

Protest Song and Countercultural Discourses of Resistance in 1960s Colombia

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Abstract

In Colombia, the tumultuous second half of the twentieth century kicked off with a fierce conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties known as *La Violencia* (The Violence, ca. 1948-1958). Following a brief period of military rule (1953-1957), a bipartisan system of shared governance, the National Front (1958-1974), brought about some respite to the sectarian bloodshed. However, the exclusionary two-party system precipitated new lines of conflict between the state and communist guerrillas. Along with the political turmoil, the nation was also undergoing an era of profound cultural change. This essay examines three countercultural-oppositional movements that captivated a wide swath of youth in Colombia's biggest cities during the 1960s: the *canción protesta* (protest song) movement, the rock and roll subculture denominated as *nueva ola* (new wave), and *nadaísmo*, a rabbleroising avantgarde literary movement. I analyze the correspondences and discontinuities in the ways adherents of these movements conceived of the ideal means to carry out social, cultural, and political resistance. While there were fundamental tensions between the "discourses of resistance" linked to these three countercultural streams, I argue that their convergence in the late 1960s facilitated the emergence of a commercial form of *canción protesta*.

Keywords: *Canción Protesta*, *Nadaísmo*, *Nueva Ola*, Rock and Roll, Resistance, Colombia.

On July 16, 1971, the second *Coco de Oro* (Golden Coconut) Festival of Protest Song began amidst controversy in San Andrés, Colombia's island territory in the Caribbean Sea. Much of the discontent participants voiced revolved around the makeup of the jury for the festival's central event: the competition for best protest song. Echoing the opposition that many had expressed towards the presence of government functionaries on the jury, one columnist pointedly asked:

What on earth is the Minister of Interior doing at a protest festival? How can impartiality be ensured in the adjudication if an official and officious defender of the establishment is voting on the songs? [...] Amongst the judges there is not one but several delegates from a government that is not truly revolutionary. They will ensure that the chosen songs won't be "very strong" and that the state of siege will extend itself over the works presented.¹

1. "Contenido". 1971. *El Tiempo*, July 16, 18. All translations from Spanish-language texts and interviews are my own.

The journalist was referring here to a security statute, enacted in early 1971 in response to mounting student, labor, and peasant protests, which banned any political gathering that might "disturb the peace" (Archila Neira 2003, 105). He or she may have wondered how one song entered in the contest, "Destino la guerrilla" (Destination: The Guerrillas), would fare if the restrictive conditions the state of siege engendered were invoked. The song's text extols the Marxist guerrilla groups that had formed in the late 1960s and were then waging battle on the Colombian state:

Caminando, caminando	Marching, marching
La guerrilla es un amor	The guerrilla is love
Echan pata que da miedo	Their gait strikes fear
Viva la revolución	Long live the revolution

Notwithstanding the peculiar invitations to government representatives to serve as judges, the overall composition of the jury was in keeping with the festival's multidimensional character. Several prominent figures had been tapped to round out the panel: Santiago García, director of the Communist-Party identified Casa de la Cultura (House of Culture) in downtown Bogotá; Gonzalo Arango, founder of the *nadaísmo* movement; broadcaster and producer Alfonso Lizarazo; local businessman Nicolás Jackamán; and journalists from the leading newspaper *El Tiempo*, among others.

The Festival's musical offerings were likewise varied. The most prominent protest singers to represent Colombia were Pablus Gallinazo, composer of "Destino la guerrilla", and the duo Ana y Jaime. Both acts had been involved with the grassroots *canción protesta* (protest song) movement that had recently flourished at Bogotá's Casa de la Cultura, but they were also working with Alfonso Lizarazo and the media industry that had been built up around the *nueva ola* (new wave) rock and roll scene to promote their music. Guest appearances by *nueva ola* star Harold and rock band Los Flippers further accentuated the ties forged between some *canción protesta* and *nueva ola* practitioners at this time. Although the presence of figures from the world of *nueva ola*—including an emcee role for Carlos Pinzón, one of the earliest promoters of rock and roll in Colombia—was consistent with broader trends, pop singers with no prior relation to *canción protesta* were also invited to perform.²

While the festival jury determined what kinds of songs would win prizes at a high-profile protest song contest, reporters on the ground clearly felt that the compositions performed did not live up to the festival's billing. A journalist by the pen name of Samuel griped that few of the participants worked seriously in the field of protest song. He reasoned that Ana y Jaime, who won third place with a song titled "Obreros" (Workers), ought to have taken the top prize because their main line of artistic work throughout the year was as protest singers.³ His final appraisal of the festival was summed up pithily in an article title that read: "San Andrés Festival, More Song than Protest".⁴ *El Tiempo* writer Alegre Levy, who served on the jury, reiterated many of Samuel's concerns. She complained about the random assemblage of artists singing songs "that had everything except for themes of protest", but acknowledged

2. "II Festival de la Canción Protesta 'Coco de Oro' San Andrés". Concert program. San Andrés, July 16-18, 1971.

3. Samuel. 1971. "Animación y protestas en festival de San Andrés". *El Tiempo*, July 18, 9.

4. Samuel. 1971. "Festival de San Andrés más canción que protesta". *El Tiempo*, August 20, 19. Samuel also noted that the expensive cost of admission (50 pesos) excluded the "common people [...] to whom the message should be directed".

that Venezuelan artist Manuel de la Roche had “brought a true song of protest titled ‘Coffee and Oil’ [Café y Petróleo]”. Levy hoped that future editions of the festival would be more consistent with what she saw as the proper ethos of *canción protesta*: “We hope that next year there will be more protest, more working class, and less establishment”.⁵

In the end, the Golden Coconut for best protest song went to a singer from Bogotá named Sergio Torres for his *cumbia* “No trabajo más” (I Will Work No More). Although Torres was not associated with the *canción protesta* movement, in outlining a straightforward Marxist remonstrance against capitalist exploitation, the text of “No trabajo más” was consistent with much of the *canción protesta* repertoire of that time:

[Coro:]	[Refrain:]
No trabajo más	I will work no more
Pa’ ningún patrón	For any boss
Solo espero ya	Now, I only hope
La Revolución	The revolution comes
[...]	[...]
Trabajando arando la tierra	Working, plowing the land
Pa’ sembrar el algodón	To plant the cotton
Mientras las utilidades	While my boss
Las disfruta mi patrón	Enjoys the profits

In a final puzzling moment, the trophy for best protest song was awarded by the ambassador of Guatemala, a country ruled by a hardline coronel who ruthlessly persecuted the leftist opposition.⁶

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The extensive reporting on the 1971 Coco de Oro Festival provides us with an ample view of the trajectories of *canción protesta* only a few years after this category was established in Colombia. In expressing their beliefs about what kinds of artists and songs should participate in a protest song festival, what kinds of people should judge them, and what kinds of audiences were best suited for their messages, the individuals who were disappointed by the scarcity of bona fide protest were articulating the tenets of a core discourse on *canción protesta*. Yet, the fact that they were compelled to express those sentiments in the first place is evidence that they were coming up against competing perceptions of the genre. Indeed, the heated commentary sparked by the diversity of the festival’s organizers, performers, judges, and attendees attests to the collision of several oppositional discourses in Colombian popular culture at this moment.

In this article, I examine three countercultural currents that captivated a wide swath of youth in Colombia’s biggest cities in the 1960s: *nadaísmo*, *nueva ola*, and *canción protesta*. After describing their development, I analyze the similarities and differences in the ways adherents

5. Levy, Alegre. 1971. “Cantos y desencantos del Festival Protesta”. *El Tiempo*, July 23, 17.

6. “Entrega del ‘Coco de Oro’”. 1971. *El Tiempo*, July 21, 11.

of these movements conceived of the ideal means to bring about social, cultural, and political change. Certainly, there were fundamental tensions between the diverse positions on resistance held by those at the nuclei of these movements. The communist activists who first cultivated *canción protesta* were particularly disdainful of what they viewed as the disingenuous revolutionary tactics associated with other countercultural fields. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there was reciprocal admiration and interaction amongst exponents of different currents; the reality for most urban youth was that of a multidimensional countercultural environment in which a variety of outlets for artistic expression and political action were available.

The Coco de Oro Festival and the attention conferred upon it by the mainstream media were also symptomatic of the transition that *canción protesta* was undergoing in the early 1970s from a grassroots movement to a commercially viable phenomenon. Ultimately, I argue here that *canción protesta*'s shift into the commercial ambit was expedited by the confluence of the "discourses of resistance" linked to the three prevailing countercultural streams of the late 1960s.

Discourses of Resistance

It is not fashionable to write about music and resistance in 2020. Speaking in 2014 about his recent book, *Brass Bands in the Streets of New Orleans*, ethnomusicologist Matt Sakakeeny opined that such an analytical focus was anachronistic: "Can you imagine", he asked interviewer Steven Feld, "if I had organized my study around structure/agency, resistance/accommodation, or hegemony/complicity today" (Dilday 2014)?⁷

Sakakeeny's point is well-taken. The proliferation of research on resistance in the social sciences since the 1980s has generated abundant critiques of the term's inconsistent use within and across disciplines. Sociologists Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner (2004) took an early inventory of the main problems they identified in the literature, which centered around whether acts of resistance must be recognizable to their targets and observers, and whether a resistant intent must lie behind them.⁸ In their recent book, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance"*, Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen (2020) provide a dizzyingly comprehensive review of the theoretical pitfalls they find in the scholarship on "everyday resistance". And yet, this volume's publication demonstrates a continuing scholarly interest in studying resistance.

The title of Johansson and Vinthagen's book is indicative of the fact that most scholarship on *resistance* actually builds on James Scott's (1985) seminal inquiries into *everyday resistance*. Scott described *everyday resistance* as consisting of uncoordinated and often unrecognizable acts, and he set out to theorize them as an antidote to the disproportionate focus on coordinated and overt forms of resistance. Despite his efforts to distinguish these phenomena, however, Scott's conception of *everyday resistance* has been largely mapped on to the scholarly notion of *resistance* in its unqualified form. This conflation is apparent in much writing on music. In his entry on "Resistance and Protest" in the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music*

7. Anthropologist John Gledhill (2012, 1) has expressed a similar sentiment.

8. It is noteworthy that in contrast with Sakakeeny's statement ten years later, the first sentence of Hollander and Einwohner's (2004, 533) essay reads: "Resistance is a fashionable topic".

of the World, for instance, Dave Laing (2003, 345) differentiated “protest songs”, which he defined as “explicit statements of opposition”, from the “coded or opaque [...] expression of dissidence” found in “music of resistance”. This formulation has been reproduced in several studies (Attfield 2017; Laine, Suurpää, and Ltifi 2018; Tranmer 2019), including John Street’s (2012) oft-cited book, *Music and Politics*.

There is no question that we must attend to the different ways in which musical resistance operates in the spectrums between veiled opposition and open protest, and between small- and large-scale struggle. Nonetheless, distinguishing “protest songs” from “music of resistance” only inverts a problem that Scott (1985, 297) sought to redress in his work—the tendency to “reserve the term ‘resistance’ for collective or organized action”. Now, musical resistance is restricted to individual expression in which oppositional messages are concealed, while protest singers do something intrinsically different. I agree with Moreno Almeida (2017, 3) that this supposition is subjective.

Another quandary is thrown into relief when we recognize that scholarly efforts to analyze *resistance* generally look to theories of *everyday resistance*. If, by definition, *everyday resistance* has “no Leninist conspiracy behind it” (Scott 1985, 31), then the models used to study it may be of limited use for investigating a musical repertoire that was strongly informed by Marxist-Leninist ideas, as was the case with Colombian *canción protesta*.

Given the challenges that ensue from examining protest music through the prism of resistance, then, why make it a central theme of this study? For one, it is imperative to pay attention to the terminology used in the communities with which we work (Gledhill 2012, 1-2); and secondly, research on *everyday resistance* has led to valuable insights that can help us think through other forms of resistance and political action.

I see the countercultural movements discussed in this article as bound up in “discourses of resistance”. Allow me to illustrate with the example of *canción protesta*, a socially constructed category through which a subset of musicians and activists in 1960s Colombia endeavored to define what musical resistance should look and sound like. Most of the people involved with *canción protesta* were university students and/or involved with leftist political organizations. Inspired by the Marxist texts they were lapping up—and these sources were integral to the *academic* discourse of resistance—the movement’s participants positioned *canción protesta* as a form of struggle against the capitalist system imposed by the Colombian oligarchy, who maintained their political domination through a severely curtailed democracy. I use the word “struggle” here as a translation for *lucha*, the Spanish term that leftist ideologues uttered ad nauseum to denote the different modalities of resistance through which they sought to achieve their goals. By the early 1960s, for example, the Colombian Communist Party had concretized a strategy known as *la combinación de todas las formas de lucha* (the combination of all forms of struggle), by which it proposed to advance its agenda through electoral politics and armed resistance, along with strikes, land invasions, and so forth. Commentators vigorously debated the role that art should play in this framework—in other words, its potential to be resistant. As I describe below, the participants of the *nadaísmo* and *nueva ola* movements elaborated their own discourses of resistance in conversation with a different set of ideological resources.

Thus far, I have emphasized the role of “resistors” in directing the discourse on resistance. However, I recognize that resistance (of any sort) is, “due to its entanglement with and

intersectional relations to power, discursively articulated by actors, targets and observers" (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 39). This point encapsulates three interrelated assumptions I wish to highlight in my understanding of "discourses of resistance". First, it appropriately broadens the network of actors within which we see resistance being actuated and compels us to pay close attention to the reactions (or lack thereof) that resistance may elicit. Secondly, it acknowledges insights that many scholars have made (Abu-Lughod 1990; Gledhill 2012; Malcomson 2019; Moreno Almeida 2017)—inspired by Foucault (1978)—into the infinitely complex relationship between resistance and power. Finally, Vinthagen and Johansson's postulate speaks to the importance of interrogating "the discursive tactics that imbue acts of resistance with their particular meanings" (McDonald 2013, 28) in specific historical and social contexts (Johansson and Vinthagen 2020, 6).

It is to the contexts forming the backdrop to my research into music, protest, and resistance in Colombia that I now turn.

***La Violencia*, the National Front, and First-Generation Guerrillas**

Since the middle of the twentieth century, Colombians have been grappling with the legacy of the ten-plus years of sectarian political violence they call *La Violencia* (The Violence). The beginning of *La Violencia* is usually pegged at April 9, 1948, the date on which Liberal Party leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, whose socialist-tinged rhetoric had garnered him enormous popularity, was assassinated in Bogotá. Gaitán's murder sparked the *Bogotazo*, several days of mass riots in the capital that spread to other towns and spiraled into incessant fighting between supporters of the country's main political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. Ironically, it took a coup by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953 to bring about a respite from the violence. Balancing the distribution of political appointments to Conservatives with amnesty for Liberal guerrillas, Rojas enjoyed a significant drop in the *Violencia*-related death toll. As the dictatorship wore on, however, the levels of violence resurged, and the establishment parties became wary of Rojas's maneuvering to remain in power.

In 1957, voters approved a plebiscite authorizing the creation of the National Front (Frente Nacional, FN), a system that provided for equal representation of Liberals and Conservatives in legislative bodies and the alternation of the presidency between the parties for sixteen years. The pact undoubtedly paved the way for a drawing down of the capitalized *Violencia*. However, the bipartisan agreement marginalized alternative political forces, a situation compounded by the broader Cold War context. With the triumph of the Cuban Revolution only one year after the Front was initiated in 1958, containment of the "communist phantom" became a priority of successive FN presidents (Archila Neira 2003, 93). Indeed, starting in the mid-1960s, the front lines in the Colombian conflict were redrawn between the Colombian military and a handful of newly coalesced guerrillas.

Che Guevara's revolutionary theories influenced the creation of some of the first communist guerrilla groups in Colombia. The National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN), for example, was founded in 1964 by middle-class radicals who received military training in Cuba. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC), on the other hand, came together in 1966 from a host of peasant self-defense groups that had been formed under Communist-Party influence during *La Violencia*.

The following year, the Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación, EPL) was founded as the armed branch of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, a Maoist faction that broke away from the Communist Party of Colombia (Partido Comunista de Colombia, PCC).

One sector from which the guerrillas recruited new fighters was the university student movement. A common expression among student organizers during this period was “irse para el monte” (head for the hills), a phrase evoking the remote mountainous areas where the guerrillas were ensconced (Beltrán 2002, 169). Accounts of the student movement’s activities during the 1960s show a continuous cycle of student protests that were met by authorities with university shutdowns and police and military takeovers. The repressive responses sent student leaders straight into the open arms of leftist parties’ youth wings, and student organizing was thereafter dominated by the Communist Youth (Juventud Comunista, JUCO) and rival leftist groups (Archila Neira 2003; Tirado Mejía 2014).

Nadaísmo

Nadaísmo, [...] more than a late manifestation of our feeble aesthetic avantgarde, was the protest by intellectuals of plebeian origins against the official culture that had given moral licence to the mechanisms of political violence [...] The nadaístas’ insolence had been incited by the political violence in a society that sanctified—with blessings, prayers, and rosaries—the rituals of mutilation, disfigurement, and incineration that repeated themselves without mercy (Loaiza Cano 2004, 86).

As historian Gilberto Loaiza makes clear, the nadaísmo literary movement, which arose in 1958, was in no small measure a response to the violence that had racked Colombia over the preceding decade. In fact, the movement’s launch was tied to political events that marked the abatement of *La Violencia* and the initiation of the National Front. In 1957, *nadaísmo* founder Gonzalo Arango had been a substitute delegate to the National Constituent Assembly that was intended to extend Gustavo Rojas Pinilla’s regime. When Rojas resigned that year amidst growing opposition, Arango fled to Cali, seeking refuge from the backlash against Rojas supporters in his home city of Medellín (Romero 1988, 35). In Cali, Arango penned the *First Nadaísta Manifesto*, which he published upon his return to Medellín in 1958. In this foundational text, Arango proposed that *nadaísmo* was a “condition of the revolutionary spirit” that aimed to discredit all facets of the “established order”, and he foregrounded the poetic domain as the front on which the battle with Colombian society would be waged (Arango 2013).

In their efforts to undermine all facets of Colombian tradition, the *nadaístas* evinced a “fierce cosmopolitanism” (Romero 1988, 39) and constructed their nonconformist stance with guidance from foreign literary and philosophical luminaries (Pedersen 1971, 355). Fundamental influences included Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism (Lagos 1977, 104) and the surrealist movement (Romero 1988, 77-8). From the early 1960s, various currents of the US counterculture exerted an increasing impact. When poet Elmo Valencia joined the Cali *nadaístas* in 1960 after his studies in the United States, he contributed his knowledge of the American beatniks. In the late 1960s, the *nadaístas*’ struggle to disrupt conventions around dress, hair length, and sexual relations found resonance in Euro-American hippie culture.

Prominent *nadaístas* would go on to champion the hippies' mass-mediated cultural emissaries (e.g. the Beatles, Bob Dylan), and many of them experimented with drugs.

While the *nadaístas* were staunchly ambivalent towards organized politics (a topic I return to below), the quote at the head of this section alludes to an institution that was the unequivocal target of their ire: The Catholic Church. Known for its conservative tendencies and links to the dominant political parties, the Colombian Church was even accused of fomenting bloodshed during *La Violencia*. In the decades leading up to the 1960s, its control over social and political life in Medellín, where *nadaísmo* first took off, was all-encompassing (Tirado Mejía 2014, 212). The *nadaístas* set out to attack this symbol of the status quo from the get-go. In 1959, a group of *nadaístas* interrupted mass at the Basilica of Medellín, trashing communion wafers and smoking cigarettes before being chased by an angry mob (Romero 1988, 40-1). The movement gained its initial notoriety through stunts of this ilk.

Nueva Ola

During the same years that intellectuals in Medellín and Cali were laying the foundations of *nadaísmo*, rock and roll arrived in Bogotá and quickly spawned a robust subculture. In the late 1950s, broadcaster Carlos Pinzón became a leading promoter of North American rock and roll via his program on the Nuevo Mundo (New World) radio station (Pérez 2007, 27-29; Riaño "Sant-Jordi" 2014). Sowing the seeds for the development of a local Spanish-language scene, Nuevo Mundo and other stations in the capital soon began airing Mexican and Argentinean bands that recorded translated covers of rock and roll hits from the United States. Among the first Colombian rock and roll bands formed in the early 1960s, seminal groups like Los Speakers and Los Flippers advanced the development of domestic rock by composing original songs.

Around the turn of the 1960s, the term *nueva ola* had been coined in Argentina to denote the foreign rock and roll styles that were infiltrating the airwaves, along with their local exponents (Manzano 2010, 19, 35). Since these artists figured prominently in the playlists of the first Colombian radio stations to devote substantial airtime to rock and roll, *nueva ola* came to be used generically for all of the rock-derived music they broadcast (Riaño "Sant-Jordi" 2014). Capitalizing on the genre's growing popularity, in 1963 Carlos Pinzón started a new *nueva ola*-centered channel for the national broadcaster, Caracol. Radio 15, as the new station was baptized, was taken over by Alfonso Lizarazo, who extended its footprint to other cities. Lizarazo also inherited a program called *El show de los frenéticos*, which did weekly live broadcasts of a talent search. In 1965, a similar show called *El club del clan*—its name inspired by an eponymous production in Argentina (Manzano 2010)—was created on Radio Cordillera, and a television spin-off was introduced the following year. Programs like these quickly became the main vehicles through which *nueva ola* musicians launched their careers.

Through to about 1968, there was little classificatory distinction made between the different types of artists that were grouped together in the category of youth-oriented music that was taking the country by storm. Although it was frequently labelled *nueva ola*, the homegrown rock and roll music of the mid-1960s was also known in Colombia as *go-gó* and *ye-yé*, terms purportedly derived from commonly sung exclamations in English-language rock and roll

(Riaño “Sant-Jordi” 2014).⁹ Towards 1967-68, however, the staid sounds of *nueva ola* (or *go-gó* / *ye-yé*) began to be distinguished from the more ideologically nonconformist and musically progressive orientation of “rock” musicians who were trying to keep up with international developments. As Umberto Pérez (2007, 65) writes:

It is important to clarify that by [1967-68] *nueva ola* was differentiated from rock. To the former belonged especially the soloists and the crowd from *El club del clan*; the songs were not very rebellious or oppositional, and they distanced themselves from the accelerated rhythms of rock and were more palatable to adult ears.

As we shall see, in fact, within a few years the lines between rock and a musical category that was defined by its oppositional stance—*canción protesta*—became somewhat blurry.

Canción Protesta

As *nadaísmo* was approaching its 10th anniversary and *nueva ola* was reaching its peak in popularity, another youth-oriented cultural movement was taking shape in leftist circles. Towards 1966-67, a small group of musicians began performing at union, university, and community spaces in Bogotá in conjunction with the PCC and JUCO. These were the first Colombian artists to be designated by the *canción protesta* label. In November 1967, a report on the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in the PCC’s newsweekly, *Voz Proletaria* (Proletarian Voice), affirmed that Pablus Gallinazo, who performed at the event, was “perhaps the best exponent of the new trend christened as protest song”.¹⁰ Several months later, the singers Aída Pérez, Juan Sebastián, and Eliana performed a “recital of protest songs” at an exposition of Vietnamese drawings at the Casa de la Cultura.¹¹

The idea of cultivating a distinct category of music denominated as *canción protesta* appears to have come from Cuba. In 1967, the International Protest Song Meeting was held there, and while Colombia was not represented at the event, it is likely that PCC activists who had established ties with Cuba transmitted news from the island. Activist-musicians like Alejandro Gómez Roa, who had performed in front of Fidel Castro in Havana in 1960 (Emanuelsson 2014), would have been aware that the Protest Song Meeting led to the creation of a Protest Song Center at Havana’s Casa de las Américas (Americas House; Díaz 1994, 126-133). Gómez and his peers were inspired to formalize their own work in a similar fashion.

On April 24, 1968, the National Protest Song Center (Centro Nacional de la Canción Protesta, CNCP) was inaugurated at the Casa de la Cultura in Bogotá with the goal of creating “a movement that would bring together through songs a vast sector of nonconformist youth”.¹² Despite the institutional air evoked by its name, the loose assemblage of musicians involved with the CNCP initially continued their work in much the same way as in the years leading

9. “Los Ye-Yé se roban show de la feria”. 1966. *El Tiempo*, September 4, 26; Santos, Cecilia. 1966. “‘Mano a mano’ entre vieja y nueva ola”. *El Espectador*, December 3, B1.

10. “Grandioso acto rendido a la U.R.S.S.”. 1967. *Voz Proletaria*, November 16, 11.

11. “Noticiero cultural”. 1968. *El Tiempo*, February 22, 14.

12. “Canciones de protesta y esperanza”. 1968. *Voz Proletaria*, April 25, 2.

up to its founding. While they gave recitals at the Center itself, they continued to be called upon to enliven events organized by the JUCO, such as when Juan Sebastián "was in charge of the protest song" at the Second Festival of Peasant Youth in Viotá, Cundinamarca, in October 1968.¹³

The years 1968-69 were the gestation period for several initiatives launched at the CNCP beginning in 1970. That year, the CNCP began to host weekly *peñas* (coffeehouses) for "poets, singers of ballads [*baladas*], protest song, and folkloric music".¹⁴ The CNCP's *peñas* were modeled in part after the now-renowned Peña de los Parra (Gómez 1973), founded in Santiago, Chile in 1965 by *nueva canción* (new song) singers Isabel and Ángel Parra. In 1968, the Chilean playwright Gustavo Gac and Colombian actor-musician Perla Valencia, who had toured a music and poetry show from Chile to Colombia, established themselves as integral members of the Casa de la Cultura and relayed their knowledge of the Chilean *peña* milieu in which *nueva canción* was thriving (Flores 1994, 145).

Gac and Valencia were involved with other projects that marked the growth of *canción protesta*. In 1970, they published an anthology of protest song texts with support from several unions (Gac Artigas and Valencia Moncada 1970). Three of the Colombian songs from that anthology were included on a record released by the CNCP and the JUCO the same year. Titled ¡*Canción Protesta!!!*, the album featured Valencia's interpretations of two songs by JUCO executive committee member Jaime Caicedo alongside compositions by Juan Sebastián, Alejandro Gómez, and a tune commemorating the PCC's fortieth anniversary.¹⁵

In September 1970, Gac, Valencia, and others organized the First National Protest Song Festival, a weeklong event hosted by the CNCP.¹⁶ Evidently seeking to disseminate the political-artistic work they had been nurturing to a wider audience, the coordinators invited musicians from several Latin American countries, programmed recitals at union halls, universities, schools, and in working-class neighborhoods, and tried to have them broadcast on radio and television. At least two dozen performers participated.¹⁷

The flurry of activity at the CNCP continued into early 1971, when the Center teamed up with unions to reframe the weekly *peñas* as "Workers' Saturdays". The goal of this series of performances was evidently to generate interest in the Marxist political rhetoric espoused by the musicians involved with the CNCP among the constituency they often evoked in song texts—the revered *obrero*. Whereas the regular cost of admission to the *peñas* was 10 pesos (Gac Artigas and Valencia Moncada 1970), union-affiliated workers were offered entry to Workers' Saturdays for only 1 peso.¹⁸

While a detailed description of the *canción protesta* repertoire is beyond the scope of this essay, suffice it to say that songs articulating support for the recently formed guerrilla groups

13. "Combativo y unitario festival realizó la juventud campesina". 1968. *Voz Proletaria*, October 17, 2.

14. "Programación de la Casa de la Cultura". 1970. *Voz Proletaria*, January 15, 6.

15. "Editan disco". 1970. Suplemento Juventud, *Voz Proletaria*, August 13.

16. "En Bogotá festival de canción protesta". 1970. *El Tiempo*, July 16, 16.

17. "Organizan festival de la canción protesta". 1970. *Voz Proletaria*, September 10, 6; "Gran festival de la canción protesta". 1970. *Voz Proletaria*, September 24, 7.

18. "Los sábados obreros". 1971. *Voz Proletaria*, February 18, 6.

made up a significant proportion. Songs with titles like “Me voy para la guerrilla” (I’m joining the guerrillas) abounded. In numerous texts, songwriters also called upon peasants, workers, and students to take cognizance of their subjugation and join the revolutionary struggle. In terms of musical style, early *canción protesta* was rather heterogenous.

Divergent Discourses

The differences between the three expressions (leftism, *nadaísmo*, and rock) were enormous and obvious. While the first two had some degree of organization and ideology, rock appeared as an amorphous and confusing phenomenon [...] Only *nadaísmo* understood the significance of that youthful manifestation and in some manner of speaking became connected with it through ties of friendship and small literary contributions [...] The communists and other revolutionary groups did not understand the phenomenon and placed it in the traditional categories of imperialist penetration and alienating trend [...] In that era the hippie message of peace and love did not square with the recent tragedy of [priest-turned-ELN-fighter] Camilo Torres and the torrent of armed revolution that traversed the country (Giraldo Ramírez 1997, 15).

As Jorge Giraldo observes, there were clear and at times unbridgeable fault lines separating the ways in which adherents of *nadaísmo*, *nueva ola*, hippie rock, and *canción protesta* conceived of resistance to the dominant culture and political-economic system. In this section, I analyze the manifold discontinuities between the discourses of resistance fomented around these countercultural currents. In the following section, I identify convergences between the artists, audiences, and performance contexts associated with each in the final years of the 1960s.

The Politics of Nothing

Although *nadaístas*’ repudiation of the culture imposed by elites from Colombia’s traditional political parties and the Catholic Church overlapped with leftist views, the relationship between *nadaístas* and the political Left was a fraught one. As *nadaísta* poet Eduardo Escobar wrote, “*Nadaísmo* doesn’t have anything to say with respect to the conflict between capitalism and communism [...] It is not directed at the working or peasant masses”.¹⁹ Needless to say, there is an irreconcilable discrepancy here with the fundamental premise of Marxism, an understanding of which communist groups sought to communicate above all to workers and peasants. In an assessment of *nadaísmo* on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, Escobar stated: “Our relationships with the Left have ranged from complicity in our work, to our indifference and our open rejection of it”.²⁰ He went on to stress, however, that the *nadaístas* had been resolute on key political issues, including in their unwavering support for the Cuban Revolution.

Given their irreverence towards institutions and figures of all intellectual and political stripes, it is unsurprising that the *nadaístas* were themselves the objects of much critique. While

19. Escobar, Eduardo. 1976. “Gonzalo Arango. El nadaísmo. Historia de una pasión”. *Gaceta* 7, 8.

20. “Lo que dejó la tempestad”. 1979. *Alternativa* 207, April 9, 26.

condemnation from the clergy and elites was predictable, leftists who may have reserved sympathies for *nadaísmo's* anti-establishment track criticized its scandal-driven approach for not truly departing from bourgeois values (Pedersen 1971, 267; Tirado Mejía 2014, 211).²¹ Escobar countered these views by arguing that the Left couldn't comprehend the revolutionary proposition in *nadaísmo's* "affirmation of the body, of life, the land, love, and rejection of absolutes".²²

As Giraldo Ramírez noted in the quote above, there were many points of intersection between *nadaísmo* and the world of *nueva ola* in the late 1960s. While *nadaístas* have been credited with injecting a modicum of social consciousness into the *nueva ola* scene, for some leftists the rapprochement between the two camps was further proof of *nadaísmo's* empty rhetoric. As one well-known actor involved with the EPL put it, the *nadaístas* had "removed their masks of false rebellion to unite with the reactionary go-gó".²³

Long-Haired Resistance

Comments such as the one just quoted exemplify the deep suspicion with which militant leftists viewed *nuevaoleros* and the hippie movement, which arrived in Colombia in the late 1960s and became closely associated with rock music (Tirado Mejía 2014, 174). Although its fundamentally rebellious spirit is a recurring trope in the historiography of Colombian rock, the politics of early rock and roll culture were decidedly mixed. In the mid-1960s the *nueva ola* music-culture celebrated a youthful hedonism that was lived out at the weekend dances around which the scene revolved. As Eduardo Arias put it, "I don't think the music from that time carried any more significance than 'we are young and want to have fun in our own way'".²⁴

The middle- and upper-class backgrounds of many *nueva ola* musicians and followers similarly undermined its oppositional credentials. Before embracing the potential for *go-gó* music to channel *nadaísta* ideas, Gonzalo Arango mused that

the ye-yé are a generation that shake off the nothingness of their bourgeois life [...] It is a generation that doesn't even rebel in a creative manner [...] They stay dancing in the same impotent hell, with no exit towards liberty.²⁵

Within bands, political positions varied widely. In response to questions about whether they supported a revolution in Colombia, one member of Los Flippers stated that they "play to forget about social issues", while another indicated that he favored a Cuban-style revolution.²⁶ A group of young rock and roll musicians that claimed to be behind an impending artistic "revolution" in 1967 delineated an explicit contrast between their own approach and the

21. "Del nadaísmo al oficialismo". 1968. *Voz Proletaria*, November 14, 5.

22. "Lo que dejó la tempestad". 1979. *Alternativa* 207, April 9, 27.

23. Aliocha. 1967. "Fausto y la tragedia del humanismo". *Cromos*, August 14.

24. Arias, Eduardo. 2000. "El rock colombiano: el proceso de surgir y de caer varias veces". *Gaceta* 47, 112.

25. Osorio, Sonia. 1966. "El sacudido mundo de los ye-yé". *Cromos*, December 12, 11.

26. "Todo lo que hay que saber sobre Los Flippers". 1966. *Cromos*, November 28.

strategies of resistance favored by the Left, avowing that in “music, painting, songs, and sculpture, we are going to realize a pacific revolution, without strikes, protests, or anything of the like”.²⁷

While the gulf between the principles guiding most *canción protesta* musicians and those at play in *nueva ola* was evident, the young people involved with the latter espoused a form of generational protest through which they aimed to challenge traditional notions about dress, the length of men’s hair, sexuality, and music (López de la Roche 1994, 72-75; Pérez 2007, 55). Although these contestations on the cultural front did not purport to disrupt the overall political or economic order, conservatives clearly perceived a threat to their cultural hegemony. Police in Bogotá and Medellín were in the habit of apprehending the *melenudos* (long-haired men) that were known to be *nueva ola*’s primary constituency and forcibly shaving their heads (Londoño 2014, 70). At times, the urban youth that made *nueva ola* their musical emblem organized collective acts of resistance against the denigration they suffered from the dominant culture. In late 1966, prominent DJ Jaime Guerra Madrigal organized a march in Medellín to protest the vilification of *go-gós* and *ye-yés* there; a similar demonstration was held in Bogotá the following year.²⁸ The fact that figures from the music world spearheaded these acts of protest demonstrates that they were strongly associated with the rock and roll music that anchored the culture.

“Revolutionary Sincerity”

Members of leftist political parties may have recognized the futility of harnessing rock fans’ ambiguous oppositional proclivities in spaces where the two interacted. One such space was the 1968 First Assembly of Youth in Rebellion, which featured speeches by leaders of various parties’ youth wings and was supposed to showcase performances by Los Flippers and Eliana. After police prohibited the musicians from taking their instruments into the venue (the National Capitol building), the event almost ended due to the “mass exodus of long-haired youths”. A writer from *Voz Proletaria* criticized the majority of *go-gó* fanatics in the crowd, but suggested that those in whom one could “appreciate revolutionary sincerity, who enthusiastically applauded Camilo Torres and Che Guevara”, should “seek the true revolutionary path that mobilizes youth in the fight for the conquest of power under the direction of [...] the Communist Party”.²⁹

Zooming out, we can distinguish four principal axes in the Left’s critique of *nueva ola* and hippies. For one, as Giraldo Ramírez (1997, 15) mentions, rock’s foreign roots allowed radicals to simplistically dismiss it as a symptom of American imperialism. Secondly, and following Giraldo again, most hippies deviated from communist groups in terms of their positions on armed insurrection. Press coverage of the hippie movement insinuated that rather than resort to violence, the hippie youth of the day belonged to “the new generations that have resolved to exchange rocks and ‘Molotov’ bombs for a guitar”.³⁰ Thirdly, the commentary on the First

27. Ayuso, Miguel. 1967. “‘Revolución’ artística inician 15 conjuntos”. *El Tiempo*, April 27, 14.

28. “Arte y artistas”. 1966. *El Espectador*, December 9, B4; Moannack, Gloria. 1967. “La marcha ye-yé de la ‘nueva civilización’”. *El Tiempo*, February 12, 15.

29. “Primera asamblea de la ‘juventud en rebelión’”. 1968. *Voz Proletaria*, October 3, 2.

30. Hurtado de Paz, Amparo. 1971. “3 días de música en Medellín”. *El Espectador*, June 18, 1B.

Assembly of Youth in Rebellion prioritizing "the fight for the conquest of power" speaks to the elemental conflict between the Marxist approach to class struggle and the generalized "atmosphere of resistance and of criticism towards dominant values" in the hippie movement (López de la Roche 1994, 73-4). Finally, the suggestion that the Communist Party was the best route through which to work towards revolutionary change reflects leftist organizations' efforts to monopolize oppositional practices. Whereas the phenomenon of *canción protesta* had remained linked to the PCC's sphere of influence through to about 1970, by 1971 it had surged beyond it. That year, the press identified rock concerts and the Coco de Oro festivals as key loci for *canción protesta*. Given activists' tendencies to rigidly follow their organizations' creeds, it is not surprising that they would devalue protest music produced and disseminated outside their jurisdictions.

Countercultural Movements in the Late 1960s

Notwithstanding the ideological rifts that existed between the three countercultural streams, starting in 1967 figures from the *nadaísmo* movement, the *nueva ola* scene, and *canción protesta* intermingled frequently. The relationship between *nadaísmo* and *nueva ola* was particularly fruitful during this period. Finding a counterpart for their resistance to traditional customs in the *go-gó* phase of *nueva ola*, *nadaísta* poets strove to make their mark on the popular music scene. The highlight of the *nadaísta* Festival of Vanguard Art in Cali in 1967 was a concert that brought together the country's "principal go-gó artists".³¹ Soon after that event, Gonzalo Arango published a long essay extolling *go-gó*'s revolutionary qualities, highlighting its affinities with *nadaísmo*, and looking forward to the "new directions" in which *nadaísta* writers would take the *go-gó* movement with their "protest songs and love ballads".³² As the hippie-associated rock scene developed at the dawn of the 1970s, the mutual esteem between hippies and *nadaístas* was palpable. In 1970, police arrested *nadaísta* poet Jotamario along with "fifty hippies" outside a venue where American rock band Hope had been scheduled to perform until the City of Bogotá's Section on Narcotics Prevention and Control prohibited the concert.³³

The link between *nadaísmo* and *nueva ola* went beyond intermittent comingling and into the realm of musical collaboration. *Nueva ola* singer Eliana recorded two albums of songs written by *nadaístas*, with titles—such as *Canciones de la nada* (Songs from Nothing, ca. 1967)—that explicitly referenced the movement.³⁴ Gonzalo Arango wrote about this work that it "fuses two generations: *nadaísmo* and go gó, poetry and music".³⁵ Another key artistic association was the one formed between Arango and the Medellín rock band Los Yetis. In 1967, Arango published a lengthy report on the band, in which he praised the *go-gó* generation for acting as a counterpoint to the violent means through which many in Colombia had worked out their frustrations: "All of that wild fury that expressed itself in an aimless violence was

31. Morris de Flórez, Athala. 1967. "Breves del festival". *El Tiempo*, June 14, 9.

32. Arango, Gonzalo. 1967. "Qué diablos es el go-gó?". *Cromos*, August 7, 13.

33. "50 detenidos al prohibir policía concierto 'rock'". 1970. *El Tiempo*, October 11, 7.

34. Mesa, Elkin. 1967. "En tono confidencial". *Cromos*, July 3; Aliocha. 1968. "Última página". *Cromos*, April 15.

35. This quote is taken from what appears to be a manuscript about the recording typed by Arango; see "Gonzalo sobre Eliana", digital image, posted to Flickr by Nadaísta, August 2, 2013, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/89185403@N05/9424456777/>.

embodied in the go-go spirit [...] That generation did not express its protests through arms, but through art". In a seemingly contrived segment at the conclusion of the piece, Arango asked Los Yetis why they didn't write protest songs. Band member Juan Nicolás Estela replied that if Arango wrote one for them, they would record it. The resulting song was "Llegaron los peluqueros" (The Barbers Have Arrived).³⁶ According to Yetis singer Juancho López, the song's text, which included the line "Die barbers, long live long hair, the revolution", voiced one of male *nuevaoleros'* most urgent demands: the right to grow flowing manes. As amusing as this posturing may seem today, let us recall that men's locks were key sites of social control and resistance at that time. In fact, "Llegaron los peluqueros" was duly censored from radio by the Ministry of Communications (Londoño 2014, 80).

The discourses of resistance associated with *nueva ola* and *nadaísmo* clearly overlapped with each other in ways that separated them from *canción protesta*. Still, the progressive social values championed within the former two shared at least superficial affinities with leftist ideas, and there were important links between the rock and roll community, *nadaístas*, and the world of leftist activism. Members of Los Young Beats, a Bogotá band formed in 1966, had close ties with leftist artists, rehearsed at the Colombo-Soviet Cultural Institute, and conveyed political messages in their songs (Moreno 2003). In the late 1960s, a growing number of *nueva ola* stars were attracted to the contrarian allure of *canción protesta*. An in-depth profile of *nueva ola* idol Óscar Golden in 1967 focused on the artist's support of the *protesta* genre. The article noted that Golden, who said he identified with the *nadaístas*, had recently recorded his first protest song.³⁷ At least one *nuevaolero* was sympathetic enough to the communist rhetoric underpinning *canción protesta* to join the ranks of the guerrillas. In 1967, the drummer of Los Speakers apparently participated in an ELN hijacking of a domestic flight in protest of Cuba's expulsion from the Organization of American States (Behar 1985, 112). Accounts of the 1970 Festival de la Vida (Festival of Life), one of the first major rock festivals held in Bogotá, provide a barometer of the hippie movement's political orientations as it reached its zenith: the image of Che Guevara was pervasive on attendees' clothing, and performers sang about him and co-revolutionary Fidel Castro, as well as workers' strikes.³⁸

There were also instances in which *canción protesta's* advocates opened physical and expressive spaces for the protagonists of *nueva ola* and *nadaísmo*. In 1966 the JUCO invited *go-gó* groups to perform during a cultural week it put on, and the following year Los Young Beats performed on *canción protesta's* home turf, the Casa de la Cultura (Moreno 2003). Recognizing oppositional merit in *nadaístas'* literary output, musicians involved with the CNCP set some of their texts to music. Among the *nadaísta* poems that Juan Sebastián musicalized was Gonzalo Arango's "Tomás el Contento" (Happy Tomás), which recounted the story of a youngster conscripted to "defend Wall Street in Vietnam" (Gac Artigas and Valencia Moncada 1970, 104-105).

The musical production described thus far resulted from mutual inspiration and collaborations between artists that were strongly identified with either *nadaísmo*, *nueva ola*, or *canción protesta*. However, the approximations between these different currents also came to be embodied in individual artists. In 1966, Pablus Gallinazo shared the first prize in the *Nadaísta*

36. Arango, Gonzalo. 1967. "Cara a cara con Los Yetis". *Cromos*, August 28, 65.

37. "Que no censuren las canciones de protesta pide Golden". 1967. *Cromos*, July 10.

38. Gossain, Juan. 1970. "Tarde de angustia, histeria y rock". *El Espectador*, June 28, 14A; Levy, Alegre. 1970. "El festival de la vida". *El Tiempo*, June 28, 16.

Novel Competition for his book, *La pequeña hermana* (The Little Sister), and he quickly became a key figure in the movement (Pedersen 1971, 363). The same year, Gallinazo established himself as an important player in *nueva ola* music with his composition "Boca de chicle" (Bubblegum Mouth), which Óscar Golden made into a hit.³⁹ Gallinazo was also involved during the gestation period for the CNCP around this time and proved his communist credentials by performing at the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. In a similar vein, singer Eliana moved easily between the three streams. She performed at the *nadaísta* Festival of Vanguard Art in 1967 and recorded *nadaísta* songs, released albums in conjunction with the popular music industry that promoted *nueva ola*, and was a regular at CNCP events.

***Canción Protesta* Goes Commercial**

While militant leftists challenged the modes of resistance privileged by *nadaísmo*, *nueva ola*, and hippies, some *canción protesta* supporters made room for unaffiliated countercultural manifestations. The *nadaístas*, for their part, rejected any sort of political dogmatism, including that emanating from communist camps—though some *nadaístas* were on board with leftist ideals. Several leading *nadaístas* were drawn to the rebellious energies of *nueva ola* and hippie rock. And while certain segments of the latter two movements were built around a "bourgeois" hedonism and devotion to peace, many of the youngsters involved with them sympathized with the political ideas that activists from the *canción protesta* movement promoted.

As I hope can be appreciated in the preceding summary, despite the discursive boundaries that ideologues may have set up around these countercultural movements, the reality on the ground for most urban youth was quite fluid. Young people evincing a range of political interests, as well as an array of artistic preferences, moved in and out of various oppositional spaces. Their allegiances to particular musicians or ensembles—or, in the case of the artists themselves, to particular contexts of performance and production—shifted in turn. In the final section of this article, I demonstrate how this dynamic environment paved the way for *canción protesta* to move beyond its original grassroots constituency and become a mass-mediated cultural product. A brief look at the experiences of two young groups will help illustrate this transition.

At the same time that they were becoming some of the most active performers at the CNCP during its peak years of activity (1969-1971), the duos Norman y Darío and Ana y Jaime were also nurturing roots in the world of *nueva ola*. Norman Smith and Iván Darío López had been members of Los Yetis before moving to Bogotá around 1969 to pursue studies in advertising. Once in the capital, Norman y Darío performed frequently at the *peñas* held at the Casa de la Cultura. They established a relationship with militant leftist poet Nelson Osorio Marín, and composed music for several texts he wrote. Smith's recollections of that period are a testimony of the variegated political ambiance within which he and López created their brand of *canción protesta*:

39. "Arte y artistas". 1966. *El Espectador*, December 14, B4. Gonzalo Arango described the song, which appears to express a yearning for sensuality, as being "at the same time a *nadaísta* poem and a 'go-gó' rhythm" (Arango, Gonzalo. 1967. "Qué diablos es el go-gó?". *Cromos*, August 7, 12). It is important to note that for young people at that time allusions to eroticism were interpreted as forms of resistance to what many people I spoke with viewed as a puritanical culture. A middle-aged man I met at a Pablus Gallinazo concert in 2013 told me that "Boca de chicle" was oppositional precisely because of its sexual overtones.

We were living in Bogotá and, you know, the left-leaning tendencies, because we were mad and we wanted to talk about it and be like all the other revolutionaries [...] I guess it was pretty political. I mean, you're either from the oligarchy or you weren't [...] Other people were a lot more intense and had more structured feelings and thoughts about why they were doing what they were doing [...] We were kind of floating with all these different people, thinking kind of the same but not adhering to one particular calling or flag.⁴⁰

Norman y Darío used the contacts they had made with Los Yetis to establish connections with the media, working closely with Alfonso Lizarazo and performing on his *nueva ola*-oriented television show, *Estudio 15*. In their brief time as a duo, they recorded a mini-LP and full-length LP with CBS. Smith told me several of the songs on the mini-LP were “an ode to Che Guevara”, although only “Etc. etc. etc.”, with lyrics by Nelson Osorio, includes direct references to the legendary revolutionary. The physical copy I obtained of this recording confirms that it was appreciated by leftist intellectuals: stamps on the record sleeve indicate that it belonged to the “Club Máximo Gorki”. Given that it was named after the pioneer of socialist realism, operated at the Colombo-Soviet Cultural Institute, and had its activities advertised in *Voz Proletaria*, this group surely had some kind of relationship with the PCC.⁴¹ The full-length LP, titled *Las primeras protestas* (The First Protests), appears to fall more in line with *nueva ola* productions of the time. Lizarazo served as artistic director for the recording, and Harold did the arrangements. The liner notes tout the album's contents as “a challenge to traditionalism”.

The sibling duo Ana y Jaime became involved with *canción protesta* at roughly the same time as Norman y Darío. Ana Valencia recalled that the latter introduced her and her brother to the *peñas* at the CNCP, which they attended religiously. Like Smith and López, the Valencia siblings were not associated with any political party, but were drawn to the oppositional climate at the CNCP:

There we learned social songs that sort of denounced something, that told a story [...] Perhaps we were quite young, but we liked what we were narrating; we liked the songs they sang; we thought they were pretty. We thought they worked well or that people understood the message that was being conveyed.⁴²

Attendees of the *peñas* were quite taken with the duo, giving them records and teaching them songs from the Latin American protest song repertoire. It was at the CNCP that Ana y Jaime discovered the work of Venezuelan Alí Primera and Chilean Víctor Jara, whose songs they later recorded. Nelson Osorio asked the youngsters if they would set his texts to music, and some of their best-known songs resulted from their collaborations with him. While Ana y Jaime were integrating themselves into the movement at the CNCP, however, Alfonso Lizarazo was grooming them for the commercial market, inviting them to perform on his talent shows and preparing them to record their first LP.

Initially, the CNCP community embraced Norman y Darío and Ana y Jaime, both of which performed alongside core CNCP organizers Perla Valencia, Juan Sebastián, and Alejandro

40. Norman Smith, interview with author. February 19, 2015.

41. “Culturales”. 1970. *Voz Proletaria*, February 12, 7.

42. Ana Valencia, interview with autor. March 24, 2015.

Gómez at the First National Protest Song Festival. When the duos were not originally included in the lineup for the first Coco de Oro Protest Song Festival in 1970, their CNCP colleagues wrote the festival organizers a letter protesting their exclusion. Alejandro Gómez stated that the festival "could not be the expression of what Protest Song is. [The organizers] chose singers that never had anything to do with this movement and in an impromptu fashion learned several protest songs, which for them was an unknown genre".⁴³ Ana y Jaime and Norman y Darío, the latter of which Gómez called "one of the best, if not the best young duet there is in Colombia", did ultimately perform at the festival. Like its iteration the following year, though, the Coco de Oro's initial staging in the tourist mecca of San Andrés was bizarrely construed. Organized by *nueva ola* singer Leonardo Álvarez during peak season, the event aimed to raise funds for the construction of a Catholic chapel on the island, and the jury thus included a local priest, along with San Andrés superintendent Pedro López Michelsen (brother of soon-to-be president Alfonso), leftist writer Jaime Mejía Duque, and Gonzalo Arango—once an unabashed critic of the Church.⁴⁴

Norman y Darío split up in 1971 when Smith moved to the United States. Ana y Jaime, however, continued to shift over to the media infrastructure that had been set up for *nueva ola*, while retaining their labelling as exponents of *canción protesta*. And so it was that they came to be featured contestants at the 1971 Coco de Oro Festival. As described in the introduction, the festival lineup also included *nueva ola* musicians with few ties to *canción protesta*. In contrast to the CNCP's efforts to appeal to the working classes by lowering the cost of entrance to their *peñas*, admission to the Coco de Oro was prohibitive for that population. The Festival revolved around a song contest that a leftist dramaturge, the founder of *nadaísmo*, local businesspeople, figures from the mainstream media, and government officials were invited to adjudicate. Many observers questioned the presence of emissaries of the "establishment" on the jury, and there were concerns that its make-up would lead to censorship. Nevertheless, some of the judges had notions about what a protest song should be that were in line with those of CNCP activists, and songs from the grassroots *canción protesta* repertoire ultimately fared well.

In my view, the numerous contradictory aspects of the Coco de Oro festivals and the controversies they engendered were manifestations of a collision of competing discourses of resistance. As a more generalized youth counterculture came to the fore from the amalgam of different currents, actors outside the CNCP community staked their claims on *canción protesta*. As the genre was appropriated beyond its original context, conceptions of *canción protesta* began to diverge from the vision cultivated at the CNCP. The "Protest Song Manifesto" printed in the 1971 Coco de Oro Festival program is a good example of the shifting discourse on protest song. While it includes ideas that are unmistakably derived from communist thinking, it stops short of prescribing precisely what kinds of resistance should be deployed, or by and against whom, as texts written about *canción protesta* by activists consistently did.

Notably, the artists that had been involved with the CNCP, but also participated in the Coco de Oro festivals, radio and television broadcasts, and album releases with record companies, lost favor among the more politically defined voices in the grassroots movement. In 1973, Alejandro Gómez said about Ana y Jaime that while it was commendable that the group included song texts by Nelson Osorio on their albums, "unfortunately, they became independent [from the

43. "Canción protesta es cantar los problemas que vivimos". 1970. Suplemento Juventud, *Voz Proletaria*, August 13.

44. Samuel. 1970. "Festival de protesta se inicia hoy en San Andrés". *El Tiempo*, July 3, 7.

CNCP] and commercialized [...] It is a collaboration, let's say, with protest song". Summarizing his take on acts like Ana y Jaime and Pablus Gallinazo, he complained:

This is a protest song in quotes, commercialized by record companies that want this type of song to be the one that is heard as protest song, while the truly committed songs, the revolutionary songs, are completely ignored by such companies (Gómez 1973).

In retrospect, Gómez's concerns were not entirely misplaced. What has come to be known most widely as *canción protesta* in Colombia since that time is the mediatized version he decried. In my view, however, his theory about corporations conspiring to stamp out genuine musical resistance in *canción protesta* was overly simplistic. It belies the fact that there was substantial overlap between the protest songs played on the media and those that appear in the songbooks compiled by leftist activists.

Conclusions

Situating oppositional and countercultural expressions in the discourses of resistance within which they take shape can help us comprehend *canción protesta's* routes at the turn of the 1970s. At this time, the discourses associated with *canción protesta* and *nueva ola*, the latter of which was itself indebted to the agitation initiated by *nadaísmo*, intersected at a few key nodes. These small overlays created opportunities for the groups and institutions that fostered *nueva ola* and rock to merge the protest song genre, along with some of its original connotations, into their sphere of action. Leftist activists' responses to the perceived commercialization of *canción protesta*, which communicated central precepts of the discourse within which it developed, further attest to the highly contingent nature of musical resistance. The artists and songs that CNCP disciples deprecated when their attachments to the grassroots movement frayed were in fact no different from those they had applauded at the CNCP's *peñas*. Aired in different contexts, however, these musical acts (in both senses of the word) could no longer be reconciled to communists' understanding of the directionality of resistance.

Focusing on discourses of resistance also helps circumvent the trap of describing oppositional music as either "protest music" or "music of resistance"—a predicament resulting from the tendency in some musicological writing to project the characteristics of *everyday resistance* onto all musical *resistencia*. Taking a wider view, we may consider various deeds considered here—trashing a church, writing *nadaísta* poems, men growing their hair long, dancing to lustful rock and roll songs, peasants taking up arms, performing protest songs that exalt guerrilla groups, etc.—as potential acts of resistance that lie in the spectrums between everyday/exceptional and individual/collective. Paired with close analysis, moreover, this approach provides a framework for identifying the knotty vectors of resistance and power, as negotiated between actors in different positions (e.g. musicians, activists, journalists, police, politicians, etc.) in a changing society. To conclude where I began, I offer the example of the winning song from the 1971 Cocco de Oro Festival.

In the mid-1960s, singer-guitarist Sergio Torres garnered press coverage for a lengthy tour he did across Europe interpreting traditional Colombian music. Although Torres "took on revolutionary positions" during his stay in Europe, he was not personally involved with

the *canción protesta* movement in Colombia.⁴⁵ He is thus one of the many musicians who participated in the Coco de Oro protest song contests despite their lack of prior affiliation with the genre, a situation that irked journalists, judges, and CNCP activists. As far as protest songs go, though, Torres' tune "No trabajo más" conformed to the models established by the activist-musicians who pioneered *canción protesta*. In fact, Maoists who published a protest songbook titled *Guitarra y fusil* (Guitar and Gun) in 1971 deemed it worthy of inclusion, and one can easily imagine young militants rousing a crowd with its simple, catchy refrain.

While Torres himself recorded the song, the festival triumph spurred Venezuelan dance band Los Melódicos, which was quite popular in Colombia, to issue its own interpretation of the upbeat *cumbia*. Interestingly, the Melódicos version omits one verse from the original:

Trabajo en las petroleras	I work in the oil fields
Con ese calor minero	With that heat of the mines
Las empresas extranjeras	The foreign companies
Se llevan nuestro dinero	Take all of our money

It is tempting to read this edit as tacit acknowledgement that this portion of the song, which indicts the neo-colonial exploitation of Latin American natural resources, was the most likely to be understood by various parties as subversive. Indeed, despite having passed muster with politicians and other Coco de Oro jurors who were "not truly revolutionary", media and government entities appear to have attempted to squash the dissemination of "No trabajo más". As Torres reported in an interview,

That song was censored by a radio station [...] and there were also rumors that it was prohibited by the Ministry of Communications, because in Barrancabermeja [a hub of the petroleum industry] they took it up as an anthem, and because they considered it communist.⁴⁶

If what Torres suggested was true, the prospect of actual workers in oil fields singing out against their working conditions may have prompted officials to wield their power to limit the song's spread. In contrast to a middle-class musician vocalizing abstract protests on a festival stage, such an occurrence may have portended a form of overt, collective resistance with the potential to effect change.

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