

To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture

The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution

Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt

Foreword by Jorge Fornet

Based on a four-year research project, which included five months in Havana, this book documents the approaches to culture that evolved out of the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Deploying micro and macro perspectives, it introduces all the main protagonists to the debate and follows the polemical twists and turns that ensued in the volatile atmosphere of the 1960s and '70s. The picture that emerges is of a struggle for cultural dominance between Soviet-derived approaches and a uniquely Cuban response to culture under socialism, based on the principles of Marxist humanism.

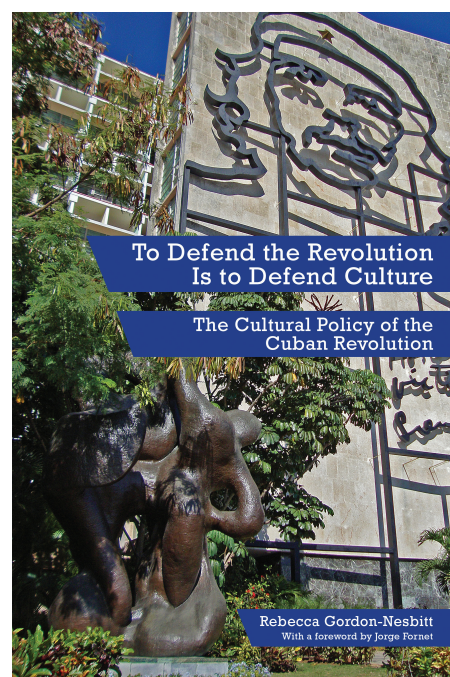
Accordingly, this book aims to isolate the main tenets of Cuban cultural policy as they crystallized through an extensive process of trial and error. Primacy is given to emancipatory understandings of culture, and ample space is dedicated to discussions that remain hugely pertinent to those working in the cultural field, such as the relationship between art and ideology, engagement and autonomy, form and content. In the process, this book provides us with an entirely different way of thinking about culture and the policies underlying it.

To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture takes its title from a slogan—devised by artists and writers at a meeting in October 1960, and adopted by the First National Congress of Writers and Artists the following August—which sought to highlight the intrinsic importance of culture to the Revolution. Departing from popular top-down conceptions of Cuban policy-formation, this book establishes the close involvement of the Cuban people in cultural processes and the contribution of Cuba's artists and writers to the policy and praxis of the Revolution.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Since the mid-1990s, **Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt** has been engaging with the internal dynamics of the cultural field. In 1998, she cofounded salon3, a multidisciplinary arts organisation in London. Two years later, she took up a post as a curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art in Helsinki, with a responsibility for stimulating art exhibitions, publications, and events throughout the Nordic region and, latterly, the UK and Ireland. Since then, she has dedicated herself to exploring the politico-economic conditions underwriting artistic practice, which eventually took her to Cuba in search of new ways of thinking about culture. Her writing has been extensively published in anthologies, monographs, catalogues and journals, a selection of which is available at shiftyparadigms.org

Since 1994, **Jorge Fornet** has been director of the Centre for Literary Research at Casa de las Américas. He has written widely on Latin American literature, focusing on the projects and worldview of writers born towards the end of the 1950s.



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With a foreword by Jorge Fornet

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