

# ¡QUE VIVA LA MÚSICA!: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUBCULTURAL DISCOURSE OF ROCKERS AND SALSEROS IN ANDRÉS CAICEDO'S NOVEL\*

¡QUE VIVA LA MÚSICA!: UN ANÁLISIS DEL DISCURSO SUBCULTURAL DE ROCKEROS Y SALSEROS EN LA NOVELA DE ANDRÉS CAICEDO

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\* **Cómo citar este artículo:** Cómo citar este artículo: Fehringer, M. A. (2023). *¡Que viva la música!: An Analysis of the Subcultural Discourse of Rockers and Salseros in Andrés Caicedo's Novel. *Estudios de Literatura Colombiana* 53, pp. 97-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.elc.352693>*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the subcultural discourse within Andrés Caicedo's works, primarily focusing on the novel *¡Que viva la Música!* and the short story "El atravesado". Through the application of Williams' "structure of feeling" and subcultural theory, informed by Hebdige, it fills a significant gap by examining the various notable practices of the depicted subcultures. It uncovers their transformative potential in recontextualizing meaning and challenging dominant social norms, highlighting the influence of collective experiences and a transcendent sensibility that prioritizes affect over intellect. This research represents an initial step towards a deeper understanding of Caicedo's writings within the subcultural framework.

**Keywords:** Subculture; Structure of Feeling; Caliwood; Signifying practices; Caicedo; Rockero; Salsero.

**Resumen:** Este artículo explora el discurso subcultural dentro de las obras de Andrés Caicedo, centrándose en la novela *¡Que viva la Música!* A través de la aplicación del structure of feeling y la teoría subcultural, llena un vacío significativo al examinar las distintas prácticas significantes de las subculturas descritas. Descubre su potencial transformador de recontextualizar el significado y desafiar las normas sociales dominantes, destacando la influencia de las experiencias colectivas y de una sensibilidad que prioriza el afecto sobre el intelecto. Esta investigación representa un paso inicial hacia una comprensión más profunda de Caicedo dentro del marco subcultural.

**Palabras clave:** Subcultura; Estructura del sentimiento; Caliwood; Prácticas significantes; Caicedo; Rockero; Salsero.

**Editores:** Andrés Vergara-Aguirre,  
Christian Benavides Martínez

**Recibido:** 15.02.2023  
**Aprobado:** 23.05.2023  
**Publicado:** 31.07.2023

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## Introduction

Despite his youth, Andrés Caicedo Estela (Cali, 1951-1977) devoted himself with unwavering determination to the creation of a remarkable body of literary work and film criticism. The sheer quality and depth of his output evoked a bittersweet yearning for the potential masterpieces that could have emerged had he been granted a longer creative tenure. It seems a poignant realization, a sense of unfulfilled promise, as if we are left with only a glimpse of what could have been. However, indulging in such notions is to misconstrue the true essence of Caicedo's artistry. His literary productions, firmly established as some of the most significant Colombian works of the 20th century, stand as a testament to their maturity and enduring value. Caicedo's narrative plots capture the lives of adolescent protagonists who are driven by an intense longing for heightened experiences, which they actively pursue through a steadfast commitment to hedonistic indulgence, rebellion and a rejection of societal constructs imposed by their parents. While contemporary literary criticism acknowledges Caicedo's remarkable literary techniques, such as his skillful incorporation of intertextual references spanning song lyrics, street jargon, cinema, and literature, as well as his construction of a metafictional universe where characters such as "El atravesado" or Antígona from "Noche sin fortuna" reappear as Bárbaro and María del Carmen Huerta in *¡Que viva la música!*, this paper seeks to provide a novel perspective that has been lacking in previous analyses. This research delves into the subcultural dimensions of the salseros and rockeros depicted in Andrés Caicedo's works, primarily focusing on *¡Que viva la música!* and to a lesser extent, the short story "El atravesado" (referred to as "El atravesado" hereafter). By examining Caicedo's writings through the lens of subcultural theory, particularly influenced by Raymond Williams' concept of "structure of feeling" and Dick Hebdige's insights, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subcultural frameworks within which these characters operate. It investigates the profound impact of their signifying practices, emphasizing their creative efforts to transform and recontextualize signs and meaning, ultimately challenging prevailing social norms.

### Subculture and Structure of Feeling: Analyzing "the voice of a generation"

Anouck Linck (2018) eloquently states:

Andrés Caicedo no vivió mucho tiempo pero sí vivió con una rara intensidad. Sabido es que buscó incansablemente ensanchar por diferentes medios —la escritura no es sino uno de ellos— su capacidad de "sentir". Si formulamos esto de otra manera, diciendo por ejemplo que Caicedo buscó mediante

múltiples experiencias explorar modos de consciencia no intelectivos, la analogía con la contracultura salta a la vista (pp. 32-33).

Despite her distinct analytical perspective, it is worth highlighting that Anouck Linck's observation, though influenced by Theodore Roszak's concept of "counterculture," holds substantial significance and provokes thoughtful consideration, particularly in relation to the notion of the "structure of feeling." Williams' concept represents an endeavor to elucidate the role of emotions within culture. Initially developed and applied in the analysis of literature, Williams (1975) perceived the structure of feeling as a discernible expression that permeates the literature of a particular period, encompassing both high art and popular fiction. However, it also signifies a broader cultural possession or presence. Describing it as "the felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time," (p. 47) Williams highlights the significance of the subjective experience. He delves into the realm of emotions, highlighting that the structure encompasses "feeling much more than thought — a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones" (Williams, 1979, p. 159), and emphasizes the affective aspect rather than mere cognitive processes. In contrast to the dominant consciousness of an era, which is often codified in doctrines and legislation, Williams sought to incorporate the experiential outcomes of living within a specific social and cultural milieu into historical and theoretical discourse. He distinguishes between the knowledge derived from an era's institutions and social structures and a deeper understanding of its emotional dynamics and relationships. Therefore, he highlights the crucial importance of granting credibility to individuals who have personally lived through specific events or states of being, as it contributes to a comprehensive understanding of cultural identity formation. According to Williams, this credibility rests on the notion that those who directly experience something and emotionally recognize it are better qualified to articulate and represent it. His understanding of experience extends beyond individual subjectivity, recognizing the interplay between social formations and individual existences. Lived experience, therefore, emerges from the interaction between the individual and the social rather than existing solely in a hypothetically separate realm. In this context, artists and writers play a significant role by reflecting upon and exploring facets of existence like feelings of isolation or alienation, which serve as powerful manifestations of prevailing social conditions. It becomes apparent that "structures of feeling" refer to the organizing processes that both constrain and suggest the ways in which individuals

express their emotions within specific temporal and spatial contexts. By acknowledging and engaging with these structures, artists and writers offer valuable insights into the complexities of human experience and the broader social landscape. In this context, both *¡Que viva la música!* and “El atravesado” can be regarded as exceptional literary testaments of an author that sought to unravel the illusions of society and the world that enveloped him and vividly captured the “structure of feeling” prevalent among the youth in Cali during the 1960s and 1970s, offering profound insights into the emotional and social landscape experienced by the young protagonists, whose rebellious path ultimately results in confinement, emptiness, and self-destruction, or as María del Carmen Huerta puts it:

Tú haz aún más intensos los años de niñez recargándolos con la experiencia del adulto. Liga la corrupción a tu frescura de niño. Atraviesa verticalmente todas las posibilidades de precocidad. Ya pagarás el precio: a los 19 años no tendrás sino cansancio en la mirada agotada de capacidad de emoción y disminuida la fuerza de trabajo. Entonces bienvenida sea la dulce muerte fijada de antemano. Adelántate a la muerte, precísale una cita. Nadie quiere a los niños envejecidos. Solo tú comprendes que enredaste los años para malgastar y los años de la reflexión en una sola torcida actividad intensa. Viviste al mismo tiempo el avance y la reversa (Caicedo, 1977, p. 102).

In accordance with Williams’ theoretical framework, Caicedo’s literary work can be understood as a demystifying portrayal, the voice of a generation’s moods, emotions, and atmosphere that are seen as social and historical phenomena beyond the confines of ideological metanarratives. It provides a unique perspective on the world through the lens of contemporary youth, capturing the *affective* mechanisms of society, class, and culture shaped by their individual experiences, memories, and temporal context, as well as their collective beliefs and values, offering nuanced insights into the multifaceted tapestry of their lived realities:

Todos pertenecemos a lo mismo, todos hemos tenido las mismas oportunidades, qué le vamos a hacer si nos tocó la época en la que somos eternos seducidos y luego abandonados, las moscas no nos buscan porque ya han inventado un incienso que huele a cereza y miles de perfumes para la rumba. No me gusta que demos imagen de gente que pierde, que no sabe en qué clase de juego se metió (Caicedo, 1977, p. 49).

As a result of the collective experience of María del Carmen and Cali’s doomed youth —“eternos seducidos y luego abandonados”— a distinguished “way of life” arises, characterized by unique subcultural manifestations and signifying practices. These expressions are prominently depicted in *¡Que viva la música!* among the “salseros” and “rockeros.” It is therefore through the analysis of their specific subcultural signifying practices that we can delve deep into the “structure of feeling” of the salseros and rockeros, revealing profound insights into their distinct realities, as we will explore in

the following sections. However, prior to embarking on an analysis of the subcultural discourse in Caicedo's body of work, it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of the term itself.

The term "subculture" is a subject of ongoing debate, as delineating its boundaries and differentiating it from other social formations proves challenging. As Thornton bluntly points out: "What is a subculture? What distinguishes it from a community. And what differentiates these two social formations from the 'masses', the 'public', 'society', 'culture'?" (Gelder & Thornton, 1997, p. 1). Studying subcultures involves attempts to map the social world, which inherently involves representation and construction. The emergence of subcultural analysis can be traced back to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in the 1970s. It initially interpreted subcultural style as resistance against class subordination and a means of marginalized symbolic communication. However, feminist (McRobbie, 2000), discourse analytical (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995), and postmodernist (Muggleton, 2000) perspectives have criticized and modified this concept, leading to alternative notions such as 'neo-tribes' (Maffesoli, 1996), 'lifestyles' (Chaney, 2004), 'youth cultures' (Baacke, 1993), 'post-subcultures' (Muggleton, 1997), and the ubiquitous 'scenes' (Blum, 2001). Despite varying definitions, there is a consensus that a subculture involves a group of people sharing distinct cultural practices that significantly differentiate them from other social groups. However, this description can also apply to other groups, such as communities, societies, or cultures. Nevertheless, scholars consistently focus on similar social networks and activities when examining subcultures. While the term "community" is closely linked to subculture, it often implies a settled population connected to specific neighborhoods, with families playing central roles. In contrast, subcultures are seen as oppositional and disruptive to their surroundings, appropriating urban spaces for their street culture. The youth's pursuit of forging their own cultural identity, diverging from the norms and values upheld by their parental households, resonates prominently in Caicedo's writing. This aspect bears significant relevance and will be explored further in our analysis. At its core, subcultures represent cultural practices that deviate from those of broader communities. They are often viewed as disenfranchised, disaffected, and unofficial, yet also dynamic and creative. In this sense, the focus of subcultural studies lies in examining smaller cultural practices. While the term "societies" aligns more closely with subcultures in terms of small-scale associations sharing common in-

terests, it implies formal membership processes and bureaucratic structures. In contrast, subcultures are generally considered informal and organic, with participants joining by choice or through forced associations like prisons or asylums. The prefix “sub” indicates a subordinate or secondary rank, highlighting that the groups studied are often seen as subordinate, subaltern, or subterranean. Subcultures are positioned in society or culture in two main ways. Firstly, they are frequently regarded as deviant or debased, both within their own ranks and by society at large. This pattern becomes evident in the portrayal of most of Caicedo’s protagonists and manifests in criminal “undergrounds,” such as the “barras” and “galladas” in Caicedo’s oeuvre. They are shaped, in part, by legal frameworks from above and, in part, by the actions and participation of those involved from below. Similarly, LGBTQ subcultures challenge compulsory heterosexual norms, carving out spaces for their own rules and practices while renegotiating their subordinate position within the subculture. Secondly, social groups labeled as subcultures are often perceived as lower down the social hierarchy due to differences in class, race, ethnicity, or age. Subcultural studies have shed light on cultures traditionally dismissed as insignificant by other disciplines, such as the cultures of black, working-class, poor, and young people. Researchers have specifically examined how subculture members collectively navigate and contest issues related to their differentiated cultural practices. Culture and society, as ways of life, are inseparable. The defining characteristic of subcultures lies then in their emphasis on distinguishing a particular cultural or social group from the larger culture or society. The focus is on deviating from the norms of a broader collectivity, which is typically seen as normal, average, and dominant, although not without its own complexities. Subcultures, in essence, are marked by a cultural practice of “otherness” or difference, which they are either condemned to or find enjoyment in. In this sense, as we have previously established regarding Williams’ notion of “structure of feeling”, participants in a subculture share experiences that manifest in specific subcultural forms, including dress, language, and music – a “distinct way of life.” With a theoretical foundation established regarding the concepts of “structure of feeling” and “subculture,” the forthcoming analysis will delve into exploring the subcultural discourse of *¡Que viva la música!*, focusing on the distinct signifying practices. Drawing on their shared affective experiences, which are perceived as sociohistorical dynamics, this investigation aims to uncover the unique subcultural codes and symbolic systems that shape their identities.

## **Salseros and Rockeros: Exploring Signifying Practices Within Sociohistorical Context**

Individual writers, following Williams, are tasked with navigating the complex contours of structures of feeling, the dynamic forces that shape and give expression to one's emotional landscape within specific temporal and spatial contexts. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that structures of feeling do not emerge solely through top-down imposition or dictation. Instead, individuals actively inhabit and engage with the prevailing structures of feeling of their time, assuming agency in the creation and perpetuation of the broader social conditions that shape their very existence. To fully comprehend Andrés Caicedo's work and his portrayal of the salseros and rockeros, it therefore becomes essential to delve into the sociohistorical dynamics that unfolded in Cali during the 1960s and 1970s. By understanding the intricate interplay of social and historical processes within this specific context, we gain valuable insights into the motivations, aspirations, and challenges faced by the subcultural actors depicted in *¡Que viva la música!*

In his captivating study, Víctor Hugo Valencia Giraldo (2018) sheds light on the complex dynamics of the bourgeois youth conflict in Cali, delving into the traces and marks left by this upheaval on the lives of young individuals in the work of Caicedo. According to him,

La producción literaria de A. Caicedo está influenciada por acontecimientos históricos claramente rastreables: los VI Juegos Panamericanos, que tuvieron a Cali como sede; el movimiento estudiantil colombiano (y su influencia en la educación pública media y profesional); la instauración del modelo económico de sustitución de importaciones [...]. El estilo literario de Caicedo se caracteriza por el uso de la intertextualidad (con ritmos musicales como la salsa, el bolero antillano y el rock, principalmente; así como el cine de Hollywood), el habla común (con variedades dialectales propias de la juventud y de la región) y las descripciones de sus recorridos por lugares emblemáticos de una pequeña urbe que comenzaba su proceso de modernización y que, para hacerlo, destruía su patrimonio arquitectónico. [...] Así mismo, [...] algunos acontecimientos históricos que, con el tiempo, detonaron un escalamiento de la violencia juvenil a finales del siglo xx y comienzos del XXI, tanto en Cali como en el resto del país; como son: a) la producción, distribución y consumo de sustancias psicoactivas, que gestaron las redes de tráfico internacional y microtráfico local de narcóticos; b) la anomia y anarquía de las primeras agrupaciones juveniles (llamadas por la época de Caicedo barras o galladas), ideologizadas o desideologizadas [...] (que se despliegan en distintas formas de asociatividad: desde jóvenes infractores, contraventores o delincuentes hasta integrantes de la subversión y o de grupos de autodefensa); c) la impugnación y resistencia de la cultura popular sobre la cultura burguesa, que posiciona las expresividades propias de lo cultural/masivo como señal identitaria en las escalas local, regional y nacional: la música, el habla, los bailes, las celebraciones, etc. (pp. 8-9).

He elucidates that the stark disparity between the grand narrative of the Pan American Games and the envisioned modernization of Cali revealed a contrasting reality.

Marginalized individuals received minimal benefits from the city's supposed progress. While the ruling class cultivated a "good image," sponsored by North American foundations and multinational companies, the underlying socioeconomic issues and unequal resource distribution persisted. Upon delving into these "huellas y marcas del conflicto juvenil" within the sociohistorical context, a striking dichotomy becomes apparent between the city's projected facade and the dissent expressed through student-led marches, rallies, and mobilizations. Simultaneously, Cali experienced a profound cultural impact emanating from the European and us-American spheres, which permeated various aspects of the city's social fabric, shaping attitudes, beliefs, and artistic expressions. The influx of these cultural imports fostered a rich tapestry of facets, ranging from music, cinema, and fashion to language and ideologies dynamic interplay between local traditions and the global reach of cultural influences created a unique fusion that defined the cultural landscape of Cali during this transformative period and found deep reflection in Caicedo's work.

Hollywood cinema emerged as a significant source of inspiration, capturing the imagination of the local youth, and leaving an indelible mark on their lives. The influence of its movies on the collective psyche of Cali's young population extended far beyond mere entertainment. It ignited a cultural revolution, giving rise to the "galladas" and "barras," such as the infamous "Tropa Brava" in "El atravesado", and shaping their identities in profound ways. Within this dynamic cultural landscape, iconic films such as "Rebel Without a Cause" served as catalysts, triggering a wave of transformative experiences and social movements among Cali's youth. Caicedo, a devoted cinephile, film critic, and co-founder of the Cine Club de Cali that eventually spawned the renowned Caliwood group, astutely acknowledges the crucial role of cinema in shaping the decisions of young individuals to form alliances and confront the adult world. In "El atravesado", he skillfully explores the transformative force of cinema, ranging from the cultivation of subcultural codes to the establishment of norms and practices among the street fights of the local youth gangs:

En esa época dieron también muchas de Elvis. Y *Rebelde sin causa*, que fue allí cuando se armó. Que todo el mundo salió fue loquito de la cinta, y había una nueva gallada que se llamaba Los Intrépidos, de camiseta verde y una calavera bordada [...] y que eran tiosos, se pusieron a darse totes con los Black Stars, a la salida en el hall [...] y duro sí les dieron (Caicedo, 2010, p. 22).

Concurrently, the youth belonging to the upper and middle social strata of Cali were deeply influenced by prominent English rock bands, including iconic groups like The



Rolling Stones, The Beatles, and Cream. These influential musical acts captured the imagination and resonated profoundly with the aspirations, ideals, and cultural sensibilities of the city's young population. In the initial segments of *¡Que viva la música!*, rock music takes center stage as the omnipresent genre, serving as María del Carmen's initial musical passion and the driving force behind her entrance into the nocturnal realm of the "rockeros." Through her encounters with fellow enthusiasts of rock culture, notably her relationship with her first boyfriend, Leopoldo Brook, an US-American Rock musician, "encadenado a gigantesco estuche de guitarra eléctrica" (Caicedo, 1977, p. 18), with whom she symbolically loses her virginity on a waterbed "Made in USA," María del Carmen Huerta undergoes a transformation from an ordinary girl, a self-professed "niña bien" (p. 6) who claims that "todos, menos yo, sabían de música" (p. 4) to a connoisseur of rock culture, using anglicisms and being capable of delivering a lecture on her personal theory of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Brian Jones, a founding member of the Rolling Stones. The radio played a pivotal role in the dissemination and popularization of rock music, as well as various other genres, as we will explore subsequently. Serving as a crucial medium of musical transmission, radio stations played a significant role in bringing diverse genres and artists to the attention of the public. Through their programming choices and airtime allocations, radio stations wielded the power to shape musical tastes, influence cultural trends, and connect listeners with a wide range of musical expressions:

El radio, en su inconstancia, cambió de Rock pesado a *Llegó borracho el borracho*, que yo mutilé en el acto [...], para que se diera una sinfonía de rasguídos y chillidos buscando la mejor estación, el acuerdo. "No hay mucha", pensé desesperada. [...] Yo miré feo a Ricardito y le dije: "Please, ¿no? Sintonízalo donde es. *Somos un grupo*" (emphasis added). Ya había uno que le quería pegar: "o pones algo en inglés o te sacudo." Cortó por el camino más directo: apagó el radio (p. 16).

Simultaneously, the emergence of salsa exerted a powerful influence on the cultural fabric of Cali, leaving a profound impact on its music scene and social dynamics. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the emergence of popular radio stations, alongside the widespread accessibility of music records, introduced a fresh repertoire that significantly influenced the tastes and preferences of the middle and lower classes in Cali. An integral catalyst in this transformative process was the inception of the "Feria de Cali," a revered cultural event that has occupied a prominent place in the calendar from the 25th to the 30th of December and served as a cathartic outlet for the societal pressures and tensions that characterized the late 1960s and early 1970s.

(Valencia Giraldo, 2018, pp. 26-27) While the elites continued their revelry at exclusive clubs, the popular classes found their expressive and joyful music in the concerts and street parties associated with the “feria”. It was during this period that Salsa, rather than the Caribbean porros, cumbias, and the “música tropical” of the Paisa region, took center stage in the popular festivities, challenging the “taste” of the dominant upper classes and serving as a vivid representation of the changing cultural landscape. A testament to this transformation is exemplified through the following poster of Rubén, María del Carmen’s second boyfriend and a devoted salsa aficionado with whom she delves into the salsero subculture in the second part of the novel:

EL PUEBLO DE CALI RECHAZA. A LOS Graduados, Los Hispanos y demás cultores del “Sonido Paisa” hecho a la medida de la burguesía, de su vulgaridad. Porque no se trata de “Sufrir me tocó a mí en esta vida”. Sino de “Agúzate que te están velando.” ¡Viva el sentimiento afro-cubano! ¡Viva Puerto Rico libre! RICARDO RAY NOS HACE FALTA (Caicedo, 1977, p. 75).

The enthusiastic dance moves and energetic rhythms of Richie Ray & Bobby Cruz’s music resonated deeply with the people of Cali, who enthusiastically embraced the rebellious spirit it embodied. Their song “La Amparo Arrebato” became a musical tribute to the carefree and popular young dancer from Cali, eventually epitomized in *¡Que viva la música!* It embodies the vibrant essence of Cali’s exuberant youth, acting as a potent symbol of their lively cultural identity as salseros and their unyielding quest for pleasure and hedonistic self-discovery. In the pivotal moment, as María del Carmen Huerta transitions from rock music to salsa, she eloquently captures the very essence of their rebellion and liberation in her own words:

Me inflé de vida, se me inflaron los ojos de recordar cuánto había comprendido las letras en español, la cultura de mi tierra, donde adentro hace un sol, grité descomunalmente: “¡abajo la penetración cultural yanky!”, y salí de allí corriendo, obligando a mis amigos a que, sin un segundo de pérdida, me siguieran (p. 55).

Within this sociohistorical context, Felipe Gómez (2007) elucidates the depiction of the rockero and salsero subcultures in *¡Que viva la música!* in his article “Tropical Gothic” as follows:

What Caicedo mainly gives us in his novel is the portrait of two very different types of youth subcultures [...] enclosed in a clear-cut subdivision sharply delimited by socioeconomic and racial elements [...] —the subculture in the North establishes its identity in direct proportion to the level of assimilation, and “accent-free” imitation of an “original US counterculture”, while the contrasted subculture of salsa incorporates elements of the fusion of races, cultures, and rhythms (p. 64).

By employing the framework of subcultural studies and delving into the distinctive signifying practices of salseros and rockeros, a deeper comprehension of the intricate

dynamics at work becomes attainable and opens up new avenues for a comprehensive exploration of their unique viewpoints and lived experiences.

### **Rockeros and Salseros: Redefining Meaning through Defiance of Dominant Norms**

Hebdige (2002) asserts that subcultural style, as explored in his influential work “Subculture: The Meaning of Style,” is inherently subversive. It challenges and undermines the “dominant ideology” by transforming signs and infusing them with alternative meanings, thereby disrupting the normative process of signification. Subcultures, then, are a sort of temporary blockage within the system of representation. From this analytical standpoint, it is evident that María del Carmen’s deliberate immersion into Cali’s subcultures aligns precisely with her departure from the confines of her routine and her transformation away from the identity of a privileged girl from the bourgeoisie:

Vuelvo al día en el que quebré mi horario. ¿Por qué lo hice, si le había cogido afición al Método? Sobre todo, en los últimos años de bachillerato. Fui aplicadísima, y no me faltaba nada para entrar a la U. del Valle y estudiar arquitectura: segundo lugar en los exámenes de admisión (la primera fue una flaquita de gafas, mal compuesta en cuestión de dientes, medio anémica, que salió de La Presentación del Aguacatal), faltaban 15 días para entrar a clases y yo, sabiéndome cómo son las cosas, pues estudiaba *El Capital* con estos amigos míos, hombre, pues era, a no dudarlo, una nueva etapa, tal vez la definitiva de esta vida que ahora me la dicen triste, que me la dicen pálida, que se pasea de arriba abajo y me encuentran mis amigas y dele que dele a que estás i-rrecono-ci-ble. Yo les digo: “olvidate”. Yo las había olvidado antes, anyway, bastó una sola reunión de estudio para reírmeles en la cara cuando me llamaron dizque a inventarme un programa de piscina: no sabían que yo, al salir de la reunión, agotada de tanto comprendimiento, me había ido con Ricardito el Miserable (así lo nombro porque sufre mucho, o al menos eso es lo que él decía) al río. Ni más ni menos descubrí el río. “¿Cómo no lo había conocido antes?”, le pregunté, y él contestó con la humildad del que dice la verdad: “porque eras una burguesita de lo más chinche” (Caicedo, 1977, p. 6).

Undoubtedly, this scene holds great significance as it not only initiates the subcultural discourse in the novel but also foreshadows pivotal elements within the scope of our analysis. The emblematic transition from the “programa de piscina” to the “programa de río,” in accordance with Hebdige, is a significant transformation of signs, imbuing them with repositioned connotations. By doing so, it becomes a potent disruption of the normative process of signification. The “symbolic challenge to the symbolic order” is further accentuated by her abandonment of the conventional trajectory as an “aplicadísima burguesita de lo más chinche,” recently graduated from the prestigious Liceo Benalcázar and on the verge of entering the Universidad del Valle. Instead, she embraces a “vida que ahora me la dicen triste” – a life that is deemed “triste,” according to the normative framework of the “dominant” ideology. This “deviant” shift represents

a notable subversion of societal expectations and constitutes significant resistance to the prevailing symbolic norms. The sociopolitical context adds an additional layer of complexity, as the increasing involvement of North American foundations as sponsors and benefactors of the Universidad del Valle, under the umbrella of the anti-communist Alliance for Progress, introduced concerns. Gradually, these foundations faced accusations of co-opting graduates and professors, resulting in a significant “brain drain” as academic talent migrated to the United States. Such circumstances raised doubts about the genuine intentions underlying the U.S.’s ostensibly selfless aid and sparked dissent, which found expression in student-led protests (Valencia Giraldo, 2018, p. 23).<sup>1</sup> It is in this context that María del Carmen Huerta, “sabiéndome cómo son las cosas,” partakes in a leftist study group, and “como respetaba y respeto su pensamiento.” (Caicedo, 1977, p. 18). However, as Camilo Aguilera Toro (2009) elucidates:

Después de tres reuniones ella deserta del grupo, lo que representa su “entrada al mundo de la música, de las escuchas y del bailoteo”. Su salida del grupo es también la renuncia a un cierto tipo de vida y a los espacios y personas que lo constituyen [...] a uno nuevo, el que podríamos llamar tentativamente “cultura del rock”, aún emergente en los años 70 (p. 175).

While we agree with the conclusion that this moment signifies María del Carmen Huerta’s entry into the “cultura del rock” — or, as per the logic presented in this article, the rockero subculture — it is crucial to underscore an additional detail that Aguilera Toro overlooked. In response to her rhetorical question, “¿Por qué lo hice, si le había cogido afición al Método?”, María del Carmen Huerta attributes her reasons to being “agotada de tanto comprendimiento.” This statement holds crucial importance, as we can interpret it, drawing from the concept of the “structure of feeling,” as a deliberate emphasis on affective elements rather than purely intellectual ones. As established in the preceding chapter, Williams sought to integrate the lived experiences of individuals within a particular social and cultural milieu into the domains of historical and theoretical discourse, diverging from the prevailing ideological framework of the respective era. This insight enables us to recognize that María del Carmen Huerta’s exhaustion from intellectual knowledge should not be misconstrued as a complete rejection of understanding. Instead, subcultural signifying practices embody a profoundly creative

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<sup>1</sup> The proximity of the Pan American Games and the student marches sparked tensions, leading to a repressive act on February 26, 1971. The police attempted to take control of the Universidad del Valle, resulting in the death of a student leader. The unrest spread across Cali, causing over 30 casualties. This event served as the fitting conclusion to “El atravesado”.

endeavor, purposefully reshaping societal norms by prioritizing lived experiences over intellectual acquisition:

Algunos, los más inquietos, les reprochaban su falta de talento para apreciar la noche, para tomársela, como decíamos, lo que significaba entonces que eran viejos, y otros, aún inteligentes, no salían de la certeza de que cuando se llegara la hora de evaluar esa época, ellos, los drogos, iban a ser los testigos, los con derecho al habla, no los otros, los que pensaban parejo y de la vida no sabían nada, para no hablar del intelectual que se permitía noches de alcohol y cocaína hasta la papa en la boca, el vómito y el color verde, como si se tratara de una licencia poética, la sílaba no-gramatical, necesaria para pulir un verso. No, nosotros éramos imposibles de ignorar, la ola última, la más intensa, la que lleva del bulto bordeando la noche (Caicedo, 1977, pp. 19-20).

Indeed, subcultures are complex articulations of specific codes and practices. In one sense, subcultures revolve around image, as Barthes (1972) observed, the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional there exists a distinction between subcultural and “normal” styles. Subcultural stylistic ensembles, such as combinations of dress, dance, argot, and music, go beyond expressing intended communication. In this sense, every object can be interpreted as a sign. These ensembles – even seemingly insignificant objects, such as a waterbed labeled “made in USA” that becomes the backdrop for the protagonist’s inaugural sexual encounter – hold a position within an internal framework of distinctions, aligning with predetermined societal roles and choices. They convey a multitude of messages through nuanced distinctions across interconnected sets such as class, status, self-image, and attractiveness. In the context of *¡Que viva la música!*, there are various intriguing instances that exemplify this phenomenon. One such example is María del Carmen Huerta’s initial encounter with cocaine, which serves as a defining element of the rockeros’ subculture and acts as a distinctive marker within this cultural framework:

Entonces sacó su agenda, de la agenda el sobrecito blanco, de mi mesita de noche un libro: *Los de abajo*, y encima desparramó el polvito y se puso a observarlo, olvidándome. Cocaína era la cosa que traía. Me estremecí, como maluca y con ansia, pero “No —pensé—, es la excitación que trae todo cambio (Caicedo, 1977, p. 11).

Not only does the “sobrecito blanco,” María del Carmen Huerta’s clandestine “psychedelic secret,” originate from the USA despite its remarkably higher cost – a supply brought by Ricardito’s mother with the intention of alleviating his misery – but Mariano Azuela’s novel, far from serving as literary work of art, instead serves as a platform for inhaling the drug for the first time. Does this imply that the book has lost its meaning? Both rockero and salsero subculture, and taking a point of departure from Barthes, go

against the grain of a mainstream culture whose principal defining characteristic is a tendency to masquerade as “nature”, to substitute “normalized” for historical forms, to translate the reality of the world into an image of the world which in turn presents itself as if composed according to “the evident laws of the natural order” (Barthes, 1972, p. 131). By repositioning and recontextualizing commodities, by subverting their conventional uses and inventing new ones, the subcultural stylists give the lie to what Althusser has described as the false obviousness of everyday practice (Althusser and Balibar, 1968), and unfolds the world of objects to new and covertly oppositional readings. In this sense, thus, *Los de abajo* maintains remarkable significance and, while its content about the Mexican Revolution is of no interest to María del Carmen Huerta and Ricardito, it ironically still unfolds “revolutionary” potential by playing a pivotal role in the transformative process of subcultural initiation that, prioritizing *lived experiences over intellectual knowledge*, “trae todo cambio.”

This transformative change, referred to by María del Carmen as “los vórtices de la época,” finds its vivid embodiment in the case of “Roberto Ross, de 13 años, el chutero más joven de Colombia” (Caicedo, 1977, p. 44).

La historia de Roberto Ross resumía tal vez, los vórtices de la época. Probó la droga durante su estada de un año en USA, producto de una beca con el American Field Service. Al llegar a Cali se hizo muy popular porque hablaba de ácidos, luego al ser rechazado porque vendía ácidos. Le achacaron la locura y muerte de Margarita Bilbao, su novia de 12 años. Pero no lo pudieron acusar de nada. Para escapar a la horrible depresión de la cocaína, empezó a inyectársela. Se denominaba el profeta del mal ejemplo, no por corruptor sino por víctima. Con la última oleada de gringos drogos y delinquentes alcanzó un notable prestigio. Hacía contactos y hasta llegó a señalar tiras. La pasaba muy bien (p. 47).

The mention of “prestigio,” or rather “subcultural prestige,” hoods considerable weight. The deliberate selection and consumption of a specific drug of choice within a subculture carry profound significance, serving as intentional modes of communication. These practices differentiate themselves from the mere repositioning of commodities, as illustrated by the recontextualized use of Azuela’s *Los de abajo*. Consequently, the *salsero* and *rockero* subcultures emerge as visible constructs, characterized by a distinct set of subcultural practices that command attention and invite interpretation. This distinction sets apart the visually captivating ensembles of spectacular subcultures like the *salseros* and *rockeros* from those endorsed by the mainstream culture(s), highlighting the contrasting realms of the “straight” and the deviant. The communication of a significant difference and the parallel communication of a group identity, then, is the “point” behind the subcultural style. It is the superordinate term under which all the other significations are marshalled,

the message through which all the other messages speak. Subcultural codes and signifying practices, such as US-inspired “psychedelic” fashion, the frequent use of anglicisms or Hispanicized English expressions (“brodercito,” “mancito” etc.), codified youth jargon (e.g., “solladísimo”), a specific drug use or distinctive practices like playing records faster than normally intended, define the distinction value and subcultural capital of its participants. In this sense, we can assume that it is not ironic when María del Carmen Huerta concludes that Roberto Ross, with “su fea piel coronada por el acné” (Caicedo, 1977, p. 45) as a result of his rampant drug use, “la pasaba muy bien” (p. 47), taking a subcultural practice to the extreme and transforming into the infamous “profeta del mal ejemplo.”

In examining the internal structure of individual subcultures, its style as bricolage, any blending of dissonant elements (Hebdige, 2002, p. 102), share a common feature: they are cultures of consumption (including the types of consumption that are conspicuously refused). It is through the distinctive rituals of consumption, through style, that the subculture at once reveals its identity and communicates its meanings. It is basically the way in which commodities are used in subculture which mark the subculture off from more orthodox cultural formations (p. 102). An intriguing illustration of this fusion of seemingly contradictory elements is the innovation of Cali’s salseros, who manipulate the speed of record playback, surpassing the intended limits, thus gratifying the dancers’ yearning for velocity:

Quando Rubén se quería tirar al tres yo lo acompañaba. Aprendí mucho con su miseria. Me enseñó el brillante misterio de las 45 revoluciones por minuto para un disco grabado en 33, invento caleño que define el ansia anormal de velocidad en sus bailadores. ¿Cómo, quién fue el que probó a ver cómo sonaba “Qué bella es la Navidad” en 45, o “Micaela se botó”? Se debe haber creído un genio ante el resultado, compositor Welter Carlos. El 33 vuelto 45 es como si lo flagelaran a uno mientras baila, con esa necesidad de decirlo todo, para que yaya [sic] tiempo de volver a decirlo 16 veces más, y a ver quién nos aguanta, quién nos baila. Es destapar el espíritu, no la voz, sino eso turbio que se agita más adentro, las causas primordiales para levantarse y buscar la claridad, el canto. Es volver necesaria y dolorosa cualquier banalidad, porque hay Salsa, mamá. (Caicedo, 1977, p. 77).

As in the case of the manipulated and elevated record speed – “*porque hay Salsa, mamá*” – within salsero subculture, such subcultural practice can be viewed as the ground where the social code is destroyed and renewed. Julia Kristeva (1975) counts as “radical” those signifying practices which negate and disturb syntax, and which therefore serve to erode the concept of “actantial position” upon which the whole “Symbolic Order” is seen to rest. This “symbolic order” for cultural studies purposes designates the apparent unity of the dominant ideological discourses in play at any one time. In addition, the general idea of signifying practice can help us to rethink in a more complex way the relations not only between marginal and mainstream cultural formations but between

the various subcultural styles themselves. The intricate relationship between experience, expression, and signification lies at the heart of subcultural style. Consequently, each subculture has its own symbolic orders that form a unity – its own fashion style, music, and in some cases its own drug of choice, along with its own argot. They are different in terms of incompatibility at the level of “content” and at the level of different political and ethnic affiliations, different relationships with the parent community, different gender relationships, and different in the way in which each subculture communicates (or refuses to communicate) meaning. Such subcultural hostilities hold significance. Throughout the last century, notable antagonisms between groups like Mods and Rockers or Skinheads and Hippies have left a lasting impact on the European and US-American cultural productions which, in turn, influenced Cali’s youth and in a broader sense both rockeros and salseros via Hollywood and music. On the one hand, both the rockero and salsero subcultures exhibit a distinct generational disaffiliation from mainstream culture, finding a certain sense of unity in their purposeful divergence from mainstream cultural norms. As our previous analysis has revealed, they employ diverse signifying practices to challenge the “dominant ideology,” such as their rejection of traditional Colombian music, including cumbias and pasodobles, as well as “música tropical.” On the other hand, notable differences arise, echoing the previously mentioned “clear-cut subdivision sharply delimited by socioeconomic and racial elements,” as expounded by Gómez. This distinction becomes evident in instances such as when Marcos Pérez, a volleyball player and salsero, remarks to María del Carmen, “para mí que hueles a droga cara –me dijo–, debes saber amarga toda” (Caicedo, 1977, p. 53). It is within this context that she makes the following declaration:<sup>2</sup>

Mi cuerpo fue creado para un mecanismo de orden más redondo: no sentía sueño en aquella mañana sino ganas de visitar gente, y, además, sabiéndome para siempre con una conciencia de lo que era música en inglés y música en español, como quien dice conciencia política estructurada. [...] Acabo de descubrir la salsa a la astilla. Hay que sabotear el Rock para seguir vivos (pp. 56-57).

In drawing critical attention to the relationship between the means of representation and the object represented, there can no longer be any absolute distinction between these two terms (Hebdige, 2002, p. 118). Emphasis on signifying practice can be accompanied

<sup>2</sup> Once again, it is intriguing to note how María del Carmen Huerta equates her immersive, almost physical experience of salsa music (“Me inflé de vida, se me inflaron los ojos de recordar cuánto había comprendido las letras en español, la cultura de mi tierra”, see above), with a “conciencia política estructurada.” This association should be considered within the framework of the “structure of feeling” and subcultural signifying practices, highlighting the importance of lived experiences and emotional understanding as opposed to intellectual knowledge.



by an insistence that subcultural disaffiliation represents the triumph of process over fixity, disruption over unity – the triumph, that is, of the signifier over the signified. It should be seen as part of the group's attempt to substitute the values of "fissure" and contradiction for the preoccupation with "wholeness." Indeed, the disruption and reconfiguration of meaning are integral to María del Carmen Huerta's distinctive, oralized narrative voice. Colombian literary critic Adriana Hernández (2003) astutely observes this "rupture of syntax" and "transcoding":

La novela *¡Que viva la música!* corresponde a la obra de un creador joven que [...] decide fundamentar una escritura, novedosa en varios sentidos: en primer lugar, la ruptura de la sintaxis a nivel de uso de la lengua narrativa que trae implicaciones ideológicas y estéticas. Fragmentar el lenguaje es fragmentar la cultura oficial y desmitificar sus relatos, sus imágenes, es decir, la autoconciencia autoral quiere aunar a las funciones del lenguaje en la narrativa, una función reflexiva y crítica acerca del mundo desde la novela; en segundo lugar, el uso del discurso oral, llevado a la escritura, constituye una transcodificación con implicaciones muy profundas a nivel narrativo e ideológico (p. 115).

The members of a subculture – such as the protagonists of *¡Que viva la música!* and "El atravesado" – must share a common language. And if a style is really to catch on, if it is to become genuinely popular, it must say the right things in the right way at the right time. It must anticipate or encapsulate a mood, a moment. It must embody a sensibility beyond metanarratives. It is therefore that the concept of "structure of feeling" proves to be an invaluable tool for comprehending subcultural discourse. In the case of Andrés Caicedo, who, as a writer, exhibited a remarkable sensitivity toward his generation, this notion becomes even more essential, given Raymonds' explicit endorsement of literature as a means of exploring it. This article holds merit as it serves as the first attempt to establish a relationship between the concepts of "structure of feeling" and subcultural theory – mainly Hebdige – within the context of *¡Que viva la música!* Given the notable presence of rockeros and salseros in the novel, it is somewhat surprising that this connection has not been previously explored. Therefore, this article fills an important gap that has long been awaiting investigation, shedding new light on the novel and its subcultural dimensions. This presents us with a remarkable opportunity to acquire fresh and insightful perspectives on the social dimensions surrounding the young individuals depicted by Caicedo. By illuminating their productive and creative endeavors in reshaping and recontextualizing meaning, these individuals effectively challenge the prevailing and "normalized" social norms. Through an examination of their signifying practices, we can analyze their emphasis on valuing the process over fixed outcomes and their embrace of disruption rather than conformity. It is discernible that their rejection of

rigid ideological considerations and intellectualism does not result in a loss of meaning; on the contrary, it eloquently highlights the profound significance of lived experiences and emotions as invaluable sources of insight and knowledge. With that being said, it is important to acknowledge that this article represents an initial endeavor to outline an analysis of the subcultural discourse within *¡Que viva la música!* Undoubtedly, there remain several gaps to be addressed, such as the need for a more comprehensive and comparative exploration of the “structure of feeling” and a thorough examination of the signifying practices of both the rockero and salsero subcultures. These aspects extend beyond the scope of this article and would necessitate a more extensive study of Caicedo’s work to fully encompass their complexity and depth. However, it is to hope that this endeavor serves as an initial step towards highlighting the immense value of critically analyzing Caicedo’s work from a subcultural perspective. I have full confidence that the gaps and limitations identified in this study will be addressed in future research, leading to a more comprehensive and profound understanding of Caicedo’s writings within the subcultural framework.

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