Black skin, red masks? Decolonisation and literature in 1970s Cuba

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Abstract

For commentators on cultural life, the decade of the 1970s is almost unanimously viewed as unremittingly grey: the decade opened with the highly controversial 1971 Congreso de Educación y Cultura, and continued with the infamous *quinquenio gris*. However, as Jorge Fornet's recent study *El 71. Anatomía de una crisis* (2013) makes clear, the 1970s was not only the decade of the sovietisation of culture; it was also the decade in which clashing endogenous and exogenous models of literature included many perspectives that advocated cultural decolonisation as the most urgent project. This chapter examines the complexity of cultural production, regulation and reception during the first half of this decade through a close reading of discourses of decolonisation in the most infamous policy document produced in the 1970s, the closing resolution of the 1971 Congreso de Educación y Cultura, and relates those debates to contemporary cultural policy in Cuba.

This chapter aims to examine and interrogate the orthodoxy that the early 1970s was a period when, for a variety of internal and external reasons, Cuba became sovietised to the exclusion of other development models, and when cultural policy embraced the Soviet and/or socialist model to the exclusion of all other paradigms of cultural production and reception. This conventional reading, often focusing on the very repressive atmosphere for intellectuals, writers and artists who were considered by the cultural authorities to be contaminated, is primarily based on the analysis of a wide range of primary sources, not least the Declaration of the now notorious Primer Congreso de Educación y Cultura held in Havana in April and May of 1971. Indeed, the Declaration itself is often reduced to its most strident and exclusionary phrases that refer to 'la maffia [sic] de intelectuales burgueses seudoizquerdistas' [1] (El Primer Congreso Nacional 1971: 15), aspects which themselves refer us to the events which immediately preceded the Congress: the effects and responses of the *caso Padilla* of 1968-71.

[1] All references to the Declaration, including page numbers, are to the pdf version of the text originally published in the Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí, and preceded by Cintio Vitier's commentary. The text is most easily available online at http://revistas.bnjm.cu/index.php/revista-bncjm/article/view/1732 (date accessed 11 November 2017); page numbers refer to the original published text, rather than the pdf.

Subsequent scholarly work has largely taken this reductive interpretation of the 1971 Congress and has reduced it even further. [2] Thus, the long-term effect on scholarship of Cuban culture of the inevitable emphasis on these particularly aggressive dimensions of the declaration is twofold: it authorises us not to reassess the primary text in its entirety itself, and, as a consequence, it reproduces the notion that this is the unique and exclusive message of the text. As such, and not without due cause, the impact of this metonymic reading is to cast an excessively singular and narrow interpretation on the decade of the 1970s, an interpretation, itself becoming increasingly narrow over time, that stresses the triumph of narrow political prescription over artistic freedom.

The orthodoxy in contemporary scholarship on Cuban literary culture is that policy was entirely focused on producing and promoting political and didactic literature, if not explicitly 'sovietised' through the adoption of the genres and stock characters associated with Eastern bloc socialism (the hero overcoming challenges, the triumphalist depiction of a reality destined for socialist perfection). Conventional approaches certainly focus on the authority and credibility award to genres such as 'socialist' detective fiction or testimonial writing, to literary approaches such as socialist realism, and, in all cases, the assumption is that the literature produced was not only overtly political but also mediocre in terms of literary or aesthetic quality. The first half of the 1970s, then (if not the entire decade, or *decenio gris*, according to some more recent commentators), is often cast as a period of retrograde development after the gains of the 1960s, a time of stasis which left little room for competing discourses of literature in the Revolution to circulate and jostle for power.

In terms of a conceptual approach to cultural policy, then, 1971 becomes a landmark moment, a line in the sand which produced its own 'before' and 'after'. However, an approach to the development of cultural policy during this decade must be both linear and non-linear (diachronic and synchronic) if it is to capture the complexity of the period, allowing for evolution and response as well as circularity (Navarro 2002), cycles of debate and resolution (Kapcia 2000) and, of course some level of chaos. In this sense, although it is necessary to view internal events (the death of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara in October 1967, the *caso Padilla* that started in 1968, the failed *zafra* of 1970, the tenth anniversary of Playa

[2] The list of these references dates back to the 1970s, and is too numerous to mention in detail. However, the increasingly frequent use of the term 'post-Soviet' to refer to the post-1990 period implies that the vision of Cuban culture as being entirely subsumed into Stalinist or sovietised models from the 1970s to the 1990s is very pervasive.

Girón in April 1971) and external events (the election of Salvador Allende in September 1970, the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the same month) as the immediate historical precedents to the early 1970s in Cuba, it is also worth examining the decade through other lenses that question the deterministic, absolute and inevitable nature of history and that instead emphasise its 'contingency and chaos' (West-Pavlov 2013: 75).

This chapter will propose and demonstrate not only that a more appropriate conceptual model for understanding cultural policy during this period would be that of the appropriation and accumulation of different discourses of modernity and development over the period since 1959 (and including the 1970s), but also that the cultural and political leadership attempted to fuse these discourses over the course of the decade of the 1970s in order to reach a more inclusive model that incorporated the language of particular ideological factions, as well as to establish vital connections between Cuba and its emerging international allies. In this sense, although the effects of the *quinquenio gris* certainly resulted in a sense of cultural isolation and defensiveness for many artists and intellectuals, running parallel was a counter-narrative which articulated multiple new paths for political and economic cooperation with international allies which could, it was hoped, bear cultural fruits.

A brief and superficial examination of some of the most prominent cultural decisions after 1970 makes it clear that a conventional linear understanding that assumes a monolithic 'sovietised' model applied consistently and coherently is inappropriate in several ways. Firstly, if the start of the 1970s did indeed herald the comprehensive top-down adoption of Soviet-style models to the exclusion of other, more autochthonous, paradigms, how can we explain the sudden 'recovery' from the crisis of cultural freedom that accompanied the creation in 1976 of the new Ministerio de Cultura with Armando Hart at its head? Secondly, how can we explain the fact that, well in advance of the creation of the Ministerio and its gradual development after 1976 of the 'módulo cultural' (the nationwide municipal network of cultural institutions), the 1971 Congreso proposed and ratified the creation of a nationwide network of Casas de la Trova (Fornet 2013: 180)? Why, if Roberto Fernández Retamar had composed the essence of his landmark anti-colonialist essay 'Calibán' in 1968, was it not only published but thereafter widely circulated in Cuba and across left-wing Latin American nations in 1971? Why did the first PCC Congress not take place until 1975, just as the influence of the notorious Consejo Nacional de Cultura was coming to its end? In the field of literary histories and the formal and informal education through this medium in their own literature of Cubans, why were the Cuban literary histories that circulated in the 1970s more

often re-editions of texts first published in the 1960s than new texts to reflect the new 'sovietised' zeitgeist? [3] In light of this context, the publication of the 1980 *Diccionario de la Literatura Cubana* produced by the Instituto de Lingüística y Literatura assumes a new purpose: not only as a potential corrective or counterbalance to an abundance of models imported from the Eastern bloc, but also as an attempt to create one comprehensive and inclusive understanding of literature in revolutionary Cuba. In other words, the evidence demonstrates that the picture is clearly more complex than many conventional perspectives would admit.

Crucially, given the importance of the Cuban Revolution for Cuba's most immediate regional allies, the Latin American left, this complexity extended beyond the borders of the island and implicated many eminent Latin American intellectuals in a debate about the shape that Latin American literature should take after the euphoric events of the Cuban Revolution. Prominent Latin American writers such as Julio Cortázar debated these difficult questions with concepts such as 'Los revolucionarios de la literatura más que los literatos de la revolución' (Cortázar, in Fornet 2013: 67), whilst Mario Benedetti produced extensive essays and position pieces (Gregory 2010), and young writers who were less sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution, such as Mario Vargas Llosa joined 'los 33', those opposing the right of the Cuban government's response to Heberto Padilla; these all occurred alongside, of course, the more publicised and polarised debate between Ángel Rama and Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Gilman 2012).

Indeed, the 1970s produced multiple and endless debates, in many cases detonated by the *caso Padilla*: the central focus of these continued a decades-long tradition, established by key figures such as Darcy Ribeiro, Antonio Candido, Antonio Cornejo Polar and others in the Latin American left about how the continent should employ its literary forms to enter modernity whilst positioning itself against its colonial past. With the irruption on the global literary scene of the internationally prestigious and commercially successful texts promoted under the banner of 'magical realism', the debates about Latin American literature extended to more ethical and political questions about the Latin American writer and intellectual: where should they live, what kind of literature they should produce, what kinds of recognition should they accept? In this context, the *caso Padilla* can be understood as just one more symptom, albeit a very public one, of a much more complex and extensive polemic. Crucially, behind all these debates lay the issue of how to project Latin America and its

[3] I am not including here those histories of Cuban literature that were published off the island, predominantly in Spain, Mexico or the US.

literature internally – nationally and continentally – but also externally to the centres of literary power. Issues of localism, nationalism, language, genre and aesthetics were addressed with the objective of formulating a post-colonial – and in many cases anti-colonial – direction for Latin American literatures in the twentieth century. In this sense, cultural policy in 1970s Cuba, whilst certainly absorbing the effects and language of the new political and economic relationship with the Soviet Union, also continued debates that were distinctly national and continental in flavour. Added to this, of course, were the new currents of decolonisation that were emerging from newly independent Third World nations and their intellectuals and politicians, with Algeria, Vietnam and Africa providing new perspectives and voices to the project of eliminating cultural colonialism.

Jorge Fornet's meticulous analysis of 1971 as a key year (Fornet 2013) offers many detailed insights into the complexity of the early 1970s and the multiplicity of debates, discourses and perspectives vying for dominance in the opening year of that infamous decade. His introduction to the study makes it clear that, despite the subsequent focus on the *caso Padilla* and its role in the 1971 Congreso, the question of 'how to do culture' was not the main item under discussion in this key year: 'En todo caso, la cultura aparece aquí como síntoma de fenómenos que la exceden con mucho' (Fornet 2013: 9). In particular, what emerges from Fornet's analysis of texts produced at the time, and especially those texts produced in response to the *caso Padilla*, is that the controversy of 1968-71 was to all effects a powerplay about the right to national sovereignty, the right of the periphery to decide its own destiny and, indeed, the right to define its own revolution. [4] Fornet cites the desire articulated by Vargas Llosa and those others that signed the initial protest letter that the Cuban Revolution should return to a model that was more palatable to the intellectuals and fellow travellers who had first embraced it as the death knoll for, in Claudia Gilman's terms, the 1960s honeymoon period for 'la familia intelectual latinoamericana' (Fornet 2013: 128). Fornet also makes it clear that this desire, expressed as an injunction from the centres of power, represented the end of any dialogue between the two poles of left-wing intellectuals who had protested or condoned the treatment of Padilla. As Alfredo Guevara expressed it in his memoirs, 'esta es una ruptura real con los que firmaron, es decir, una ruptura con la ilusión de que la

[4] The tenor of these debates and tensions is dramatically represented in the Mesa Redonda scene of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 film *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, where we witness real footage of a debate in Casa de las Américas in which panel members from Cuba, the Caribbean and Latin America – including Edmundo Desnoes – are asked by a US journalist why they have not yet formulated a more 'revolutionary' format for debate than the conventional round table.

Revolución Cubana tiene algo que esperar de las grandes metrópolis imperialistas colonizadoras en decadencia' (Guevara 2003: 265). In other words, the accusations of Stalinism levelled against the Cuban government and its cultural institutions provided for those working within Cuba's revolutionary institutions further evidence of the need to continue the post-1959 project of decolonisation by creating models that would put Cuba – the periphery that had been catapulted into the centre of geopolitics with the 1959 Revolution – at the centre of its own ideas and processes; it also confirmed that what appeared to be an open debate between equals was, in reality, little more than the re-articulation of a colonialist and colonising desire to empathise or disagree at will, a 'controlling disposition' (Sommer 1999: 116) exerted from the centres of literary power.

For culture, and especially for literature, then, the *caso Padilla* had an important metonymic function too – it provided further evidence of the need to reposition the rules of the game that was literature in a way that was unique to the evolving Cuban Revolution. Whilst Cortázar, unlike Vargas Llosa and others, evolved in his position vis à vis the right of outside commentators to pronounce on the direction that the Revolution was taking (Fornet 2013: 203-8). [5] Rama saw the *caso Padilla* not as a catalyst for the *quinquenio gris* but merely as a symptom of a lack of a clear debate in Latin America that fractured and delayed the natural growth of Cuban cultural life: 'La frustración de aquel debate siempre pospuesto, en cambio, dislocó el proceso de crecimiento de la cultura cubana y provocó un retroceso imposible ya de calibrar. Mirado a la larga duración, ella sería la principal víctima de aquel encontronazo' (Fornet 2013: 212).

What, then, of the principal pronouncements of the 1971 Congreso and thereafter? Do they demonstrate the emerging dominance of a more sovietised or explicitly socialist tendency in Cuban cultural life, or, alternatively, do they indicate the continued relevance of concepts and tendencies that pre-dated the *caso Padilla*? The Congreso took place between 23 and 30 April 1971 in Havana, and brought together 1,800 delegates, including the PCC, the main trades unions and mass organisations (Kumaraswami and Kapcia 2012: 105-107). Whilst it might be assumed that the focus on culture was 'bolted on' to the original plans for the Congreso de Educación in order to bring wayward artists and intellectuals into a forum

[5] The importance of the debate for which the caso Padilla was the catalyst is brought to life by Fornet's reference to a Mafalda comic strip produced in 1971 with the famous protagonist voicing her support for the Cuban government amid these acrimonious debates: 'Más vale Fidel en mano que intelectual volando' (Fornet 2013: 200).

dominated by ideologues (Abreu Arcia 2007: 138), another interpretation emerges both from the evidence of post-59 cultural policy and from the areas covered in the Congress. Certainly, the evidence from the cultural actions undertaken in the first decade of the Revolution – the 1961 Campaña de Alfabetización, the *aficionados* movement, the creation of ICAIC, the establishment of a publishing infrastructure and a host of other cultural institutions and mechanisms intended to widen access to culture – would indicate that the focus on national development as a priority meant that the new Cuba would not continue to follow models which separated culture from education and art from wider socio-cultural, and even economic, considerations. Equally certainly, the 1968 Congreso Cultural de La Habana had raised concerns that exogenous models of culture might enjoy some favour with established writers and artists.

In this sense, whilst a monolithic political demand for didactic cultural forms, Soviet-style, might be assumed to underlie the core purpose and message of the Congress, an analysis of the texts – declarations, resolutions and speeches – that emerged during and after the Congress can shed light on the complex priorities of cultural policymakers and central government at a time of heightened tensions. A brief quantitative analysis makes it clear that the afore-mentioned and much-cited reference to bourgeois, extravagant, homosexual, foreign or elitist tendencies makes up a very small proportion of the overall text: no more than 10 of the total 450 lines of text make any reference to the 'problematic' groups and tendencies attempting to question and undermine the revolutionary process. The larger part of the text at times could certainly be read as a direct response to these individuals or groups, but it more comfortably reads like an address to a much wider audience: the congress delegates, the Cuban nation and its international allies.

As Cintio Vitier's brief (although uncritical) summary and analysis of the Declaration described it: 'Como flechas convergentes en un solo blanco, todos los enfoques socio-ambientales de la *Declaración* encuentran su máxima lucidez y combatividad en el concepto clave que es el *leitmotiv* de la última parte: el concepto de descolonización cultural' (7). Indeed, rather than building towards a glorious future, as would be expected if the Congreso marked a new sovietised direction for Cuban culture, the Declaration communicates the overall aim of rejecting the colonialist past in favour of a future framed by Vitier as 'la liberación creciente de las masas' (7). The text of the Declaration itself makes several recommendations which justify the careful selection of educators and artists who will have sufficient political or ideological credentials to take on this ambitious task. It is here that the

much-quoted list of ‘undesirables’ – elitists, homosexuals and other social aberrants – appears. In one short paragraph, it warns against allowing these ‘falsos intelectuales’ to project their ideas as revolutionary, when in fact their understanding of both revolution and culture renders them ‘alejados de las masas, y del espíritu de nuestra Revolución’ (8).

From there on, the Declaration makes a series of recommendations that emphasise autochthonous cultural forms (both national and continental), and, following the thinking of José Martí, the incorporation of international tendencies as a conscious process of appropriation from within rather than imposition from without. These include (with a clear nod to the *caso Padilla* and ensuing tensions) the reform of prize criteria and their juries, and a close examination of the nature of foreign intellectuals invited to Cuba as well as their effect on national writers and artists, ‘sus amanuenses del patio’ (8). Once again, whilst the clear defensiveness behind the notion of ‘vetting’ juries and other influential cultural actors might be seen in retrospect as evidence of Stalinist purges, the recommendation when seen within the context of the entire Declaration does little more than restate the somewhat ambiguous formula much quoted from Fidel Castro’s 1961 *Palabras a los intelectuales*: ‘Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada’ (Castro 1961: 10). That is, all cultural actions will be allowed, so long as they do not threaten the existence and survival of the Revolution.

Having established a teleology that incorporates both Martí and the *Palabras*, the Declaration goes on to trace further continuities that have hitherto condemned Cuba over five centuries to its peripheral, dependent and colonised status: in more socialist terminology, it establishes an equivalence between colonialism and capitalism (9), two forces which can only be overcome through changes to culture in both its definitions (as artistic representation and as lived experience). Especially illuminating in the text is the use that is made of key discursive elements that belong to a variety of political perspectives and traditions. This suggests that, rather than attempt to consolidate the support of the Soviet bloc by proscribing Cuba’s cultural and political future within a contemporary explicitly Soviet model, a more strategic approach is being taken which aligns strictly socialist or Marxist terminology with a left-wing and Third World lexicon familiar to anti-colonial processes in Cuba, Latin America and the Third World in general. The overall result of this discursive strategy is, as in many other cases of Cuban policy statements, to create a coherent narrative that links Cuba’s historical evolution to its present, and to do so in a way that implies that the contemporary reality of

Cuba is the accumulation of the struggles of a broad pantheon of national and international heroes, their attempts at decolonisation frustrated – until now.

Thus it is that the figure of the 'hombre nuevo', as articulated by Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (Guevara 1965) is fused in the Declaration with traditions dating back to the guiding figures of the wars of independence, with their promotion of a 'cultura nacional portadora de características propias' (6), a tradition, according to the text, that was reinforced by José Martí, but also by Lenin (11). The period after independence from Spain, from 1902 to 1959, is referred to, unsurprisingly, as a time of 'neocolonización' where the repression of the *pueblo* by the 'nueva metrópoli' amounted to the repression of national culture (note the anthropological definition of culture that is produced by the equivalence of *pueblo* and *cultura*, a definition which underpins all cultural policy since 1959). The 'neo-colonial' period, then, is described as a time of collective cultural impoverishment, 'embrutecimiento colectivo, a través de la colonización del gusto estético', whilst the working classes, both urban and rural, are seen as the guardians of the 'tradición patriótica' of the Cuban nation (6). Thus, the current controversy detonated by the caso Padilla is seen as the latest in a centuries-old tradition of imposing culture and values from outside, a contamination and weakening of authentic Cuban values.

The language in this section is heavily gendered and pathologised, with terms redolent of disease, corruption, decadence and deviation often being equated with foreign influences but also with urban culture and its 'cultura metropolitana imperialista' (11). In this way, authenticity is implicitly defined – from Martí to the present day – as non-urban, autocthonous, pure and essential. At the same time, however, the Declaration incorporates the necessary ideological items that fuse and connect the Cuban nation's historical struggle against cultural colonialism with the contemporary political landscape: it describes the current ideology as 'marxismo leninismo pertrechado por las ideas de la Revolución' (10), and refers to its national and international dimensions through explicit reference to post-colonial nation-building projects in Latin America, Asia and Africa (10). In opposition to this powerful and anti-colonial alliance stand the 'podridos y decadentes sociedades' of the colonial and neo-colonial period: the US, but, in the contexto of the *caso Padilla*, also – more significantly – Western Europe.

The Declaration ends with an extended extract from the letter written by Martí in 1878 to the Bayamo-born patriot and poet José Joaquín Palma. It is worth reproducing at length as it

serves to illustrate the need for cultural decolonisation that was recognised by Martí almost a century before the Congress, and represents a timely reminder both of the lasting vengeful power of decadent empires as well as of the need for postcolonial nations to defend and represent themselves in authentic and autochtonous terms:

> Lloren los trovadores de las monarquías sobre las estatuas de sus reyes, rotas a los pies de los caballos de las revoluciones; lloren los trovadores republicanos sobre la cuna apuntalada de sus repúblicas de gérmenes podridos; lloren los bardos de los pueblos viejos sobre los cetros despedazados, los monumentos derruidos, la perdida virtud, el desaliento aterrador: el delito de haber sabido ser esclavo, se paga siéndolo mucho tiempo todavía. Nosotros tenemos héroes que eternizar, heroínas que enaltecer, admirables pujanzas que encomiar: tenemos agraviada a la legión gloriosa de nuestros mártires que nos pide, quejosa de nosotros, sus trenos y sus himnos (16).

The words of the closing Declaration are echoed very closely in the closing speech of the Congress, delivered by Fidel Castro on 30 April 1971, in the theatre of the CTC (Castro Ruz 1971). After the usual quantitative summary of the actions of the Congreso (number of delegates, number of recommendations received, number discussed, and number of resolutions passed), Castro underlined that the educators present at the Congreso had demonstrated the ability for debate and unity to exist simultaneously – 'una posición firme, sólida, unánime, monolítica' – and that the delegates had demonstrated their ability to internalise a range of political and ideological currents. Much like the Declaration, Castro's words pointed to an inclusive understanding of different ideological and political traditions and contexts: 'las ideas revolucionarias, las ideas patrióticas, las ideas internacionalistas, las ideas marxista-leninistas'.

With the focus very much on education as the priority for the nation, the speech moved to the question of resources: rather than launch a direct attack on those Cuban and foreign writers who had broken with the Cuban Revolution, the topic of the reaction to the *caso Padilla* was introduced much more subtly and indirectly, through establishing a broader argument that mass cultural provision (such as the smooth running of the Instituto del Libro for the provision of educational books, rather than the attention paid to individual established writers) was the government's urgent priority:

> Pero hay que tener un criterio preciso acerca de las prioridades de nuestro Instituto del Libro. Y ese criterio se puede resumir con estas palabras: en los libros que se

> impriman en el Instituto del Libro, la primera prioridad la deben tener los libros para la educación (APLAUSOS), la segunda prioridad la deben tener los libros para la educación (APLAUSOS), ¡y la tercera prioridad la deben tener los libros para la educación! (APLAUSOS.)

Indirectly, then, the field of literary production and reception was presented in such a way that, firstly, cultural democratisation should be accepted as the unquestionable priority and, secondly, any reference to problematic individuals should be evaluated in that light. Indeed, Castro presented the events surrounding the *caso Padilla* not only as a lesson for Cuba, but for many other allies in the developing world: 'Claro está que en el transcurso de estos años hemos ido cada día conociendo mejor el mundo y sus personajes…. Pero que ya conocemos, y nuestra experiencia servirá para los demás, y servirá para los países latinoamericanos, y servirá para los países asiáticos y los países africanos'. Through framing the Padilla controversy as a symptom of continued projects of cultural and political imperialism undertaken in the US, Europe and parts of Latin America, Castro made it clear that the only dignifed response was that of collective resistance against the centres of power through mass education and culture, in order that the periphery establish itself as the centre of its own reality, with the ability to determine its own destiny:

> Porque ellos allá, todos esos periódicos reaccionarios, burgueses, pagados por el imperialismo, corrompidos hasta la médula de los huesos, a 1000 millas de distancia de los problemas de esta Revolución y de los países como el nuestro, creen que esos son los problemas. ¡No!, señores burgueses: nuestros problemas son los problemas del subdesarrollo y cómo salirnos del atraso en que nos dejaron ustedes, los explotadores, los imperialistas, los colonialistas; cómo defendernos del problema del criminal intercambio desigual, del saqueo de siglos. Esos son nuestros problemas.

Moving on to discuss the vital need to protect the newly literate and increasingly educated Cuban people from sociocultural models that were irrelevant, damaging to both individual well-being and national unity and wholly inappropriate for Cuba's development, Castro emphasised that a political conceptualisation of art would not subsume aesthetic question to political ideas, as is often assumed, but that art without an ethical or human function would have no place in the new Cuba: 'Nuestra valoración es política. No puede haber valor estético sin contenido humano. No puede haber valor estético contra el

hombre. No puede haber valor estético contra la justicia, contra el bienestar, contra la liberación, contra la felicidad del hombre. ¡No puede haberlo!'. [6]

Finally, issuing a veiled threat to foreign intellectuals that, whilst their civilisations were in decadence just as the Third World and socialist bloc were in the ascendency, Castro formulated a further binary opposition – between the interests of capitalist First Worldist minority groups and the mass interests and orientation of the revolutionary and socialist projects on a global scale, once again creating a smooth equivalence between the concepts of *patria, pueblo* and socialism:

> Los debates fueron amplísimos en las Comisiones, los criterios fueron expuestos con absoluta franqueza, con absoluta libertad, como no se puede concebir en ninguna otra sociedad que no sea socialista, expresando en todo instante únicamente los intereses de la comunidad, los intereses de la patria, que son los intereses de los trabajadores, los intereses de los estudiantes, los intereses de los niños.

In many ways, then, Castro's 1971 speech had more in common with his 1961 'Palabras a los intelectuales' and the cultural policies of the 1960s, underpinned by discourses of democratisation and decolonisation, than it did with any explicit policy of cultural 'sovietisation' that might have been introduced as a result of the *caso Padilla* and the increasingly strong alliance with the Soviet bloc. What differentiates the two moments, however, is that, whilst the 'Palabras' were primarily focused on internal or national development, by 1971, the changing geopolitical landscape (not least in the Americas and post-colonial development in Asia and Africa) was making Cuba's place in an international alliance ever more pressing. Thus, the 1971 speech made more explicit connections between Cuba and a range of international allies, using a broader and more inclusive language of decolonisation and development that incorporated and fused the experiences of the developing world and the Eastern bloc. Whilst both speeches pointed to an internal colonialism which must be overcome, the 1971 speech, for entirely logical contextual reasons, reminded the auidence that external colonising intentions – cultural, political and economic – were more present than ever.

[6] This fragment is also reproduced in Fernández Retamar's 1971 revision of the original 'Calibán' essay (Fernández Retamar 1971).

Thus, whilst the notion of the 'plaza sitiada' (Fornet 2002: 27) remained ever present in 1971, it was not uniquely a symptom of the 'closed' system of Soviet-influenced socialist ideology, but also – and more meaningfully – an effect of a discourse and policy of sustained decolonisation, established once again through the application of independence thinkers such as Martí to the contemporary context, but now with international socialist alliances, rather than predominantly internal solutions (as was the case in 1961), providing models for the future.

Finally, by examining policy documents that take us beyond the early 1970s, we can further illuminate the complexity of the early 1970s. Firstly, the changes to the Cuban Constitution of February 1976 once again reinforced the centrality of the 'Palabras' and the central concept of 'Dentro/contra' (Gallardo 2009: 229) to cultural policy, signalling that the continuity of policies of decolonisation was not incompatible with the political, cultural and economic relationships with the socialist bloc and socialism in the developing world. More significant for our purposes here, however, are the speeches delivered by Armando Hart on assuming his role as Minister of Culture in December 1976. The political purpose of Hart's appointment – to usher in a more conciliatory and less polarised way of regulating and enabling culture after the traumatic, divisive and conflictive effects of the *quinquenio gris* – is without doubt. Crucially, Hart argued repeatedly in these speeches that there was no need or intention to 're-do' or re-think' cultural policy in the light of the controversies of the preceding 5-year period (or indeed, since the explosive and polarising effects of the late 1960s). In one of his first speeches to theatre practitioners, in late December 1976, he set out the purposes of the meeting, stating:

> No creemos que haya necesidad de elaborar una política cultural. La política cultural de la Revolución está elaborada ya, y está contenida en las "Palabras de Fidel a los Intelectuales" [sic]; en las conclusiones del Congreso de Educación y Cultura de 1971; en los preceptos de la Constitución de la República que se refieren a la cultura, y en la Tesis sobre la Cultura Artística y Literaria, aprobada por el Primer Congreso del Partido en diciembre de 1975 (Hart 1978: 7).

Hart continued by clarifying that, whilst cultural policy would remain largely unchanged as it had been formulated through an extensive process of inclusive consultation with all levels of Cuban society and its organisations, the key question could only be how to implement policy:

> Nuestro primer deber en el Ministerio, y en esto sí seremos intransigentes, es defender esa política cultural; y seremos intransigentes porque es la política cultural de la Revolución, la política cultural del pueblo, la política cultural del Partido. Todo lo que ayude a la aplicación de esa política, contenida en los documentos de referencia, será apoyada por el Ministerio. Todo lo que dificulte la aplicación de esa política no podrá ser apoyado por el Ministerio (Hart 1978: 8).

The message from many of his inaugural speeches, then, was that the approach of policy continuity that had been practised from 1959 to the late 1960s should be expanded to reach the present day; but the implicit mesage was also that polcy impemantation could and should be improved after the *quinquenio gris*. Whilst some commentators might see this as evidence of a monolithic and inflexible approach, or an unwllingness to change ideas, my argument is that it evidences precisely the opposite: that is, the ability of broad (and sometimes ambiguous) policy documents to shape and incorporate an ever-changing cultural and political landscape and, importantly, a faith in the existing structures to implement policies in that environment in a way that supported the integrated and mass development needs of Cuba.

Once again, in spite of the conciliatory tone, the message of Hart's inaugural speeches also contained an implicit threat: that processes of development through cultural decolonisation would only work if the power of individuals and minority groups (whether foreign intellectuals, their Cuban 'amanuenses del patio' or the individuals and interest groups that came to dominance during the *quinquenio gris*) was subsumed to the collective interest – an interest that had been determined and identified through the use of established processes and institutions. Thus, while in 1961, Castro was announcing the creation of some of these institutions, in 1976, Hart was reinforcing their joint importance in implementing national cultural policy. Arguing for 'análisis sereno' rather than informality or overly impassioned positions and debates, he continued:

> La madurez de nuestros pensamientos consistirá en la capacidad que tengamos para analizar los criterios contradictorios y extraer conclusiones serenas. Digo que no debemos ser arrastrados por el apasionamiento menor, porque hay una sola pasión legítima entre nosotros: la de servir a la clase obrera, al Partido, a la Revolución y al movimiento cultural en el socialismo (Hart 1978: 9).

The last words of this extract once again underline the equivalence between socialist and revolutionary terms of reference; they point to the fact the inclusive language used in 1961, 1971 and after 1976 not only drew on a tradition of continuity that linked 1970s Cuba to the forefathers of independence and Cuba's 19th century patriots, but that it also aimed to project that continuity through the euphoric and chaotic decade of the 1960s and the turbulent years of the 1970s. Against the backdrop of an equally turbulent start to the twenty-first century, with Cuba's relationship with the US and the future of ALBA increasingly fragile and unstable, this process of accumulation and continuity is notably present in contemporary Cuban cultural debates. The continued use of decolonising discourses, blended with relatively new languages that were relevant in the 1970s to the socialist bloc or, in the twenty-first century, are relevant to globalisation, has created a resilient and inclusive equivalence that to a large extent explains the continued survival and reinvention of the Cuban Revolution over nearly 60 years. To view the Cuban Revolution in 1971 or 1989 simply as a 'before' or 'after' of Sovietisation neglects the simple but important influence that discourses of decolonisation continue to exert in Cuba's complex cultural and geopolitical arenas. The call issued by Fernández Retamar in the late 1960s and early 1970s to recognise and resist multiple forms of colonialism and to defend national sovereignty through reclaiming and reinstating endogenous versions of language and reality retained its relevance as Cuba entered the problematic decade of the 1970s. That relevance continues today:

> Los independentistas, blancos y negros, hicieron suyo con honor lo que el colonialismo quiso que fuera una injuria. Es la dialéctica de Calibán. Nos llaman mambí, nos llaman negro para ofendernos, pero nosotros reclamamos como un timbre de gloria el honor de considerarnos descendientes de mambí, descendientes de negro alzado, cimarrón, independentista; y nunca descendientes de esclavista (Fernández Retamar 1971: 34-35).

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