rejection of established views...and seem to offer a form of resistance to established authority.”

By combing Bourdieu, Cohen, and Martin, I am able to generate a theoretical model which addresses my research at three different levels, moving from general to specific: Bourdieu conceptualizes the discursive formation of the artistic field from which

the Underground emerged; Cohen then is used to establish the boundaries of the Underground community within the artistic field; and Martin provides the analytical tools for the means of community formation, music.

Chapter 1: Transformation of the Artistic Field, 1948-1968

This chapter lays out the historical context from which the Underground movement emerged by critically examining the production and use of cultural resources and forms of agents in the artistic field and actions upon it coming from the political field. The aim is to understand the socially constructed binary of dominant/dominated positions within the artistic field and their change over time. I look to the point of emergence of differentiation in the field and the ensuing struggle of over cultural resources within by describing subversive and heterodox strategies of agents in the artistic field. I then proceed to discuss the external force of rock'n'roll, setting up the atmosphere of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia to be detailed in Chapter 2. The artistic field, from its beginning in the field of power, was one of little autonomy as a result of the heavy-handed cultural policy of the new socialist government.

1.1 The Communist Coup & Socialist Realism, 1948-1953

In February 1948, Klement Gottwald, the First Party Secretary of the Communist Party, delivered a speech which outlined the new role of artist in Czechoslovakia, stating that artists (and intellectuals) are no longer bound servants to capitalists and elite groups, but that they would now be “obliged to make their work accessible to all people, and to propagate communism through their work” (Svašek, 1996: 34). This newly installed artistic form, Socialist Realism, followed from Stalin’s depiction of the artist as “the engineer of human soul“, which sought to change the “selfish capitalist“ to a “selfless socialist man“ by combining “the theories of Pavlov with the dictates of Lenin“ (Ryback, 1990: 8).

Socialist Realism became the driving force behind artistic production in Czechoslovakia during the 1950s. The new mandate of the artist was informed by the Socialist Realist method which was laid out clearly in the magazine *The Visual Arts* (*Výtvarné Umění*) as

not wanting some kind of banality, grey, and spiritless objectivity, but on the contrary, it wants movement, colour, and the reality of objects, [...] Socialist Realism does not want to renounce [...] the poetry of reality, the poetry of life, it wants a true, more beautiful, more attractive poetry (Jícha, 1951:1 qtd in Svašek, 1996: 43).

The blind ardor and revolutionary zeal of Socialist Realism was supported by the socialist State, thus providing a dominant symbolic system for which dominant social groups could accept a hierarchy of social distinction and cultural arbitrariness of standards (Swartz, 1997: 83-86). The socialist State's buttressing of Socialist Realism is evidenced by the statement of the new direction of art by Minister of Information Václav Kopecký at the Ninth Party Congress:

The spreading of Socialist Realism, as formulated by the directive speeches of comrade Zhdanov⁶ in the resolutions of the Central Committee (...) and in Soviet discussion about questions of artistic works (Šolta, 1950: 108; qtd in Svašek, 1996: 43).

We can witness the symbolic monopoly the socialist State has within the field of power and thus their ability to impose symbolic violence upon other cultural forms not adhering to the outlines of Socialist Realism. The installation of Socialist Realism by the socialist State set up a symbolic system inaugurating the socially constructed binary of proper/improper modes of expression, which translates to dominant/dominated positions within the artistic field. Symbolic systems are the "logic of difference, of differential deviation" (Bourdieu, 1991: 237), thus built on inclusion and exclusion through cultural

⁶ Andrei A. Zhdanov was one of Stalin's chief architects in the creation of Socialist Realism and its intended fight against cosmopolitan and formalist discourse of American cultural forms (Ryback, 1990: 8).

policy (Schwartz, 197: 84). By encapsulating a binary logic of differentiation that served social and political functions, symbolic differentiation served to produce categorization in the social world upon these same lines of polarity. Bourdieu claims that (1984: 5) “at stake in every struggle over art there is also the imposition of an art of living, that is, the transmutation of an arbitrary way of living into the legitimate way of life which casts every other way of living into arbitrariness.” In other words, by subjugating American bourgeoisie art and lauding Socialist Realism, the government created arbitrary social groupings based on inclusion and exclusion. From this socially constructed binary, we see the beginning of a struggle of legitimation over artistic expression within the artistic field that would ensue until November 1989 by forthcoming politicians and cultural policy in the socialist State.

The aims of Socialist Realism along with the reforming and purging of western influence, and sanctioning of correct forms of expression were not only relegated to the visual arts. Zhdanov extended his polemics against the cosmopolitanism of American cultural forms by also denouncing jazz and criticising Soviet “predilection for and even a certain orientation toward modern, western bourgeois music, toward decadence” (qtd in Ryback, 1990: 11). Zhdanov’s offensive⁷ against western-styled music served to further exert dominant/dominated positions in the artistic field by creating a dualist nature of correct/incorrect and good/bad forms of playing and performing music, wherein music of American influence was put into a dominated position.

In the face of these aforementioned purges, condemnations, and exclusionary practices of Zhdanov, jazz musicians fought against the restrictions by arguing that jazz was not only an African American cultural form but also one of Czechoslovakia as

⁷ This was carried out in Czechoslovakia by Soviet conductor Aram Khachaturian (Ryback, 1990: 11).

corroborated by Jaroslav Ježek⁸ (Ryback, 1990: 13). The jazz musicians who engaged in the struggle of legitimation of jazz based on Ježek's legacy succeeded in part in seizing power of symbolic violence from the State in that Ježek's peices were spared official censure, while those of songs of dixieland and other jazz numbers were banned (ibid: 14). By positioning jazz as a legitimate cultural form via historical figures such as Ježek in Czechoslovakia, I hold that jazz musicians created a precedence of rhetoric from a dominated position within the artistic field, which served to create a cultural space for further subvert aesthetic forms to increase their presence in the social order in the following decades of socialist totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia.

Similar to the musical resistance put forth by jazz musicians, members of a loose underground group of authors in the 1950s, *Půlnoční autoři*⁹, proposed a heterodox aesthetic theory of writing and living, which called forth not 'poetry of life' in the Socialist Realist eye, but rather a 'poetry of embarrassment' (*trapná poezie*) or 'Total Realism' (*totalní realismus*) (Machovec, 2006; Bondy, 1990 [2006]: 53). This reactionary aesthetic form to the dominant position of Socialist Realism was based on

the point when banality as an aesthetic category begins to overlap [monstrosity] as an aesthetic category—with [...] absurd[ity] and scurril[ity] standing in between. [*Půlnoční autoři*] employ the aggressiveness of the trivial which in Czechoslovakia 1949-1953 consisted of omnipresent Stalinist fetish and slogans. (Bondy, 1990 [2006]: 57)¹⁰

Taking advantage of "Stalinist slogans" and attempting to "emulate Stalinist aesthetics" in unsuccessful embarrassment (Bondy, 1990 [2006]: 53-4), Total Realism was an

⁸ Ježek is know as the father of Czech jazz during the 1930s. He fled to America during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia (Ryback, 1990: 13).

⁹ or "Midnight Authors" (Machovec, 2001: 159). Bohumil Hrabal, Ivo Voseček and Egon Bondy were among its members.

¹⁰ Common representations of embarrassment include senility, dementia, defecation, sexual intercourse, and idiocy. It must be stated that this literary trend can be traced further back in Czech history to Jaroslav Hašek (See Sayer, 1998: p. 159) and even to the agent of the fool/jester, the 'mask of the idiot', in medieval Bohemia (Machovec, 2008b).

excluded cultural form, producing from a dominated position a struggle for legitimation of expression within the artistic field during the 1950s alongside jazz. While a generation younger than the Underground members of the 1970s, the work of *Půlnoční autoři* would be of crucial importance in struggle for legitimation of cultural forms and for providing an impulse and cultural resources for the Underground, as discussed below.

These contrastive symbolic systems—Socialist Realism/Total Realism and Non-Bourgeoisie Music/Jazz—thus served a political function in addition to an aesthetic one by reproducing “the social relations [of dominant/dominated] of which these symbolic systems are a more or less transformed expression” (Bourdieu, 1983: 314 qtd in Swartz, 1997: 86). The dominated social position of the *Půlnoční autoři* is shown as a one of “theft, vagabondage, begging, and anti-social activities of any kind” (Bondy, 1990 [2006]: 55). Moreover, the socialist State was able to reproduce these social relations by exercising its economic capital through its control over the distribution of cultural resources and infrastructure in the form of publishing houses, recording studios, and press, while *Půlnoční autoři* created an alternative economic capital through the self-publishing of texts (samizdat) initiating a cultural space of autonomy.

Similarly, when speaking about *Půlnoční autoři* providing impulse to the 70s Underground, we can trace the impulses upon those practitioners of Total Realism by looking at the cultural resources of the inter-war avant-garde, specifically the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group. Bondy was in contact with the group led by Karel Teige, but broke away from them as he “felt that the surrealist aesthetic was no longer capable of reflecting the world into which they were thrust” (Bondy, 1990 [2006]: 51). Indicative

of the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group's disposition, at their first exhibition at Prague's Manes gallery in 1935, the group proclaimed that

Art, painting, poetry, and theatrical creation and performance are not the aim, but a tool and a means, one of the ways which can lead to liberation of the human spirit and human life itself, on the condition that it identifies itself with the direction of the revolutionary movement of history (qtd in Sayer, 1998: 215).

In the forthcoming chapters, I show how the Underground's aim are articulated in striking similarity to those proposed by the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group. In other words, the Surrealists and *Půlnoční autoři* began to establish a "transposable system of schemata of perception" (Bourdieu, 1992: 126) based on their disposition of the relationship between art and literature in social life. This constitution of schemata appreciated over time within the transformed artistic field, which provided a conditioning of habitus within the excluded cultural space in the field of power to be used by rock musicians and audiences in the 60s, and later by the Underground, to decipher cultural codes.

As described above, the artistic field was thus reconfigured following the 1948 Communist coup of Czechoslovakia, which would shape further struggles of legitimation over the definition of expression along the lines of proper/improper throughout Czechoslovakia's socialist period. The socialist State, which had both the monopoly on economic and cultural capital, almost exclusively dominated the artistic field through their cultural policy of Socialist Realism allowing for little autonomy in the artistic field. The lines of dominant/dominated positions in the field are not strict and rigid but often murky and mutate over time between the dominant/dominated positions through agents and cultural forms, illustrated in the following chapters.

1.2 Stalin's Death & Rock'n'Roll, 1953 - 1968

Although the artistic field was one of austere censorship and purging, Czechoslovakia began a partial thaw on music and censorship, in trend with the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, following Stalin's death in 1953 (Ryback, 1990: 14-18). While jazz became a more accepted form of music within the artistic field by its struggles of legitimation in Czechoslovakia than before Stalin's death, a new subversive cultural form came in the shape of rock'n'roll during the late 1950s whose presence within the Eastern Bloc would have a significant effect on the rendering of the artistic field.

Rock'n'roll¹¹ flourished in Czechoslovakia, exceedingly in the latter part of the 1960s as a result of increased tumult in the struggle of power in the political field. While the Communist party under Antonín Novotný was battling against both party and civil pressure to temper state censorship in the press¹², a cultural space for rock'n'roll emerged resulting from the State's preoccupation with the aforementioned socio-political problems (Ryback, 1990: 74). At this time, specifically in Prague, there was a great presence of rock'n'roll bands, clubs, and fans developing a crucial social and cultural space in terms of apprehension of the rock cultural form and the building of audiences for the Underground to later appropriate as embodied cultural capital in the 1970s. Furthermore, Prague in the 1960s experienced a great number external influences upon the artistic field in the form of international touring acts¹³ which served to contribute to the struggle for legitimation of western music as youth were highly supportive of this music. These western performers, along with Anglo-American albums, Radio Free

¹¹ *BigBít* (Big Beat) in Czech

¹² Party members who were also authors, such as Ivan Klíma, Ludvík Vaculík, Milan Kundera and Pavel Kohout as well as Václav Havel (who was not a member of the Communist Party) began to pressure the State on censorship reform.

¹³ Such as Louis Armstrong, Manfred Mann, the Beach Boys, and Pete Seeger.

Europe broadcasts, and an increased youth culture patronizing rock'n'roll venues therefore led to the dominated position in the artistic field to gain economic capital in the form of property. The enhancement of the legitimation of rock'n'roll in the artistic field is illustrated by Czechoslovakia's educational system installing a "six-part series on modern music that included songs by the Beatles, the Shadows, Bill Haley, and Elvis Presley" (Ryback, 1990: 59).

Similarly, Paul Wilson, a Canadian teaching English in Prague during the 1960s and 1970s who in 1970 became a singer in The Plastic People of the Universe, describes the difference in censorship during the 1960s and Czechoslovakia's rock'n'roll characteristics:

One of the things that censorship [before the Prague Spring] did very badly was keep music out of the country. One of the things that was very marked in the 1960s was that although intellectuals found it very hard to get a hold of books it was very easy for kids to be right on top of things because records were brought in and the music was broadcast over Voice of America and other radio stations. So, there was a very current music scene [in Prague], with a lot of knock-off bands and a lot of fans of different groups just the way you'd find them in the West. The other thing, too, is that the Prague music scene, very early, attracted the attention of the western press, because for them the existence of rock bands in a communist country was a sign of change. (qtd in Velinger, 2005)

In addition to the external influence on the cultural confinement of the artistic field through the radio programming of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, Czechoslovakia also began their own rock radio programming in 1965. This start up of programming reflected the growing "confusion" in regard to rock music by the socialist State and exactly how to address its increasing significance in the youth population, thus

contributing to a further blurring of dominant/dominated positions in the artistic field (Ryback, 1990: 88).

Anglo-American cultural influence could not only be heard in the music of many Prague rock'n'roll bands, but also witnessed visually through individuals labeled *pásek* ("style-hunters") as they commonly wore

wide-cufed trousers, striped socks, and safari-styled jackets[,] purchas[ing] dull ties in government-run stores and paint[ing] them with bright colors or pinn[ing] American cigarette labels on them. (Ryback, 1990: 10)

This style of dress evidences an increase in embodied cultural capital of youths in Czechoslovakia by indicating their propensity to understand cultural forms; similarly, it points to the beginning of a cultivation of disposition amongst the youth toward excluded cultural forms. Thus, the borders of dominated cultural forms within the artistic field were expanding in so far as rock music was becoming an increasingly accepted style of music. As Vojtěch Lindaaur, a well-known music author, journalist, and expert on Czech rock'n'roll states, "In the late 1960s, Czech rock music was something like the best in all of Europe outside of Great Britain. In those days Czechoslovakia was known as the cradle of rock music in the Eastern Bloc" (qtd in O'Connor, 2006). For example, in 1967, Prague hosted the first National Big Beat Festival, one of three that would take place, where many bands in Czechoslovakia performed in the style of western rockers.

Ivan Jirous also describes the social space forged by the music scene in Prague during the 1960s as being "the first time [for] people who would normally not have access to art [to have] the opportunity [...]" Jirous further queries: "How else can people with similar opinions and natures get to know about each other except when they can display what they know in a relatively public forum" (1975 [2006]: 10). This social

space rested upon music as a performing art in that it allowed a point of social cohesion where youths could display their apprehension of cultural forms and contribute to socialization processes within the space. This critical social and cultural juncture, I maintain, should be viewed as a source of habitus formation of the later Underground community.

A noteworthy band at this critical juncture was The Primitives. Styled upon the American cultural form of psychedelic music, they "marked the arrival of a new phenomenon—underground music—even though it was emotionally and instinctively, rather than consciously understood" (Jirous (1975 [2006]: 11). Regarding the repertoire of cover songs, Jirous (ibid) asserts that "the performance of English and American rock by Czech groups was absolutely essential in the local scene." They remain an important part of Czechoslovakia's rock legacy precisely as "fathers of the Underground" (ibid) and who facilitated, and contributed to, the arising alternative cultural and social space.

While there were many groups simply playing repertoire of Anglo-American bands, it is also imperative to highlight that Czechoslovakia was in stride with western cultural developments¹⁴, substantiated by music experimentalist Milan Knížák¹⁵. Founder and leader of the band Aktual, Knížák was an innovator in the 60s and 70s, presenting new forms of art and music into Czech society. As early as 1965-66, Knížák began experimenting with "altered records—scratching them, burning them, painting on them, punching holes in them, cutting them apart and reassembling them, and then playing them back on a turntable." (Cox & Warner: 2004: 402). In addition to his sonic

¹⁴ One can also make similar assertions to the literature of the 1950s being in stride with the Beat generation in the USA: *Zybytky Esposu* by Bondy, 1955; the *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, 1956; *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, 1957; *Kádárový dotazník* by Bondy, 1962. (Bondy, 2006 [1990], 56)

¹⁵ Currently, Knížák is an active artist and the director of National Gallery in Prague.

investigations, Knížák was very involved with *happenings* in trend with those of Allen Ginsberg in San Francisco¹⁶, which can be seen as a precursor to many staged events of the rock bands that were to follow him.

These artistic performances throughout Bohemia became a social nuisance for the political field. Knížák was arrested several times in 1966 and transported to Prahá-Ruzyně Prison¹⁷. During this period, Knížák was able to accumulate cultural capital through his heterodox musical practices which the Underground—seeking to maximize capital—later tried to appropriate by including him in their festivals in order to enhance their social position in the artistic field. Aktual's influence on PPU was the use of their lyrics in Czech in order to better communicate ideas to their audience. Knížák, however, refused to be affiliated with the Underground stating that the Underground "looked to [him] weak and...quite stupid, and the music of PPU quite stupid and conventual" (Knížák, 2005).

Illustrated by the forms of jazz and Total Realism in the 1950s, and Knížák's projects and The Primitives in the 1960s, an alternative cultural space of resistance and subversion to artistic domination was created in the artistic field that established a social and cultural legacy from where Underground members could position themselves in the following decades to shape and mediate their actions and responses toward external influences (Swartz, 1997: 69). I argue that these responses and actions thus served to strengthen, maintain, and reproduce the Underground's position within the social order in

¹⁶ In 1965, Allen Ginsberg came to Prague for two months giving readings/lectures on his poetry, consulting Czech poets, and seminars on yoga. Ginsberg was crowned King of the Majáles by students of Charles University. Six days later he was expelled by Antonín Novotný (president of the republic 1958-1968), justified by the confiscation of his notebooks which included "unusual sex politics dream opinions" (Ryback, 1990).

¹⁷ The most repudably harsh prison in Czechoslovakia.

the field of power during the 1970s as well as laying the foundations for the cultivation of Underground habitus, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Early Underground Formation, 1968 – 1974

In this chapter, I seek to examine the early formations of what would become the Underground community and the social conditions from which it was produced. In order to do so, I continue from the historical context of rock'n'roll's popularity in Czechoslovakia and contrast it to the dramatic shift in censorship as a result of the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968. I then move on to discuss the emergence of PPU from this tumultuous year. Hand-in-hand with the start up of PPU, I will discuss the political field of post-Prague Spring and the effects of the dominant socialist State's normalization policies, specifically in regard to musicians and artists. Additionally, I briefly discuss the social positioning of the Underground through a historical trajectory of resistance. Finally, I look to the watershed event of the *Budějovická masakr* (Budějovická massacre) in 1974 as a crucial turning point and effect upon the boundaries of the Underground community and its formation.

2.1 Prague Spring

On the heels of a vibrant 1960s Czechoslovak output of music within the artistic field, Alexander Dubček replaced Antonín Novotný as head of the Communist party on January 5th, 1968. During the Prague Spring, the socialist State in the political field, which had up to this point exercised a monopoly on the species of capital distributed throughout the field of power, began to relinquish its control allowing for an increased level of autonomy in the artistic field: we can see this by the decreased levels of censorship which thus led to competitors of cultural capital to struggle without the imposition of political authority (Bourdieu, 1992: 114). Similarly, this increase in cultural capital by artists and musicians saw a proliferation of international exposure and thus a

space for converting cultural capital into both economic and social capital. For example, playwrights Pavel Kohout and Václav Havel both achieved international success for their work in theater, which increased not only their prestige and royalties, but also their social capital in the form of international contacts that would prove critical and pivotal in the steps leading to the seizing of power from the socialist State as both individuals became active in the political dissidence following Dubček's reforms.

Although a strategic agent within the political field because of his high level of social capital accumulated while living in the Soviet Union, Dubček's lifting of censure was met with displeasure from Moscow. The Soviet disapproval was exhibited dramatically by the Soviet Union and 175,000 Warsaw Pact troops from the Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany invaded Czechoslovakia on August 21st, 1968 (Ryback, 1990: 78). Following the invasion, as Kusin (1978: 17) asserts, the Warsaw Pact soldiers' interaction "with the Czechoslovak public was shaping history in a way which their masters in the Kremlin had not expected. The nation was not immediately afraid, only embittered and furious." Indicative of this fury, was the resistance and protest to the Soviet occupation, where on January 16th, 1969, 21-year-old philosophy student Jan Palach set himself on fire on Wenceslas Square in front of the National Museum. Three days later he died in hospital due to wounds from immolation. By January 23rd, at least four other young men did the same. Jan Palach still remains as a powerful symbol of non-violent resistance within the Czech Republic as evidenced by his, and the four others', memorial in Prague on Wenceslas Square.

2.2 The Plastic People of the Universe

During this time of political and social upheaval in Czechoslovakia, The Plastic People of the Universe (PPU) was formed in September 1968, wherein a majority of their members were still nineteen years old¹⁸. As The Primitives voluntarily disbanded in April 1969, PPU came to fill the cultural gap left by the band in the artistic field through assuming similar methods of performance. While they took on a dominated position within the artistic field by playing rock'n'roll, their goals were similar to those of other rock musicians at the end of the 1960s in Czechoslovakia: to secure a professional performing status within the socialist system.

Following the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops, Czechoslovakia still remained open to rock'n'roll currents as evidenced by the December 1968 second Big Beat Festival in Prague. Restrictions would not come later until the onset of normalization in 1970, as discussed below. PPU's formation derives from the socio-cultural space that was created pre-Warsaw Pact invasion by the socialist State's neglect of regulating rock'n'roll. Jirous illustrates the importance of this period of time in Prague in mid-1970s Czechoslovakia for musical group formation by asking

how can people in Czechoslovakia today [1975] form bands with a decent chance of survival when there is no spontaneous musical milieu in which they can meet, compare notes, play together, or follow their own path while being guided by their own freely felt musical sense and above all by a feeling of kinship? (Jirous, 1975 [2006], 11)

While comparing Czechoslovakia in the 1970s to the 1960s, we can see the dramatic cultural change as a result of the dramatic shift in the social space caused by the struggle of power in the political field. In other words, the closing of performance spaces in

¹⁸ At the beginning of their formation, PPU was similarly influenced by the American bands The Velvet Underground, Frank Zappa, and Captain Beefheart who were introduced to them by The Primitives.

Prague resulting from the beginning of a cultural policy shift back to Zhdanovism of the 1950s thus closed a social space. This closing of social space through exclusionary practices of the State, however, would be counteracted by the Underground drawing on cultural resources from historical trajectories of resistance as seen in their countryside concerts described below.

Before the onset of inhibiting and exclusionist cultural policy of the post-invasion political field, PPU first performed in 1969; at this time PPU was an officially recognized band¹⁹ and capitalized on the objectified cultural capital by playing state-owned instruments and using state-owned equipment (Reidel, 1997 [2001]: 15). Drawing on the social space created through performance space as described above, PPU met Ivan Martin Jirous at the festival ‘Beat Salon’ of that month, which proved significant as Jirous then became the artistic manager of the band. Jirous’ meeting, and subsequent involvement with PPU, should be considered as decisive in capital accumulation for PPU and its position at the center of the Underground’s mobilization following 1974. Jirous brought not only social capital in the form of networks amongst other musicians in the dominated sphere²⁰ but also cultural capital: as an art historian—with an inclination to Andy Warhol’s work—and a graduate of Charles University, he contributed significantly to PPU’s embodied cultural capital. Additionally, merging with PPU proved strategic for Jirous in that he could maintain, and enhance, his own social position within the artistic field with a band that was having professional success at that time.²¹

¹⁹ PPU had *zřizovatel* status with the state agency Prague Cultural Center, one of three levels of status within the Czechoslovak state’s categorization of musicians. *Přehrávký* and *zajmout umělecka činnost* were the lower categories.

²⁰ Jirous was the previous manager of The Primitives

²¹ Indicative of the relationship that would form between Jirous and PPU, bassist of PPU Milan Hlavsa describes him as “more than just our manager. He was our spiritual leader, our inspiration” (qtd in Murphy, 1982).

PPU's proceeding concerts in 1969/1970 showed a particular musical development that would illustrate PPU's usage of song/composition embedded in a social context to display their position within the field of power. Incorporating magical themes such as Celtic myths of The Mabinogion and the Mabinogi, which the "common theme of these narratives [was] the relationship between the mundane and the magical worlds, the Self and the Other" (Jirous, 1997: 246), lyrics concerning 16th century German magician Agrippa, and additionally composing a series of songs titled *The Universe Symphony*—a composition for one of each of the planets—PPU, I put forth, sought to establish a cultural space within the artistic field that provided an alternative social space from where audience members could transform everyday reality into something 'magical' or 'other-worldly' through musical performance. In doing so, PPU placed themselves in a relational artistic field with other western performers of this time initiating similar transformations of reality through music, notably African American jazz musician Sun Ra, German experimental electronic composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic, and David Bowie's alter ego 'Ziggy Stardust.'

Upon their performance of *The Universe Symphony* at Manes²² in 1969, the official press²³ described an early PPU concert:

And it is over. The room slowly empties; outside it's an ordinary evening and the ordinary world that you have left three hours ago to visit another one, and now you return to your own. All that remains is the feeling of uncertainty, a feeling that always comes after an encounter with something that lies outside you. (Anonymous, 1978:11)

²² A reputable official art gallery in Prague, site of the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group's first exhibition in 1935. See Chapter 1.

²³ Of which newspaper is unclear as it was quoted in a PPU album booklet.

This transformation of the social space through performance was done by juxtaposing Outer Space with their “present, mundane homeland” in order to “embrace a complex set of oppositions which express a fundamental contradiction” that served to, in the very least, to set in motion a diffusion of boundaries existing in the social world (Cohen, 1984: 51), which would come to play an important role within the social embeddedness of PPU’s music in the field of power and additionally within the struggle of legitimation over expression in the artistic field.

For example, in *The Merry Ghetto*, Czech philosopher Jan Patočka (1978: 53) describes the use of (outer) space in a story by Dostoyevsky as a place where people live in innocence and bliss. The representation of space recognizes an alternate social space to the extent of an utopian atmosphere: a place without earthly hindrances, where people can truly build a society based on values of truth and trust. PPU drew on the representation of space to posit an alternate space transformed by musical rituals, foreshadowing early Underground production. While the PPU used Space in this manner, the State used Space as being indicative of the primacy of socialist science, specifically illustrated by Vladimír Remek’s ascendance into space in 1978 as the first Czech, non-super power astronaut.

2.3 Normalization

While The Plastic People of the Universe’s initial formation was proving successful with young crowds in 1969, Gustáv Husák was installed to replace Dubček as the new General Secretary in December 1970 that “without the timely aid of the Warsaw Pact it would not have been able to safeguard socialism in Czechoslovakia” (Iello, 1972). After consolidating power in the 1970s, the Husák-dominated socialist State began the first

political process of normalizing Czechoslovak society. “[Normalization’s] aim [was] the reinstitution of the *status quo ante* and expiration of the liberalizing heresies of the Prague Spring 1968. Prominent among the measures of normalization has been the introduction of thorough censorship” (Ulc: 1978: 26).

Looking at normalization’s effects upon the social space, one could assert that “judging from the outward mien of Prague citizens today, one might think that the clock had turned right back to the fifties. Sullen faces are seen in the streets, frayed tempers flare up in the trams, the customer is treated as a nuisance on the assistant’s time” (Kavan, 1972). And with regard to the cultural space, “the state of culture in general is similar to that of the fifties. The propagandists have reduced the media to a form of masochism” (ibid). The political field exercised its monopoly of capital in the field of power by punishing deviance through

measures of economic hardship, i.e. demotion or termination of employment and of discrimination against the family members. The punishment of children (by being barred from higher education) for political sins of their parents is in all likelihood the most resented punitive measure in [Czechoslovakia] (Ulc, 1978: 27)

Although often considered a return to Stalinist practices of Czechoslovakia during the 1950s, normalization was characterized not by overt coercion but on the aforementioned extra-judicial socio-economic hardships. Through this exercise of symbolic power, the socialist State was able to create social discriminations between people based on the loss of cultural capital, for example, via the restriction to the educational system. Furthermore, the use of symbolic power, as Bourdieu maintains, initiates group formation in the public sphere by consecrating and instituting them where they previously existed in an implicit state (Bourdieu, 1987: 14). Therefore, I reason, the use of symbolic violence

through the restriction of cultural resources by the State's monopoly on such resources served to create conditions for an alternative cultural and social space for the Underground.

2.3.1 Requalification Exams

At this time, the State chose to focus on keeping official rock bands in line—regulating hair length and editing lyrics (Ryback, 1990: 143)—so the beginning of an underground movement began to emerge within this ignored social and cultural space. Furthermore, the State was also concerned with keeping an eye on the 'official opposition', thus not paying much attention to the growing community that would form into the Underground, which is discussed further below. At the beginning of the 1970s, early effects of normalization were felt in the artistic field by a profound closing of many music venues in Prague that provided a necessary space for musical meetings. According to Mikoláš Chadima, "rock'n'roll started to disappear from Prague because the clubs were being shut down one-by-one" (qtd in Ryback, 1990: 141). Moreover, between 1968 and 1974, 3,000 rock and jazz musicians were expelled from artistic agencies to which they needed to belong to work professionally (Ramet, 1994: 59).

Primary to the strangling of cultural forms through normalization were requalification exams for musicians. The tests were required of all musicians who wanted to play publicly and had to be taken every two years. While efforts had been made by the Husák government from 1970-1973 to curb rock's growing interest among the youth population²⁴, the exams' implementation in 1973 served to divide the musicians along boundaries of official and non-official in Czechoslovakia for the remainder of

²⁴ For example, Supraphon, the national recording label, halted or cancelled all music projects that contained too extreme of Anglo-American themes. Instead they played and recorded brass band music to ingratiate the older generation.

socialism. Requalification exams were thus an exculsionary practice²⁵ by the socialist State to limit autonomy in the artistic field setting in motion a restructuring of the artistic field back to its transformation under Stalinist influence in that it subjugated the efforts and actions of musicians in legitimating rock'n'roll as a cultural form.

Mikoláš Chadima (1997), a saxophinsit who played along the lines of legal/illegal performance for most of his career during socialism, insists that, “it became increasingly clear that our rock scene was dividing in two directions. Official, presented, from a creative viewpoint, as dead and resigned profimusicians²⁶, and unofficial, creative musicians, represented by a growing underground as well as isolated individuals” (qtd in Vanicek: 61). Chadima’s articulation of a growing hierarchy of musicians in the artistic field displays exclusion culturally translated into exclusion socially, which further substantiates the beginning of an alternative social space.

The reconfiguration of the artistic field under normalization was done by actors in the political field via music agencies from whom a musician needed to acquire a license in order to play professionally or even amatuerlly. As a state-run institution, the agencies functioned as a “censorship mechanism” that had the ability to demarcate musicians who could perform based not only on exams testing musical theory, but also on Marxism-Leninism, the presentation of the performer, the lyrical content of the music, and length of hair of the musician (Vanicek, 1997: 33-37). Chadima describes seven points a musician had to abide if they wanted to pass the exam:

First, no English band names! Second, no long hair! Third, no English texts! Fourth, be properly dressed! Fifth, don’t play music, which

²⁵ There was never an explicit law against rock'n'roll in Czechoslovakia, only measures of control or charges as disturbing the peace in order to still pacify the young generation of this time and illustrate to other countries that Czechoslovakia was not a closed society.

²⁶ For-profit musicians

is 'too wild'! Sixth, learn the rudiments of music theory! Seventh, don't argue with the adjudicators and let them inflate their ego at your expense! (qtd. in Vanicek, 1997: 47)

These seven points were tested through the agency by musical auditions, oral test of political theory, and finally a written test of western musical theory (ibid: 47-50). While there existed exams in the 1960s to determine a musicians' ability to play music, these new requalification exams also served not only to determine a musician's place in the artistic field but also within the political field in that one could not pass the exam if they did not have adequate knowledge of, for example, "the history of the worker's party...who the Minister of Culutre was...or their opinions on communism" (ibid: 49). Using education as testing-form, the State was thus using its symbolic violence of cultural capital in the education field to reproduce social order within the field of power.

2.4 Beginning of Underground Construction

Instead of boycotting the exam as did other musicians of this time²⁷, PPU willingly took the exam although did so without cutting their hair shoulder-length hair or changing their dress (Vanicek, 1997: 36). Their taking of the exam, along with other musicians of the time, served to legitmate the exams as a cultural resource and thus give further cultural capital to the State and subjugate themselves in their dominated position, accepting, momentarily, doxa in the field of power. Failing the exam²⁸ due to their morbid lyrics, PPU was required to give up state-owned equipment, illustrating the depreciating autonomy in the artistic field. Through the requalification exams, PPU lost much of its cultural, social, and economic capital it had accumulated since its formation and thus had

²⁷ Notably, Jaroslav Hutka and Vlasta Třešňák who would later join among Underground performances.

²⁸ Originally being told they passed the exam, PPU received notification two weeks following stating that their professional status had been revoked.

to formulate new actions and strategies to maintain its position within the social order, or rather, by creating an alternative cultural space free from the dictates of legitimation in the dominant arena of the artistic field.

After losing official status, PPU began to steer itself away from cover songs of American bands and grandiose arrangements as *The Universe Symphony* and started to focus on original composition. This change in musical direction was primarily the result of the addition of saxophonist Vratislav Brabenec to PPU in 1973. Brabenec, a theologian, brought influences of free improvisation as well as a second composer to the band, in addition to bassist Milan Hlavsa, who was the leader and founding member of PPU. Brabenec's improvisation began to reflect a growing disposition in the still loose formations of the Underground as

free improvisation is almost by definition outsider music, opposed to capitalist business-as-usual. Improvisers want to explore the possibility of the instant—in this space, using these instruments, with this audience [...] Free improvisation doesn't guarantee any particular sound or mood, it produces a question mark rather than a commodity. (Watson, 2004: 249)

Thus, the free improvisation of Brabenec is directly reflecting the ideal of rejection of consumer culture in the field of power²⁹ by not allowing music to be commodified. I reason that rejection of consumer culture through music further produced symbolic capital for the Underground in their alternative space: the precise lack of economic capital in the Underground can be converted into symbolic capital wherein economic gains via commodified art would clash with Underground values, thus 'art for art's sake' was seen as a symbolic gain. Moreover, improvisation illuminates a mode of

²⁹ Consumer culture grew in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s as a manner to placate the population from which many rights had been taken by the socialist State after 1968.

perception in the Underground that saw the future of Czechoslovak society as dim at best, as discussed in Chapter 3 concerning *habitus*. With increasing police pressure and tightening of Czechoslovak freedoms, improvisation should be viewed as a heterodox acceptance of the present social conditions, thus indicative of their explicit intentions not to engage with the socialist State, but rather to form a second culture thus entangling them in a struggle for legitimation over the ‘proper mode of expression’ within the artistic field.

2.4.1 Countryside Concerts

While the political field at this point had effectively taken the artistic field’s autonomy, members of PPU and Jirous, I suggest, were able to situate themselves in the field by taking advantage of a spatial, political, and social gap: Firstly, as much of the concentration on controlling musicians was contained to Prague, there opened a space of performance outside of the capital city. Away from the panoptic gaze of institutions and agents, musical performance began to occur increasingly in villages of Czechoslovakia (Ryback, 1990: 143). Here, the non-official musicians were able to gather and play festivals and thus begin to construct their own alternative cultural and social space. Secondly, the socialist State at this time, while focused on regulating the official musicians, were also set on delimiting “the ‘rightist opportunists of the Dubček period³⁰’” (Ulc, 1978: 29) thus their attention was not on controlling the newly forming alternative sphere, but rather that of the official opposition. Thirdly, the State at this time “preferred non-participation to wrong participation of the young. A spirit of...*détente* developed” (ibid) and thus allowed for youth, who had been accumulating embodied

³⁰ Most likely referring to the growing dissident movement involving former party members such as Ludvík Vaculík.

cultural capital from the 60s, to attend these concerts and performances in villages without the watchful regulation of the State.

Illuminating this early Underground formation in the countryside, Hlavsa remarked at one such gathering that “we couldn’t just shit on these people, even if we wanted to. What kind of entertainment would they have left if we would have done so?” (qtd in Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 15). The very necessity of music as a performing art to have an audience thus served as a point of gathering for a diverse group of individuals to come together; from here we can see an early structure of the Underground community being produced. I articulate this as an ‘early structure’ because the gatherings, although based on celebrating free expression and music, were not explicitly, nor consciously, formulated as a community; the Underground community described in the next chapter presupposes these events born from spatial, political, and social gaps in the field of power.

2.4.2 Historical Identity of Resistance

Through countryside musical performances based in the dominated position in society, the Underground was able to create a “presence of the past” through “present representations of the past” by the recollection and evocation of resistant and subversive figures in Czech history, which shaped the Underground’s understanding of their position in the trajectory of Bohemian opposition (Hutton, 1993: xx-xxi). From the experience of these musical rituals of performance, members of the Underground (audience and musicians) partook in an activation of Czech cultural memory: they “relied on historical narratives to provide continuity through identity” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 121). The Underground situated themselves according to several dominated positions within Czech

history which I classify according to four types, these being: ALLEGORIC POSITIONING to 19th century dissident Karel Havlíček, who was a force in the *Národní obrození*; MATERIAL POSITIONING of the writings of excluded poet/philosopher Ladislav Klíma as well as Egon Bondy; COMMEMORATIVE POSITIONING on March 15th, 1981 as acknowledgement to Nazi invasion of the Czech lands; and lastly, CORPORAL-SPATIAL POSITIONING to the evocation of the Hussite pilgrimages through musical ritual. In regard to the scope of this paper, I will focus specifically on CORPORAL-SPATIAL POSITIONING by the Underground's activation of a historically resistant identity by their social positioning to Jan Hus.

Cohen verifies the use of the past as a resource through the Underground's social positioning via the historical trajectory of cultural resistance is not something entirely innovative: communities often employ the past when faced with contemporary threats to culture (1985 [2003]: 46). The use of atavistic relations as a syncretic technique in the construction of community is seen in the Underground by the commonality of form within the Czech history of resistance. In other words, socially and culturally excluded groups in the field of power have been struggling for the form of expressive freedom over varying resources³¹. The Underground's use of contemporary music illustrates what Cohen (ibid) details as "the selective construction of the past with contemporary influences." Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasizes that positioning may allow for actors within the field to strategize their capital with other actors at 'the moment under consideration' and also as an 'evolution over time.' Thus, the perpetuation, expansion and development of the Underground are conceptualized as a dynamic process of growth based on, and I argue geared towards, an increase of capital.

³¹ Religiously – 15th century; linguistically – 19th century; and artistically – 20th century

2.4.3 Corporal-Spatial Positioning: Hussites

Regarding countryside concerts, I claim that this was a usage of cultural resources based on a social history of excluded groups that established similar strategies of action within a dominated position in the field of power. Describing one countryside concert in 1974, Jirous (1975 [2006]: 9) remarked that it “reminded us of the pilgrimages of the first Hussites in to the mountains....As soon as we came to [the village], we said, the lords—today [1970’s Czechoslovakia] the establishment—would be waiting to drive us away.” Indeed, the lords (police) were waiting and their concert was banned.

Within this musical ritual we can see the activation of the resistant figure of Jan Hus and the Hussites, with whom the Underground positioned themselves historically. Hus is a figure that opposed 15th century repression of the Catholic Church in the religious field set a resistant precedence of exclusion for further agents to use as a cultural resource. Signifying the symbolic capital of Hus, Ladislav Saloun (1998), sculptor of the Jan Hus monument in the center of Prague’s Old Town Square, stated that “Hus signifies for the Czech Nation a vehement, irreconcilable struggle or at least an unceasing strife with the world around” (qtd in Sayer:138-139). Saloun’s description is not dissimilar to Jirous’ vociferations about the Underground’s mental struggle against the socialist State, which thus led Jirous to describe the consequences of the Hussites similar to the banned concerts of the Underground.

The Underground were thus able to draw on this history and produce a facet of resistant identity specific to the Czech lands and its history of occupation³². Comparing themselves to past figures, the Underground were able to enhance their position in the social order. As a result of their lack of economic capital or social capital through, for

³² As illustrated particularly by Hapsburg, Nazi, and Soviet occupation.

example, a diploma or educational credential, the Underground's placement in the historical trajectory of a field of power produced symbolic capital for the Underground. Furthermore, the Underground agents became resisters using cultural forms and resources as capital in order to subvert orthodox strategies of the socialist State labeling them as "long-haired neurotic drug addicts and mental cases" (Wilson, 1983 [2006]: 44) by producing knowledge alternative to the State discourse and reframing themselves within their national history.

2.5 *Budějovická masakr*

To further exemplify the spatial, political, and social gaps in countryside concerts, and to point to the primary watershed moment of the first period of the Underground, I look to the *Budějovická masakr* (Budějovická massacre), occurring on March 30th, 1974 (Ryback, 1990: 143). The rock concert event was to take place in the village of Rudolov near the town of Česká Budějovice in south Bohemia. While other concerts in the countryside had gone on uninterrupted³³, police and soldiers raided the concert site where violence ensued just before many unofficial bands, including PPU, were set to perform. As Ryback (1990: 144) explicates, "police jammed several hundred youth into a waiting railway car and shipped them back to Prague. Six young people were imprisoned and many others expelled from school and not permitted to take their exams". Following the 'massacre' only two other performances of PPU took place in 1974 and signaled a move to a distinctively closed Underground community resulting from requalification exams excluding musicians and coercive police pressure. The boundaries produced between the dominated positions of non-official performers and officially licensed musicians thus

³³ For example, in the towns of Ledeč and Suchá

became more discrete and allowed for a consciousness of the Underground to be formed,
as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Canonization of the Underground 1974-1976

In the following chapter, I exam the shift in the Underground from a loose network of individuals to a definitive community that coalesced from a social and cultural space created in early 1970s Czechoslovakia into a relatively autonomous alternative space for artistic expression. By looking at the relational existence to the socialist State within the field of power, I seek to illustrate that the Underground was not only defined through spatial boundaries as a result of social exclusion, but also existing as a disposition toward life in Czechoslovakia, thus exhibiting malleable symbolic boundaries. Additionally, this chapter briefly looks at the exchange of capital with other structurally homologous groups within the field of power, specifically the dissidents.

3.1 Canonization of the Underground

Cohen (1984) posits that “symbolic boundaries [of a community] increase in importance as the actual social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred, or weakened.” Illustrated by the excluded position in the field of power the non-official musicians of the Underground occupied by 1974, they began to assert and articulate a clear set of boundaries between their philosophy of music in stark contrast to those put forth by the dominant position in the field of power. Jirous states this difference: “[a] musician’s responsibility [is] to play the kind of music that his conscience tells him to play and that gives him pleasure, for this is the only way he can share his creative joy with the audience,” in comparison to those who “surrendered to the demands of the establishment in exchange for the right to play publicly music [...] thus making it impossible for them to be truly creative” (Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 15). This binary distinction follows what

Bourdieu (1992: 74) asserts as “what exist[s] in the social world are relations,” thus, as Newtonian physics could not exist without Cartesian science, the Underground could not exist without the State; the two were inextricably linked.

In direct opposition to the official culture of the socialist State who “turn their hatred and suspicion against” people such as those of the Underground, Jirous further describes the excluded artists of the Underground as simply people who “stubbornly refuse to let their art be used in any other way than to celebrate those, who with the artists, wish to live in truth” (Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 10). The symbol of ‘truth’, being an object of struggle for legitimation within the field of power, is imbued with meaning from the Underground as freedom and necessity of expression. For the Underground, this need to express, instead of the “commercial sea of mental poverty” of the official bands (ibid: 12), was an imperative for the community.

The Underground’s community tenet and definition of truth becomes problematic as a result of the initial binary of ‘proper/improper modes of expression’ created within the artistic field in the 1950s, which were re-installed by the socialist State. This problematic ultimately becomes a front upon which the Underground struggle for power against the socialist State in that it can be seen as the site of symbolic violence in the field of power. Each group in the artistic field wished to define aesthetically what ‘true expression’ was in order to do symbolic violence to the other, which I describe below.

3.1.1 Formation of Habitus

Critical in theorizing the practice and strategic action Underground members in the artistic field, I look to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. As described above, the Underground is a multi-faceted, diverse community consisting of “Christians and radical

Marxists, feminists and environmentalists, pacifists, rockers, folk singers, painters, samizdat publishers and poets, drug-addicts and teetotalers” (Machovec, 2006b: 1) all based on a similar mental attitude toward art and life and additionally on loose geo-structures, as provided by musical performances. Although having a rich variety of colorful members, the Underground was disproportionately of working class background. A *Statní Bezpečnostní*³⁴ report (Šimák, 1983: 44) describes the socio-make-up of the Underground as

30% come from secondary schools, 40% are working youth, 10% university youth, and 15% others with only the basic education: soliders, clerks. In this wide range, some individuals stand out as so-called starter/leader-types. 90% they recruit from socially and morally disturbed people: broken marriages, unsettled families, and thus try to compensate for the insufficient attention from parents/families.

Bondy (1991) notes similarly that Underground members were “workers. From trains, from tractors. The hardest work. Manual labor,” however, “almost no students were among the Underground” (qtd in Steinhart: 4). The worker background is further echoed by the Underground band Umělá Hmota who came from “simple working-class families who did not even complete the basic level of education” (Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 27). Therefore, a similar socio-economic background assumes a class-specific socialization as a “structuring structure” in that external structures were internalized and thus shaped the action, perception, and disposition of Underground members.

As mapped out above, the appreciation of habitus also occurred in cultural spaces such as those beginning in the early 1950s: disposition to rock’n’roll began to be cultivated by youths learning, and being socialized, as to how to apprehend these new cultural forms, which were transmitted intergenerationally from *Půlnoční autoři*, jazz,

³⁴ *StB*, State Police of Czechoslovakia

and groups as The Primitives. This mode of perception thus served as a resource for the Underground's symbolic construction of community in that members were able to apprehend these forms based on habituation over time and meaningfully negotiate them for shared use in the project of community formation. Similarly, this appreciated habitus, having been established through preceding conditioning, constituted the community as "a meaningful world...endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one's energy" (Bourdieu, 1992: 127). The perceived reality of the Underground, therefore, must be conceptualized through socio-economic socialization by education and families, as well as appreciated through the excluded cultural space within the field of power thus allowing for the use of a shared set symbols based on the Underground's definition of the proper mode of expression.

A question arises as to why the Underground had a high concentration of workers and why was rock'n'roll at the center of this formation. Bourdieu (1984: 18) answers this by asserting that "nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music." In this light, music is seen as a vector of habitus, encapsulating and symbolizing identity and class³⁵. Moreover, the dire outlook of normalized Czechoslovak life presented a choice for those working-class individuals: continue working and accepting the fundamental order of doxa or choose a life underground. Those who chose the latter ultimately saw advantages that life in the Underground could offer by not legitimating the economic and social inequality in the field of power; being part of the Underground additionally allowed for a set of relations that provided security and protection: if wrongly persecuted by the socialist State, an

³⁵ I do not wish, though, to generalize the music of the Underground as only deriving from rock origins; indeed, the musicians had influences ranging as far as from composer Edgar Varése to free-jazz pioneer Albert Ayler.

Underground member could rely on the community to publicize the penalty locally, nationally, and internationally when possible³⁶. Importantly, however, this journey by individuals to an alternate space within the field of power included putting at stake many cultural resources, such as accepting the loss of potential economic capital and consumer comfort for a life steeped in artistic expression and rejection of the official culture.

3.2 Symbolic Boundaries

Concerning relational organization to the socialist State, the Underground was staunchly opposed to the idea of defining themselves in such terms. In Jirous' (1975 [2006]: 20) own words, "to define ourselves as anti-establishment would drive us into the arms of the establishment". Contradictorily, in the same essay, Jirous makes many references to the Underground's relationship to the socialist State: the Underground's purpose is to destroy the establishment through their attitude (ibid, 30); to struggle against the establishment through their way of living (ibid); and that "[the socialist State] wants nothing to do with us and we don't want anything to do with [it] (ibid)." Indeed, a relational existence based on binary opposition produced through the symbolic system of art is evidenced by Jirous, even if he denies this relation. Thus, in order to make sense of what precisely was the boundary between the State and the Underground, we must read his claim that 'the Underground is not anti-establishment' as being that it does not wish to engage in a critical dialog with the State, as do the dissidents, but rather seek change through the building of their own alternative space.

Czechoslovak alternative culture scholar and former Underground member Martin Machovec describes this alternative space:

³⁶ Canadian Paul Wilson, former member of PPU, often led international petitions for the release of imprisoned members. Additionally, following 1976, VONS (Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted) also contributed to this protection.

revolt was not based on any a priori spiritual, mental attitude³⁷ but on a mostly unconscious, unreflective aim of preserving the undistorted, authentic cultural values, values of authentic art and literature, but also, and more generally, the authentic values of human life, a life that is open to all spiritual influences and faces all rigidity and dogmatic inflexibility in an word, establishing the space of freedom in the overwhelming totalitarian world of the unfree. (2006b: 7)

Machovec's description therefore provides critical insight into how the Underground formed their action strategically against the socialist State based on their aforementioned relational boundary in that I frame the "unconscious, unreflective aim" as being indicative of misrecognition and thus essential in the creation of symbolic capital; this capital would later be used in exchange with the dissidents (Bourdieu, 1990: 118). The Underground's action was strategic in that the pursuit of the community was not to overthrow the regime or change the system politically, rather, as noted by Machovec, their intention was to create an alternative space for free expression. This state of alterity then served as misrecognizing the significant social and political ramifications it had over time.

The assertion that the Underground's pursuit was not to seize power from the State may seem contradictory to Jirous' statements that their purpose was to "destroy the regime" (1975 [2006]: 30). Even though Jirous became a pseudo spiritual leader for the Underground, it mustn't be reduced to only his claims; thus, within the Underground, we can see a push and pull of power over the very definition and purpose of the Underground. Primarily, this is corroborated by Hlavsa and Brabenec's (qtd in Cameron, 2003) continual claim that they only wanted to play music, that was all: "Our position was that we didn't want to be dissidents, and be 'on the other side of the barricades'. We were being ourselves. They were our expressions, our ideas, but we didn't want to fight

³⁷ In disagreement with Jirous view that in fact it was a spiritual, mental attitude.

openly against the Communist regime." Furthermore, this struggle over purpose within the Underground community is conveyed by the song "100 Points" (*Sto Bodů*), whose lyrics describe one hundred points of which the socialist State is afraid³⁸. Brabenec states that "100 Points" had been a mistake as they were never into protest songs (qtd in Wilson, 1982), however, Jirous (1978: 56) describes the song as being, without doubt, the respresentation of the "synthesis of the group's entire previous output," suggesting a pinnacle in their performance. The distinction between these agents in the Underground community is based upon their struggle between form and function: Brabenec and Hlavsa subordinate function to form in that they maintained a "'pure' aesthetic gaze", while Jirous saw music, indeed culture, as an opportunity to challenge the socialist State (Storey, 1993: 188-189).

3.2.2 Festivals of the Second Culture

The beginning of the distinction in symbolic boundaries within the artistic field appears through the Underground's newly-formed method of performance following the police aggression at Česká Budějovice. In September 1974, members of the Underground staged the 'First Festival of the Second Culture'; the festival was the first in a series of three concerts³⁹ that were privately performed as a wedding celebration⁴⁰. Staged through these weddings, the concerts took on a shape of an 'invitation-only' event. On one hand, this distinguished a clear community of individuals contributing to an alternative space of new symbolic status to which they alone could participate by denying the legitimacy of

³⁸ For example, "They fear the free flow of information/They fear Jan Hus/They fear this evening/They fear their families/They fear democracy/They fear socialism/So why do we fear them?"

³⁹ Those being the First (1974), Second (1976), and Third Festivals (1977) of the Second Culture.

⁴⁰ Under Czechoslovak code, couples getting married were able to book their own form of entertainment, and thus provided site for Underground bands to play.

the symbolic arenas in the field of power. On the other hand, the Underground shouldn't be diminished in terms of structural membership to only individuals who participated in these festivals; the Underground also sought to define a disposition to the socialist State, whom anybody could be included. Bourdieu (1992: 104) explains that "every field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself". Indeed, within the artistic field, boundaries of the Underground were encompassing many non-official musicians by their endorsement of freedom of expression, although they did not overtly participate in Underground events. For example, another loose group of folk-protest musicians existed at this time including Jaroslav Hutka and Vlasta Třešňák⁴¹, who could be considered Underground in a sense that they were 'truly expressing' and eventually the pair performed at the Third Festival of the Second Culture in 1977; Jirous (1978: 52) describes Hutka/Třešňák's journey to the Underground as having been "pushed to the so-called bottom of society where everything that is vital in Czech culture has gradually come together in a rare unity". Additionally, even some official musicians could be included in the Underground: Hlavsa remarks that official classical/folk/experimental musician Iva Bittová could be considered Underground because she adheres to the definition of someone who is true to their music (Vanicek, 1997: 86).

However, even though we can witness relational, non-absolute boundaries established by the Underground, the boundaries were not entirely flexible. There existed distinct borders in the relationship between the Underground and that of other unofficial organizations⁴² as shown by the "clearly formulated standpoints [of artistic expression by

⁴¹ Mentioned in the previous chapter as two musicians who boycotted the requalification exams.

⁴² For example, private philosophy lecturers and Christian writers

the Underground community] so radically distant from the official views” (Machovec, 2006b: 9). Thus, although the Underground existed to some extent as a spatial community in that people gathered around musical performances, it also served to connect—or alienate—people through their beliefs⁴³. As Underground member Petr Cibulka affirms,

It wasn't a place. It was a relationship with people, with whom I felt better than with other people. It was people who had similar values to mine, which mainly consisted of refusing that which we didn't want. It was people who distanced themselves from the official communist world through the way they lived and through their activities...through this, a certain space was created, in which relationships were totally different (qtd in Vanicek, 1997: 86).

Cibulka clearly affirms the relational boundaries of the Underground as internally being between people, and externally to that of the socialist State. These relations then produced an alternative space within the excluded position in the artistic field structured upon the appreciated habitus of its members creating a set of negotiated symbols based on ‘refusing that which we didn’t want’.

3.3.1 Struggles for Legitimation

Returning to Egon Bondy, whose poems first published through samizdat and used as a subversive aesthetic to Socialist Realism in the 1950s, the poet became a crucial figure within the Underground when he encountered PPU’s music at a performance in a “worker’s club in 1972” (Wilson, 1983 [2006]: 41). At this particular concert, Bondy heard the music and asked PPU to use his poems in their music, thus signaling a new impulse upon the Underground: Bondy, as an agent from the artistic field in the 1950s, allowed for PPU to appropriate the cultural resources and legacy established by *Půlnoční*

⁴³ Membership in the underground had to possess certain attributes and characteristics such as rage, humility, and uncompromising artistic expression (Jirous, 1975 [2006]: 29).

autoři in reaction to Socialist Realism and thus able to accumulate symbolic capital. Subsequently, this change within the content of the music signals an entry point into the struggle for legitimation over proper/improper modes of expression, which situated the Underground further into an excluded position within the social order in the field of power via the symbolic system of art. PPU's usage of Bondy's Total Realist heterodox poems as lyrics is exemplified in the song *Zápca* (Constipation):

Oh how plagued and tormented am I
by constipation terribly kind but sly
In my belly a hard stone turns
in my bladder a flame burns
My bowels are rotting I sense
or like a lump of dung they're dense
From my lips gases exude
and thick liquids at times are spewed
Oh how plagued and tormented am I
by constipation terribly kind but sly
(Riedel, 1997 [2001]: 57)

This particular song appeared on the album “Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned”, which included a collection of Bondy's poems put to the compositions of PPU. Not released until 1978 in France⁴⁴, “Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned” was first recorded illegally at the First Festival of the Second Culture as well as in a small castle in 1974 and signals the production of economic capital within an autonomous artistic sphere that the Underground were creating. Notably, the album contained a booklet named *The Merry Ghetto* describing and depicting Underground culture and furthering solidifying and recognizing a consciousness of the community by its members.

Jirous, whose many writings appear in *The Merry Ghetto*, was also a prominent user of Total Realism, describing the state-defined vulgarities in his poetry as the ‘simple

⁴⁴ The recording was smuggled out of the country unbeknownst to members of PPU, pressed in England, and later released through SCOPA International records.

expressions of the truth of life and the position of man in the world....[that] is never done as an end in itself, or as a means of provocation,” (1979: 7). PPU, Bondy, and Jirous became the main actors in forming the subversive aesthetic in the Underground that established a passive attack against the socialist State not through overt condemnations or requests⁴⁵ but through music as a cultural resource.

3.4 Trial of 1976 & Charta 77

The Underground’s aforementioned subversive aesthetic opposition to the dominant position within the artistic field eventually led to a trial of four members in 1976, being charged for vulgarism for such lyrics as in *Zápca*, which were declared "anti-socialist[...]extolling nihilism, decadence, and clericalism“ (Ryback, 1990: 147). The arrests followed the 'Second Festival of the Second Culture', which took place on February 2nd, 1976 to celebrate the wedding of Ivan Jirous. Although the concert went on without any disturbance⁴⁶, police struck a month later on March, 17th by raiding apartments and arresting twenty-two people in Prague related to the Underground (Ryback, 1990: 146). Subsequently, "Ivan Jirous was sentenced to 18 months, Pavel Zajíček from DG 307 to one year and Vratislav Brabenec to 8 months in jail” (Reidel, 1997 [1999]: 15). The musicians were found guilty of *vytrsnictví*, usually translated as rowdyism or hooliganism on the basis of Article 202 of the Penal Code (Ulč, 1974: 29). From this excluded position in the artistic field, these Underground members, sentenced to varying lengths of prison sentences, indicated the social exclusion translated through the symbolic system of art.

⁴⁵ See Havel’s “An Open Letter to Dr. Husák” for such direct dialog.

⁴⁶ The festival started at 15.30 and lasting until 2.00 the following morning

During the 1976 trial of members of the Underground, Havel was present and thus saw their persecution as a strike against the human rights of all Czechoslovak citizens. From this impulse of the Underground, the dissidents created *Charta 77* on 1 January 1977, which called on the Czechoslovak government to uphold the human rights covenant inscribed the Helsinki Accords it had signed in 1975⁴⁷. The trial led to the critical involvement of the dissidents of Czechoslovakia in the Underground, forming a loose network of diverse individuals from both the Underground and the ‘established’ opposition to mix and form an opposed front to the socialist State (Havel, 1986 [1990]: 126-128).

While existing separately in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s, we can see through Bourdieu how the dissidents became involved with the Underground and co-opted their historical identity for the dissidents’ own struggle in the political field between them and the socialist State. Similarly, the Underground was able to then draw on the social and economic capital of the dissidents, who had international contacts⁴⁸ as well as an organized system of relations within Czechoslovakia. The merger was built upon *Charta 77*, which allowed a political platform for Underground signatories of the *Charta* to challenge the State and seemed, in the first years of the *Charta*, to ensure the reproduction of the Underground.

I read the Underground and the Dissidents as structurally homologous in that they both occupied a dominated position in their respective fields. As Bourdieu (1992: 106) describes, between fields, “each has its dominant and it’s dominated, its struggles for

⁴⁷ “The Participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.” *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Final Act Helsinki 1975*.
<http://www.osce.org/item/4046.html>

⁴⁸ For example Heinrich Boll

usurpation and exclusion, its mechanisms for reproduction, and so on". The artistic field, based upon the socially constructed binary opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, which has a specific ideological function that is structurally homologous to, and affects, the political field (ibid). This homology of structure acted as a basis for the separate groups, embedded in separate fields, to merge relations and exchange capital, all primarily done through music as a symbol of commonality, thus allowing two structurally homologous groups to accumulate different species of capital from each other in order to increase and enhance their social positions of exclusion within the field of power.

I put forth that the creation of *Charta 77*, and the Underground's involvement therein, eventually polarized the Underground community, even though we see a great number of Underground members signing the *Charta*. Similarly, Machovec (2006b: 16) asserts that as *Charta 77* was "dominated by the prominent dissidents, intellectuals, latent political opposition leaders pursuing their own aims...the spiritual and artistic plurality [of the Underground] was subsequently diminished within the [*Charta*] community." The alternative social and cultural space of the Underground community thus began a slow erosion and mutation in the following years up to 1989, characterized by increased levels of police interrogation⁴⁹, forced emigration⁵⁰, internal exile, extended prison sentences⁵¹, and the break up of the PPU. By politicizing the Underground and using its members as willing signatories, *Charta 77*'s unstated political function, seizing power

⁴⁹ Notably the 'Asanace' campaign

⁵⁰ Pavel Zajíček, Svatopluk Karásek, Vratislav Brabenec, Jiří Nemec, Zbynek Benýšek, Vlasta Třešňák, Eugen Brikcius, Josef Vondruška, Karel "Tomcat" Havelka, Miroslav Skalický, Charles "Charlie" Soukup, Zdenek "London" Vokatý (Machovec, 2008: 10)

⁵¹ For example, "Jirous was imprisoned in the years 1977-79, 1981-85 and 1988-89, and in the years 1985-87 was placed under 'protective supervision'" (ibid).

from the socialist State, was eventually successful as evidenced by the first free elections in Czechoslovakia in January 1990.

Conclusion

The analytical power of Bourdieu's sociology allows for an intricate analysis of the artistic field in Czechoslovakia that not only regards the social construction of binary differentiation in cultural forms, but also how this dichotomy led to polarization, subjugation, and inequality within the social order. This is exemplified by non-official musicians, such as those in the Underground, producing and retreating into an alternative cultural and social space from where they created their own set of social and artistic values, thus converting depreciated capital into capital of worth. In other words, this cultural space that created a pocket from which an Underground was produced through music served to establish a symbolic site where individuals could create their own structure of values that could not be undermined by the dominant position of the socialist State within the field of power.

As shown in my paper, the creation of an alternative space produced symbolic boundaries of the Underground community, which in turn served to organize members based upon the contested symbol of expression. The struggle over proper/improper modes of expression was primarily centered on music; in this paper the music of the Plastic People of the Universe was specifically regarded. The performance of subversive music embedded in the field of power defined as the Czechoslovak nation-state allowed for excluded forms of music to serve as a social activity from where the Underground first began to produce their community and subsequently solidify it, as shown by the Festivals of the Second Culture. Therefore, the symbolic boundaries of the Underground, described both spatially and idealistically, helps to solve the problem of inclusivity and exclusivity in community formation.

Furthermore, the paper sought to describe historically the building and accumulation of capital through subversive cultural forms and resources and how these were used throughout generations of excluded individuals in Czechoslovakia by their appropriation, manifestation and development of such forms. In particular, excluded cultural forms of music and literature were examined by looking to the transformation of the artistic field of Czechoslovakia in 1948 under the dictates of Socialist Realism. As explicated, historical uses of cultural forms allowed for the Underground to enhance their social situation in the social order through social positioning; this positioning through art provides wider questions about the nature of symbolic systems of art replicating and reproducing themselves in social contexts other than where they emerged. The early production of subversive cultural forms before 1968 and its effect upon the formation of the Underground community, is one that is not examined fully in the literature concerning the artistic field in Czechoslovakia, and thus my research serves to add to this body of scholarship.

This thesis is only but a small representation of the rich sociological opportunities of investigation found within the narrative of the Underground community. Choosing to delimit my study only until the Underground's mergence with the dissidents in 1977, allows at once a fitting historical point for closure on the Underground's community formation while also providing a jumping off point for studying the subsequent effects of *Charta 77* upon the perpetuation of the community. Additionally, further studies of the construction of the Underground community as a case study following 1977 allow regard to questions of the relationship between subversive cultural forms and revolutions across Eastern Europe in 1989.

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