

**A LITERARY CULTURE IN COMMON:
THE MOVEMENT OF *TALLERES*
LITERARIOS IN CUBA 1960s – 2000s**

BY MEESHA NEHRU, BA (Hons), MA

**Thesis submitted to the University of
Nottingham for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, July 2010**

Abstract

Emerging organically in the 1960s and soon incorporated into the revolutionary leadership's official drive to democratise culture, the Cuban *talleres literarios* have expanded over the decades into a significant literary movement based on grassroots participation. In 2009, the *municipio*-based *talleres literarios*, open to mass participation, engaged over 40,000 *talleristas* in creating their own literature, with a smaller number involved in more specialised *talleres literarios de vanguardia*, including the one based within the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso, a national institution for young writers of narrative fiction. This thesis analyses this unique and under-researched cultural movement by placing it within its historical context and using the notion of Cuban cultural citizenship in order to assess its impact. It contends that the *talleres literarios* in Cuba, by acting as literary public spheres, have provided a broad range of people with the opportunity to gain and enact cultural citizenship, thus endowing the movement with a political and social significance which has largely been ignored by academic literature. The shared experience of the *talleres literarios* has formed Cuban cultural citizens who not only are invested in some of the core values of the revolutionary process, but who also have the tools and space with which to participate actively in the construction of meanings. In this way, Cuban cultural citizens formed within the *talleres literarios* benefit individually through gaining a sense of belonging to, and empowerment in, the literary world, whilst also contributing to the evolution of *cubanía revolucionaria* and the ongoing negotiation of revolutionary hegemony.

The thesis follows the recent work on Cuban culture which rejects the liberal assumptions that the cultural and political spheres should not mix and that civil society and the state are two distinct and oppositional entities. Instead, it uses the conceptual framework of cultural citizenship, which is based on the theoretical premise that culture and politics are inseparable, in order to approach critically the *talleres literarios* as sites for cultural participation. It offers a detailed history of the movement, from its origins to the present day, as well as an evaluation of the shared experience of *talleristas* based on the voices of participants from different periods and levels of the movement. By focussing on an outcome of cultural democratisation, the thesis poses a challenge to conventional accounts of revolutionary cultural policy and literature. It argues that cultural policy should be viewed as a productive as well as regulatory force, because the *talleres literarios* have been instrumental in creating a broad and inclusive literary culture which emphasises dialogic communication and active, public participation. The cultural citizenship attainable in the *talleres literarios* has provided the initial phase in the literary education of many established writers, fostered personal relationships between them, and facilitated the circulation of diverse ideas. Finally, the notion of cultural citizenship also adds a further dimension to the already broad field of research on participation and political culture. This case study of the *talleres literarios* follows the approach to participation that views it not in terms of top-down control or achievement of consensus but as a process by which shared meanings are both reinforced and new ones created as society and state interact within institutional frameworks.

Acknowledgements

It has truly been a fantastic privilege to have been able to dedicate four years to the study of a cultural movement in revolutionary Cuba. I have been both inspired by, and gained enormously from, the chance to develop an insight into the country and a dimension of its unique social experiment. For this opportunity, I am deeply grateful to the Leverhulme Foundation for sponsoring my studentship and to my supervisors Professor Antoni Kapcia and Dr. Parvathi Kumaraswami for having designed the original and fascinating project of which my thesis forms a part. Throughout the process, my supervisors have been a constant source of support; they have given me extremely helpful feedback, been patient at all times and, importantly, have believed in me from the start. I am also very lucky to have been part of the Centre for Research on Cuba at the University of Nottingham, having on my doorstep both an amazing archival resource in the Hennessey Collection and a group with which to share lively debate, discussion, and a passion for all things Cuban. Equally, it has been very enriching to have been part of the wider Cuba Research Forum network, and to have been able to attend its annual international conferences and meetings of postgraduates from across the UK. Altogether, embarking upon research has been a far from isolating experience.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the many people that helped me during my fieldwork research in Havana, Cuba. The warmth and openness with which I was greeted there made it an unforgettable time. In particular, I would like to mention José Carlos Vázquez at the University of Havana; Vice Minister of Culture Fernando Rojas; Blanquita, who is *especialista literaria* at the Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura; Ismael González Castañer; Sergio Chaple; Teresita Hernández; Mercedes Melo; Alberto Guerra; Tomasito Fernández Robaina and Ambrosio Fornet. I would also like to thank the staff and students of the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso, especially Co-Directors Ivonne Galeano and Eduardo Heras León for inviting me to learn about their exciting project. In addition, I owe an amazing four days attending the Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles in Camagüey to the generosity of the Ministry of Culture of Cuba. In general, this thesis is entirely indebted to all of my interviewees who not only gave such rich responses but offered their friendship as well, especially Lien Carranza Lau, Abraham Ortiz, Ahmel Echevarría and above all Yannis Lobaina González who taught me a great deal about Cuban literature and beyond. I am also very grateful for the kindness of my adopted Cuban family, Myriam, abuelita, Borges, Luisito, Yahima and Luis Daniel.

Closer to home, I'd like to thank my family and friends for their understanding, support and company throughout my period as a student. I would particularly like to mention Ben Sweet for the endless phone calls; my Dad; Jean Birrell for offering to be an astute objective reader of my text; my Mum for also being a reader and for being endlessly patient, encouraging and supportive; and Hayley, for keeping me going and never failing to make me laugh.

Contents

Glossary of Cuban abbreviations and notes on referencing	04
Introduction	05
Mixing Politics and Literature in Cuba: Why Study the <i>Talleres Literarios</i> ?	
<i>PART I: The Historical Context</i>	20
Chapter One	21
Changing the Rules of the Game: Literature, Cultural Policy and the Writer in Cuba 1959-2000s	
Chapter Two	53
Forming a Society of Active Citizens: The Ethos and Evolution of Participation in Cuba 1959-2000s	
Chapter Three	94
A Cuban Cultural Citizenship: A Critical Approach to Cultural Participation and the <i>Talleres Literarios</i>	
<i>PART II: The Study</i>	116
Chapter Four	117
The Expansion of Literary Public Spheres: A History of the <i>Talleres Literarios</i> 1960 – 2000s	
Chapter Five	167
Cultural Citizens Belonging to a Literary World: The Experience of the Municipal <i>Talleres Literarios</i>	
Chapter Six	214
Cultural Citizens at the Next Level or the Formation of Future Writers? A Case Study of the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso	
Conclusion	243
The <i>Talleres Literarios</i> 1960s-2000s: A Literary Culture in Common	
Interviews	258
Bibliography	260

Glossary of Cuban acronyms

UNEAC	Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba
CNC	Consejo Nacional de Cultura
ICAIC	Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos
BHS	Brigada Hermanos Saíz
AHS	Asociación Hermanos Saíz
UJC	Unión de Juventud Comunista
OPP	Órganos de Poder Popular
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias
CNCC	Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura
CDR	Comités de la Defensa de la Revolución
FMC	Federación de Mujeres Cubanas
FEU	Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios

Notes on Referencing

References to interviews will appear as the name of the interviewee and the date the interview was conducted. For a full list of interviewees please refer to the section Interviews on pg. 258.

Introduction

Mixing Politics and Literature in Cuba:

Why Study the *Talleres Literarios*?

“El desenvolvimiento de la vida literaria en Cuba está tan estrechamente ligado al de la historia política, que se hace imposible disociarlos”
Henríquez Ureña in Fernández Retamar, (n.d.).

“De los talleres han surgido nombres que han pasado al acervo de la literatura nacional, observándose la promoción de gente nueva, uno de los objetivos más importantes que debe tener la Revolución en cuanto al desarrollo de la literatura” (Hart Dávalos, 1988: 2).

“La realización de talleres contribuye...a satisfacer las necesidades del primer nivel de participación poblacional” (CNCC, 2008).

In a 1992 speech to Cuba’s Union of Artists and Writers (UNEAC), Fidel Castro stated: “lo primero que hay que salvar es la cultura” (UNEAC, 1993). Given just as the country was in the midst of the severe crisis initiated by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, this speech affirmed that maintaining a strong national culture was essential if Cuba was to resist the external pressures from hegemonic globalisation and to safeguard the core values of the Revolution. During the crisis period, the value system that had guided the Revolution’s state-led modernising project since 1959 was undermined by a severely weakened state, the partial liberalisation of the economy and growing social inequality. Following the statement, a few years later the Cuban leadership launched a series of initiatives, grouped under the title of the *Batalla de Ideas*, in which ordinary Cubans were encouraged to participate in cultural and educational activities, as a way of both re-incorporating people into the revolutionary process and strengthening culture overall. As part of this programme, the leadership revitalised and expanded the *talleres literarios*, a national movement of amateur literary workshops, and set up a new institution, the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso (Centro Onelio) to support young writers of narrative fiction.

Nearly a decade later, in one of the *talleres literarios* that can be found in every municipality of the island, a bus terminal worker, who had recently been published, read out her poetry in front of a group including a state-employed *asesor literario*, a retired army general who wrote historical novels, and a physics teacher who aspired to be the next Hemingway. Meanwhile, in Havana’s smart Miramar district, Cuba’s most promising writers of fiction aged under-35 were preparing to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Centro Onelio, the institution where they had met and taken a writing course, by

holding an international event including young writers from all over Latin America. That same month, the Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles was held over four days in a hotel in Camagüey. During this event, children of primary and secondary school age, inbetween playing around the pool and generous buffet meals, read out and commented on each others' short stories and poems in front of a panel of literary professionals. At all three locations, whatever their age or background, participants displayed a love for literature and pride in their own involvement in a national tradition.

As the Cuban Revolution neared its 50th anniversary celebrations, the country could boast a thriving literary and artistic scene, involving not only the work of its many nationally and internationally-renowned cultural producers, but also many ordinary Cubans as active participants and consumers. In a way that appears to contradict some external commentators' impression of Cuba as an oppressive regime imposing an outdated ideology on an unwilling population, Cubans of all backgrounds have participated in numerous cultural activities, from the Feria Internacional del Libro which annually attracts the attendance of nearly half the population, to film festivals, concerts, local cultural events, and an extensive amateur artistic movement, including the *talleres literarios*. Such a scene has led one analyst to state: "In many ways, Cubans live through the arts. Particularly during the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, the arts have taken on a vital role in formulating, articulating, and making sense of everyday life" (Fernandes, 2006: 2). This thesis contends that the social, cultural and ultimately political significance of such cultural engagement cannot be underestimated, and aims to investigate this significance through a case study of the *talleres literarios*.

However, the *talleres literarios*, like many of the participatory activities for engaging with the arts mentioned above, have a history and impact that extends way beyond Cuba's contemporary post-crisis period. Therefore, they have to be understood in the context of their origins in the vast social and cultural transformations of the first decade of the Revolution. On assuming power in 1959, the leadership placed a high value on literature, art and citizen participation from the start, and, as the Revolution swiftly became radicalised, a complex process of cultural change ensued. The *talleres literarios* emerged organically out of this new context and were soon incorporated into a central strand of revolutionary cultural policy, which constituted a drive to democratise culture. As the revolutionary process evolved, this policy combined with new ideas about the function of revolutionary art and artists

to promote a public, participatory culture that was available to all. It built on the success of early programmes such as the 1961 Literacy Campaign, when popular participation not only empowered people culturally but affected their attitudes and behaviour as well.

Later, as this policy was extended, and wider educational drives began to show results, the *talleres literarios* were organised into a formal national literary movement that, over the decades, has offered many thousands of Cubans the opportunity to participate, to learn about literature and to discuss critically each others' individual literary creations. The diversity and dynamism of the *talleres literarios* and the Centro Onelio in the 2000s is the legacy of a movement that has been both continually expanded all over the island and driven by a strong impetus from the grassroots. It has also been integral to wider literary developments. The majority of Cuban writers who have become established since the 1970s spent some time as participants in the *talleres literarios*. Overall, the *talleres literarios* represent a unique dimension of the Cuban Revolution's equally unique social experiment. For, if *talleres literarios* or literary workshops have existed in many countries, capitalist and socialist alike, nowhere else has such a widespread, voluntary, state-sponsored free movement had such an impact. However, despite their historical significance to revolutionary culture and cultural policy and their importance for 'saving culture' in the 1990s, the impact of the *talleres literarios* has also largely escaped scholarly attention.

Putting the 'talleres literarios' into context

In a recent reassessment of revolutionary cultural policy, the historian Nicola Miller commented on the centrality of culture for the legitimacy of the revolutionary project's pursuit of what she describes as an alternative modernity. She states that: "When the *comandantes* came to power, culture had long been embedded in Cuban concepts of what it is to be fully a human being and a citizen" (Miller, 2008: 685). This notion that culture was integral to the leadership's concept of citizenship was enshrined in the discourse of the drive to democratise culture and can be seen functioning in the *talleres literarios*. In other words, the *talleres literarios* are a practical example of how the revolutionary process targeted for transformation all three of the distinct but inter-related definitions of culture outlined by Raymond Williams in his book *The Long Revolution*. The first traditional meaning equated culture with

‘civilisation’, an idea of a selective intellectual and artistic tradition which is the best that humanity can offer, the second meaning was the arts, and the third was a much broader notion of ‘way of life’ including ways of thinking, and being, all of which make up the whole communicative social process by which men and women shape their everyday lives (Williams, 1961: 41).

As a participatory literary movement, the *talleres literarios* contributed to developments in Cuban literature and the concept of literary tradition. They were also integral to the Revolution’s effort to create a new revolutionary ‘way of life’ or a ‘way of being’ of citizens, through active participation in officially-sanctioned activities. However, whilst academic studies across a range of disciplines acknowledge all three definitions of cultural transformation within the Revolution, they often prioritise one aspect at the expense of a fuller appreciation of the others. In particular, whilst separate bodies of work address both the issues of literature and participation in the Revolution, the *talleres literarios* have largely been overlooked, as the question of how culture has related to citizenship in practice in Cuba has hardly been addressed. An investigation into the *talleres literarios* will attempt to rectify this, but first it is necessary to start with an exploration of the historical developments shaping these two dimensions of cultural change. As this context is the subject of the first part of the thesis, both themes will be dealt with in more detail in part I. Nevertheless, it is important to outline how a study of the *talleres literarios* will contribute to the current field of research in both areas.

Since early in the Revolution, there have been many studies attempting to analyse the impact of revolutionary change on literature from both inside and outside Cuba (Amaya, 2008; Casal, 1971; Dopico Black, 1989; Kapcia, 1982, 2005; Menton, 1975; Miranda, 1971; Otero, 1972; Reed, 1991; Wilkinson, 2006; Whitfield, 2008). The majority of these studies tackle two major themes. They analyse textual production in terms of the emergence of new literary trends or individual texts and they chart the changing institutional conditions under which writers worked and published. These studies have made important contributions to an understanding of how Cuban literature has both conformed to, and challenged dominant political ideas, as well as to an understanding of how an evolving cultural policy affected the lives and output of writers. However, the focus on established writers and their finished texts tends to ignore the impact of literary change and cultural policy in wider Cuban society and, crucially, leaves out the *talleres literarios*. Whilst most studies acknowledge that the revolutionary

state worked to create a mass readership and to extend cultural opportunities to citizens, many fail to consider the consequences of such a process. However, recent studies have attempted to address this deficit.

As a starting point, Smorkaloff's 1987 sociological survey of print culture in Cuba offers a much broader picture of the mechanisms of literary production, distribution and consumption during the Revolution, and includes a brief overview of the *talleres literarios*, though not an analysis of their actual function (Smorkaloff, 1987, 1997). Moreover, other studies have focussed on reader reception and the development of Cuban ideas about readership as a way of assessing the wider implications of cultural policy and literary culture as it has been experienced at the grassroots (Kumaraswami, 2003, 2007). In turn, these specific cultural analyses are complemented by historical approaches to revolutionary culture that argue that the conventional periodisation of literary developments should be viewed within a wider process of socio-cultural change (Kapcia, 2005; Miller, 2008). By investigating the impact of the *talleres literarios*, this study intends to contribute to this broadening of the understanding of how Cuban literary culture has operated, and, in the process, offer a fresh perspective on literature and cultural policy. As such, it forms a case study within a larger research project that is reassessing the whole place of literature in the Revolution in the light of historical change and relevant cultural theory.¹

The second body of literature into which the *talleres literarios* fall concerns participation. A high level of popular participation in all of the Revolution's mobilisations, organisations and structures has been one of the defining features of the revolutionary process throughout its history. It is considered one of the 'pillars' of the Revolution and central to its ongoing legitimacy (Carmona Báez, 2004: 85). However, as is befitting such a vast topic, there is not one coherent body of work that addresses the issue and it is approached from a variety of perspectives. Several studies emphasise the political implications of participation (Bengelsdorf, 1994; Dilla, 2000; Domínguez, 1978; Harnecker, 1975; LeoGrande, 1989; Rabkin, 1985; Ritter, 1985; Roman, 2003). Both Cuban and foreign scholars have investigated particular structures and organisations to assess the extent to which popular participation affects decision-making processes and can be thought to be in any way democratic. In particular, recent

¹ Kapcia, A. & Kumaraswami, P. (2005-2009), 'Revolutionary Regimes of Value: Literary Culture and the Cuban Revolution', Leverhulme funded project.

attention has focussed on structural changes in the post-crisis period when local-level organising replaced many of the functions of a weakened state (Dilla, 2000; Kapcia & Gray, 2008). These micro-studies are valuable for an understanding of how Cuba's structural system has functioned, how it has changed over time and its impact on the revolutionary process. Yet their narrow definition of what counts as political activity overlooks the impact of cultural participation and a movement such as the *talleres literarios*.

In contrast, more macro-level surveys approach the topic of participation as related to a notion of political culture and the leadership's drive to socialise citizens into revolutionary values through their involvement in numerous official activities and structures (Bunck, 1994; Fagen, 1969; Hernández & Dilla, 1991; Medin, 1990). These studies have broadened the notion of participation in order to show how the leadership included most areas of social life within its ethos of subjective change, from work, to sport and membership of youth and other organisations. These studies have contributed a historical perspective on different aspects of revolutionary life (Bunck, 1994), on the development of revolutionary ideology (Medin 1990), and on the official project to create a new 'way of being' or a new Cuban citizen (Serra, 2007). However, they suffer from a lack of research on ordinary Cubans, what participation meant for them, and how participation might have affected their thoughts and behaviour. Within this category, though, Fagen's 1969 study stands out as work that does not judge the Revolution's project of cultural transformation in terms of the failure (or not) to produce the ideal citizen. He attempts instead to gauge the impact of the shared experience of new structures and forms of participating on those involved, regardless of their individual commitment to all aspects of revolutionary ideology (Fagen, 1969).

Fagen's analysis demonstrates that the impact of different kinds of participation generated varying results and meanings for people and that several of the early forms of participation gave ordinary Cuban citizens a sense of empowerment. This insight was to have enduring relevance for participation in Cuba. Therefore this thesis will follow this approach and offer a case study of the *talleres literarios* to highlight both the specific way in which the movement formed part of the leadership's ethos of participation, i.e. the official discourses that shaped them, and to foreground the shared experience of people who participated, finding out what it could mean for them as citizens. Such a micro study may

challenge those analyses which seek to subsume all participatory activity into a macro-level idea of socialisation and, in doing so, will address one of the ways in which culture has been related to notions of citizenship. It will then be possible to address the function of the *talleres literarios* movement overall and to assess how it has fed back into the process of cultural change. However, the question of whether a state-run cultural movement can have a political impact at all raises certain theoretical issues that have plagued studies of Cuban culture and participation alike.

The approach: culture, ideology and hegemony

Like any study of culture in the Cuban Revolution, a study of the role the *talleres literarios* in ‘saving culture’, and the associated investigation into what their role has been since their emergence in the 1960s, is immediately confronted with the question of how culture is related to politics in Cuba. The lack of an extensive study on the *talleres literarios*, or even on a similar state-run participatory cultural movement, means that there is no clear theoretical paradigm from which to address the topic. As scholars have often noted, Cuba’s special history has made the application of external theoretical models to it difficult across all disciplines (Fernandes, 2006: 3-16; Kapcia, 2000: 7). Therefore, it is not my intention to develop a rigid theoretical framework to apply to the *talleres literarios*. Instead, I aim to outline the most useful approach to these broad themes in existing studies, and then use this to guide an analysis of the historical and cultural context in which the *talleres literarios* have developed. The conclusions drawn from this empirical background will then be able to feed into a more finely-tuned approach to the *talleres literarios*.

Several recent studies have highlighted the assumptions that lie behind many analyses of Cuban culture. The first of these is the “standard Anglo-American liberal nostrum” that cultural production should be autonomous from politics (Miller, 2008: 679). Whilst this assumption is often not explicitly stated, it has motivated many of the studies of literature in the Revolution that describe it as oscillating between periods of artistic freedom or greater state and ideological control. It has also been compounded by certain approaches to Cuban culture after the 1990s. These see the vitality and critical nature of much cultural production during this period as evidence that Cuban culture’s partial entrance into transnational markets liberated cultural producers from the hegemonic control of the authoritarian

Revolution (Davies, 2000; Hernández-Reguant, 2009; Whitfield, 2008). However, scholars have challenged this approach by arguing that culture and politics have a long history of being closely entwined in Cuba and by demonstrating that such an approach is based on a second theoretical assumption that civil society and the state are two separate entities in constant tension with each other (Miller, 2008: 680).

In Cuba, historically, the institutional spheres of culture and politics have never been as separate as they have been in many Western liberal democracies. Throughout the course of the 20th Century, the political actions of intellectuals, many drawing on the thought of the 19th Century independence fighter and intellectual, José Martí, “cemented the importance of culture into Cuba’s radical tradition” (Miller, 2008: 683). Furthermore, whilst it is well known that after the Revolution, the political vanguard set the terms for much cultural production, and that intellectuals were subordinated to the political process, scholars such as Jorge Luis Acanda have noted that, even under these changed circumstances, there has been space for meaningful debate and “an autonomous, critical and organic revolutionary tradition exists” (Hernández, 2003: vii-viii). Thus, following a historical reappraisal of how the Cuban public sphere has been the site of numerous debates, including the degree to which culture should be separate from ideology and politics, Hernández and others have argued that state and society relations should not be viewed in binary opposition, instead they can be seen in Gramscian terms that describe them as mutually constitutive, overlapping, and the site of creative tension (Acanda, 1996; Fernandes, 2006: 7; Recio et al., 1999).

This affirmation that cultural contestation came to be located within the state, rather than in opposition to it (Fernandes, 2006: 8), has led to a reassessment of how both power and ideology operate in revolutionary Cuba. Certain scholars of Cuban culture and ideology, borrowing from a theoretical trajectory which includes Gramsci, Althusser and Foucault, have argued that the power or the domination of the revolutionary project over the social body has operated through the diverse networks and relations of Cuban society (Amaya, 2008; Craven, 1990; Fernandes, 2006; Kaptcia, 2000). As one scholar has affirmed, a purely discursive definition of power is unhelpful in the Cuban case as it “obscure[s] the role of the [Cuban] state in the creation and regulation of institutions” (Fernandes, 2006: 7). However, a diffuse notion of power allows for a more complex understanding of how the

state has produced social actors, given them space with which to contest dominant ideas and been able mostly to re-assimilate their challenges into dominant perspectives through collaborative networks and “alliances of domination” (Fernandes, 2006: 8). Thus, speaking largely of the post-1990 period one critic has suggested that the “state has maintained and extended its power not by expanding bureaucracies but by decentralising tasks and strategies of governance” (Fernandes, 2006: 8).

This broader view of how governance functions in Cuba is also accepted by scholars that focus on participation and political culture (Dilla, 2000; Hernández & Dilla, 1991; Kapcia, 2000). They argue that this less clearly-defined relationship, and the process of negotiation between state institutions and social actors, operated within the Cuban Revolution long before the post-crisis period, even when the state was more visibly centralised and bureaucratic. Moreover, this idea is further supported by a recent reappraisal of Cuban ideology. Kapcia, also following Gramsci, maintains that:

...hegemonic domination is exercised through ideology, through the subtle persuasion of the subordinated groups that they have no historic, political or empirical right to exercise any significant authority outside the parameters allowed to them by the hegemonic group, and, furthermore, that the latter’s domination is historically just, natural and unchallengeable. (Kapcia, 2000: 16)

Defining ideology as a particular ‘world-view’, Kapcia sees Cuban revolutionary ideology as the profession of *cubanía* or the teleological belief in *cubanidad*, an independent Cuban identity.

In contrast to previous studies dealing with ideology that have viewed ideology as rigid, external, and imposed by a leadership on a population without ideology, Kapcia traces the historical roots of this Cuban nationalism. He demonstrates how it had its origins in a white, intellectual tradition but also, importantly, had a popular empirical dimension based on collective experience with an equally long history (Kapcia, 2000: 17). As Cuba entered its revolutionary phase, *cubanía* evolved into *cubanía revolucionaria*, providing the language for describing the direction of the new process. Cuba’s unique historical experience, first as a colony of Spain and then as a neo-colony dominated by the economic interests of the United States, facilitated the development of *cubanía revolucionaria* as a particularly radicalised version of *cubanía* based on a value system that had roots in previous traditions, but also grew to incorporate elements of Marxism-Leninism and other ideologies. Significantly, however, ideology was not static, nor was it entirely imposed on a passive population. As Kapcia suggests, it

evolved over time, often in response to changing political circumstances, in a dialectical relationship between the popular-empirical ‘world-view’ shaped by experience and an intellectual-theoretical level of ideology in which values were codified into identifiable discourses that could encompass those experiences (Kapcia, 2000: 17).

Although at times there may have been some dissonance between the ‘popular’ everyday understandings and the more easily identifiable codified discourse, the latter needed the former in order to take root and forge consensus. Throughout the revolutionary period, the collective experience that has shaped the popular ‘world-view’ has occurred within political culture, which in turn has shaped and been defined by participation. Thus participation signifies a key mechanism for the negotiation of revolutionary ideology. The crisis of the 1990s and the collapse of ‘real socialism’ in the Soviet Bloc prompted an ideological crisis in Cuba, and provoked much debate about the continuing relevance of certain ideological elements under the new circumstances. Social and economic changes exacerbated by the crisis also led to a perceived loss of values at the popular-empirical level as collective experience contradicted ideology in its codified form. Consequently, although ideology (in its identifiable codified form) did not disappear and even increased, there was also a drive to return to, and reinforce the core values of the *nación*. A focus on values rather than ideology, manifested in programmes such as the *Batalla de Ideas*, allowed for a potentially more flexible interpretation and codification than those witnessed in previous incarnations of *cubanía revolucionaria*.

In her research on ordinary Cuban citizens and the arts, Fernandes showed that despite the growing gap between lived experience and codified ideology during the post-crisis period, there was still some investment in shared frameworks of meaning. This led her to develop a revised notion of hegemony which does not rely on a macro-level concept of a consensual ideology, common in many cultural studies approaches (Hall, 1985). Equally, it is not limited to an idea that public displays of consensus, demonstrated by the ongoing participation of citizens in official activities, are purely the result of coercion and performance, as stated in analyses of former socialist states and authoritarian regimes (Yurchak, 2005: 16). In contrast, she defines hegemony as the combination of values disseminated through the social order and material practices, such as those which take place within particular institutional contexts that inscribe meanings in everyday life (Fernandes, 2006: 25). Thus hegemony in

Cuba, she argues, does not necessarily signify that the population and their ‘world-view’ represent a taken-for-granted shared ideology, in line with the intellectual-theoretical ‘world-view’, but that there are contexts in which meanings between the two levels overlap. Importantly, spaces exist in which these meanings can be formulated, reproduced and challenged, as hegemony is constantly made and remade.

This definition of ‘hegemony’ in Cuba will provide the basis for this study of the *talleres literarios* and their social and political significance. The study will first apply the notion and the corresponding understandings of ideology, power and the relationship between culture and politics to a discussion of the historical context and the existing bodies of research on literature and participation. Then there will be a more specific analysis of both the history of the *talleres literarios* movement and the shared experience of participants within it, during different time periods. By nature an interdisciplinary project, the research will draw on a variety of source material, including published and printed works consulted both in Cuba and the UK, supported by interviews with various cultural officials and workers to corroborate historical evidence where printed records are scarce. Indeed, extensive interviews, both with writers who have participated in the *talleres literarios* over the decades, and with participants who are active in different areas of the contemporary movement, will also be used since this study is predicated on the significance of the meanings generated by the shared experience of participation in the *talleres literarios* at the grassroots. A final source of information will come from my own observations gathered while attending several *talleres literarios* and the Centro Onelio, as part of my fieldwork in Cuba from February to May 2007.²

The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two sections. The first part (Chapters One to Three) deals with the historical and cultural context in which the *talleres literarios* emerged and works towards establishing a conceptual framework with which to approach their history and impact. The second part (Chapters Four to Six) consists of the case study of the *talleres literarios*, providing analyses of the history of the movement as well as the experience of participants.

² The research in this thesis complies with the University of Nottingham’s Code of Research Conduct.

Chapter One examines the current field of research on cultural policy, writers and literature within the Revolution. Using the approach in some recent studies, which view literary developments within the Revolution as a process, the chapter argues that revolutionary cultural policy, as the force that enables this process, should be seen as a productive force as well as merely regulatory. This is in contrast to many conventional accounts of cultural policy which perceive it solely in terms of ideological control and restrictions on artistic freedom. Following this argument, the chapter then outlines the main historical developments in cultural policy and its impact on literature as it is given in historical accounts. By dividing the history into separate sections addressing changes within institutions, spaces and discourses, the chapter highlights that the driving force behind cultural policy has been the continued expansion of literary and artistic activities in the effort to democratise culture. It ends by suggesting that this broader transformation of culture, that encourages the active participation of the *pueblo*, can only be understood within the wider context of changes in political culture and the general emphasis on participation.

A broad overview of participation within the Revolution is thus provided by Chapter Two. After first outlining some of the problems inherent in certain perspectives on participation based on their theoretical assumptions about state-society relations in Cuba, the chapter offers a review of the literature on participation from across a range of disciplines. It adopts the approach, common in studies of political culture, that sees participation in Cuba as active involvement in any official structures, as well as those deemed to be conventionally political. Moreover, it argues that participation necessarily has two dimensions of impact: the first is on ordinary citizens whom the leadership have believed will be socialised into a new revolutionary 'way of being' through participation, and the second is on the revolutionary process itself, as participation provides the channels of communication through which the state and society can interact. The remainder of the chapter offers a historical overview of the major changes in the ethos and evolution of participation using the existing material available on different types of participatory structures. It argues that whilst participation may not have produced an ideal citizen, the shared experience of participation did generate many shared meanings amongst Cuban citizens and was, at times, empowering. However, it concludes with the assertion that different types of

participatory structure produced different results, thereby paving a way for the discussion of the largely ignored area of cultural participation.

Chapter Three combines the conclusions from both previous chapters and outlines a conceptual framework which can be used in a study of Cuban cultural participation and the *talleres literarios*. It argues that cultural participation, because of its specific relation to communicative practice, is different from other forms of participation and is most adequately described using concepts derived from theories of cultural citizenship. The main body of the chapter demonstrates how specific strands of this broad field of theory and research are relevant to the Cuban case, particularly those devoted to theorising cultural policy, literary and artistic hierarchies and those which fall within the category of communicative cultural citizenship. It argues that whilst the concepts of belonging, empowerment and literary public spheres adequately describe Cuban cultural participation, they also maintain a critical distance from the Cuban ideal project and the ability to incorporate an analysis of how power works within Cuban cultural policy. It ends with a working model of Cuban cultural citizenship using concepts that will be qualified in the remaining chapters.

Chapter Four begins the second part of the thesis with an overview of the origins of the *talleres literarios* and a historical account of the development of the movement in Cuba, from its beginnings in the 1960s to its contemporary form in the 2000s. Using printed material and interviews with cultural officials and others involved in the movement, the chapter traces how the *talleres literarios* have provided an ever-expanding network of literary public spheres. It examines how, contingent on the parallel development of a readership and other literary activities, the *talleres literarios* extended the opportunity to participate in literary communication to broad sectors of the Cuban population, regardless of age, background or geographical location. Furthermore, it emphasises how the *talleres literarios* themselves, as focal points for literary activity in the community, became motors for making literary culture more inclusive, through promoting literary tradition and producing printed material. However, the chapter also recounts how, as literary public spheres, the *talleres literarios* operated within various institutional constraints. Over the decades, their administrative structure changed and official descriptions and definitions of their function set certain limits on this function.

Chapter Five continues the study of the *talleres literarios* by offering the possibility to contrast the official descriptions of the *talleres literarios* with the experience of participants in the municipal-level movement during different time periods. The first half of the chapter concentrates on the experiences of established writers who were involved in the *talleres literarios* up until the 1990s. Based on extensive interviews, it recounts their individual stories, demonstrating their motivation for joining the movement and the individual ways in which they gained and enacted an initial cultural citizenship from their experience. Collectively, these experiences show how the *talleres literarios* offered participants a sense of belonging to a literary world and created the conditions under which new literary generations and groups could emerge and new ideas could be discussed. The second half of the chapter then focusses on the experience of the contemporary municipal *talleres*. It highlights the actual function of these *talleres* based on observations of them in operation and the comments of participants and *asesores literarios*. Finally, the conclusion draws both sets of experience together, using the common themes within them to outline a more detailed description of Cuban cultural citizenship.

Finally, Chapter Six offers an analysis of cultural citizenship as it is gained and enacted within the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso. Forming a separate case study, this chapter discusses the differences and similarities between this unique institution and the municipal *talleres literarios* movement out of which it has grown. It highlights the exclusivity of the Centro Onelio's specialised course and its emphasis on young people, in order to show how it engenders a higher level cultural citizenship than that available in the main system. The chapter also offers a final commentary on the question of whether *talleres literarios* are directly responsible for producing writers by discussing a recent lively polemic on the topic between several Cuban writers. Finally, its discussion of the specific characteristics of a higher level cultural citizenship leads into the concluding chapter. This assesses what the notion of a Cuban cultural citizenship can bring to the current fields on literature and participation before offering a summary of its social and political significance within revolutionary Cuba.

PART I: The Historical Context

Chapter One

Changing the Rules of the Game:

Literature, Cultural Policy and the Writer in Cuba 1959-2000s

“...the definition of the relationship between revolutionary change and the resulting artistic change is not something that can be resolved in two fervent sentences”
Marinello, speaking in 1969 (Echevarría, 1985: 165).

In 2008, half the population of Cuba visited the Feria Internacional del Libro, the annual book fair that started off in Havana but then travelled around the entire island. The frequency and vast scale of this literary event may have only been a recent development - it became annual in 2008 and had started to travel in 2005 – but, its domination of the media during the month of its duration gave massive amounts of public exposure to books and literature, writers, and the practice of reading which it actively encouraged. However, far more than merely publicising literature, the level of attendance at the Feria demonstrated its ability to attract the physical, collective engagement in literary culture of large swathes of the population. Under the slogan of *leer es crecer*, people were invited not only to buy books but also to interact and engage in a face-to-face dialogue with writers at the individual book presentations.

The many stalls at the Feria selling both Cuban and foreign works of fiction and non-fiction displayed the plural nature of Cuba's literary public sphere, which included national and provincial magazines and journals, and books published locally and nationally as well as internationally. Dedicated to two established intellectuals, Antón Arrufat and Graziela Pogolotti, both previous recipients of the Premio Nacional de Literatura, the whole event celebrated literature: its products, proponents and readers and the relationship between them. In other words, it was a festival of literature in all of its dimensions: as a socio-cultural practice of communication; as a hierarchical institution; and as providing a public sphere, in which people were encouraged actively to participate.

A phenomenon unique to Cuba, the Feria encapsulates the idea that an understanding of literature's role within the island requires that it be viewed as more than just a combination of writers, texts and their context. Instead, literature in Cuba should be studied as part of an ongoing process, which includes many activities, institutions and agents, and which is linked historically in multiple ways to the wider revolutionary process. As in the case of numerous other socialist states, the question of how

literature relates to politics in revolutionary Cuba has been the subject of a large amount of critical attention. Yet very few studies have examined the multidimensional nature of literature exemplified by the *Feria*. Nor do they often interrogate a concept of politics as it relates to the literary process, opting instead to employ terms such as cultural policy and ideology as givens.

Literature as a process

As a starting point for investigating the wider manifestations and implications of literary development since 1959, Smorkaloff's sociological and historical survey of Cuban print culture is an invaluable source of data for the growth of book production and literary culture during the revolutionary process (Smorkaloff, 1987, 1996). Following on from this, Kapcia views literary developments as part of a multi-layered revolutionary process of social and cultural transformation which was itself shaped by the ongoing search for a Cuban culture and identity. He highlights how an important element of this process, the leadership's drive to democratise culture, extended the ownership of literature and art beyond an elite community and transformed the process of cultural production (Kapcia, 2005: 135).

More recently, Kumaraswami has taken a fresh look at literature and revolutionary cultural policy. Instead of focussing on its consequences for individual authors or literary trends, she demonstrates how the definition of literature as a process of 'dialogic communication' had consequences for writers and readers alike (Kumaraswami, 2007). She charts how the main cultural debates of the entire revolutionary period pivoted around different ideological interpretations of this central theme. As particular positions gained institutional weight, the figure of the Cuban intellectual was completely transformed, with corresponding consequences for established and emerging writers. Importantly, her emphasis on the dialogic function of literature factors the readership into the analysis.

From early on, the Cuban leadership maintained that literature was to be a dialogue between writers and the *pueblo*, and set about trying to create the conditions by which the *pueblo* would include the entire Cuban population. As illiteracy came close to being eradicated, and widespread educational and cultural activities were promoted, the potential for mass communication through literature vastly increased. Throughout the Revolution's history this theoretical potential has only been further

augmented by the continued pursuit of such policies and the increase in literary output. In an environment which has been relatively free of a commercialised mass-communications system, literary culture and communication may well have performed numerous valuable functions, and generated many meanings.

Moreover, dialogic communication also implies that readers have an active input and can feed back into the process of generating meaning. So, the question arises as to how and where this dialogue between writer and *pueblo* has actually taken place, what it consisted of, and what factors played a role in shaping it. The Feria, with its book presentations, seemed to offer opportunities for dialogue between writers and readers, and it has been just one of numerous other activities that have historically followed a similar format.³ Yet it is hard to draw simple conclusions from this, because as Kumaraswami argues, it is inadequate to view the Cuban readership or *pueblo* as a homogenous group, just as it is wrong to imagine the categories of writer and their texts as absolutes (Kumaraswami, 2007: 85). Furthermore, as the Feria exemplifies, beyond the text, any relationship between the two sides participating in a dialogue is mediated through defined spaces, institutions and the multiple discourses of cultural and revolutionary policy.

My thesis is concerned specifically with investigating the spaces for dialogic communication that exist within the *talleres literarios* movement. However, first it is important to outline the history of the wider literary process. This chapter will trace the main developments in the institutions, spaces and discourses that mediated the communication in which Cuban writers and their texts participated throughout the revolutionary period. By charting the changing institutional and ideological frameworks that informed literary production, as well as the competing discourses about the true role both of literature and of writers, I aim to show how a new system of literary institutions and spaces grew up and evolved within the revolutionary process. Beforehand, however, it is necessary to understand a little more about the meaning of the elements involved: texts, writers, cultural policy and ideology.

³ These include the Sábados del Libro, reading groups and programmes, as well as book presentations, which have become more common since the 1990s.

The meaning of texts and writers

As noted above, the impact of the Cuban Revolution on Cuban literature and its proponents has attracted a great deal of critical attention both within Cuba and abroad. Yet, leaving aside the work already mentioned, the majority of studies on literature after 1959 focus on texts or the lives of established authors. Conventional literary histories and critical anthologies chart the perceived changes in literary trends during different periods of the Revolution, drawing various conclusions about the impact of cultural policy and wider revolutionary developments on the output of writers (Huertas, 1993; Kaptcia, 1980; Menton, 1975; Miranda, 1971).

This tendency received renewed impetus with the crisis of the 1990s, as analysts sought to understand the intersections between a changing social fabric, a cultural *apertura* and the partial marketisation of Cuban literature (Davies, 2000; Whitfield, 2008; Wilkinson, 2006; Valle, 2005). Although these studies make reference to the institutional conditions for textual production, their focus remains on literary analysis as a means of shedding light on revolutionary culture and society. So, in general they emphasise only one dimension of literature, the meanings generated by finished texts. Often interpretations of these meanings are viewed in relation to perceptions of revolutionary ideology or society, without addressing the reception of the texts and the issue of whether intended meanings reached readers and circulated in society.

Yet another body of material investigates the impact of revolutionary transformations on the producers of literature (Casal, 1971; Dopico Black, 1989; Fornet, 1980; Fuentes & Martínez, 1994; Kaptcia, 1980, 2005; Navarro, 2002; Reed, 1991). Commentators refer to literary authors as Cuban ‘intellectuals’ or ‘writers’ but, as we shall see, these are also categories loaded with different meanings. From a variety of political perspectives, the majority of studies chart how a developing ideological framework in revolutionary Cuba brought the role of the intellectual and of literature under increasing scrutiny. They then chart the historical development of the official definitions of both terms, as expressed through cultural policy and its institutional implementation, in order to comment on periods of relative intellectual freedom as opposed to periods when stricter restrictions were placed on writers and their work.

The differences between these studies lie in the way in which they conceptualise Cuban ideology and the intellectual. For example, some are based on the assumption that ideology in revolutionary Cuba was coherent, top-down and imposed as a control mechanism, thus ignoring both the historical roots of the Revolution and the way in which social transformations also informed cultural change (Medin, 1990; Reed, 1991). Yet other studies have shown that revolutionary ideology was actually a complex mix of different discourses and values, some of which emerged organically and empirically by drawing on an 'ideological reservoir' (Kapcia, 2000: 11). Furthermore, it was constantly evolving, and it was adaptable to, and affected by, changes in both internal and external political circumstances, although some consistency was maintained through its main objective: the ongoing search for an independent national identity.

The top-down perspective on ideology has used cultural policy and control as evidence with which to criticise the regime, with one commentator even drawing general conclusions based on the personal accounts of certain individual intellectuals (Reed, 1991). In contrast, more subtle analyses look beyond a notion of ideology to the wider political issues and processes that may have fed into periods of greater or lesser artistic freedom and experimentation and how they affected individuals and institutions differently (Kapcia, 2005; Menton, 1975; Wilkinson, 2006). These include analyses that assess the self-definition of a heterogeneous group of intellectuals prior to the Revolution, and how the revolutionary process impacted on them (Kapcia, 1982, 2005; Miller, 1999: 74-76). This more critical approach to the concept of the 'intellectual' is crucial for understanding how it evolved during revolutionary history.

There is a tradition of attempting to define the position of 'intellectual' as a social category, although added to this are the different trajectories of self-defined intellectuals from Europe, the United States and Latin America.⁴ In Latin America, it has been argued that intellectuals, as men of letters, have historically had a close relationship with an emerging 'idea' of their respective nations (Rama, 1996; Miller, 1999; Sommer, 1991). Principally, intellectuals have been linked to a search for autochthonous identity and the attempt to find a distinct, authentic, national 'voice'. In Cuba, as in the rest of Latin America over the course of the twentieth century, the term has had links to literary culture, and many

⁴ Miller (1999: 11-32) outlines the theoretical background to the concept of the Latin American intellectual. In particular, she notes the differences between those writers who claimed to be 'universal', intellectuals with a specific academic function, and the wider concept of *intelligentsia*, that is, people involved in intellectual work.

intellectuals, although they adopted a variety of aesthetic positions, also adhered to the tradition of a critical engagement with their societies and involvement in politics as public figures (Miller, 1999: 23-24). The existence, or not, of tensions between their literary and public roles was often a source of debate.

In terms of their literary work, many Latin American intellectuals believed that they had access to cultural truths. However, in reality they often operated within the doubly ambiguous position of being socially distant from the 'people' they aspired to represent and to a certain extent using externally-rooted aesthetic criteria by which to assess literary merit (Miller, 1999: 29). The limited literary culture and widespread illiteracy in Latin American countries facilitated these intellectuals' claim to cultural authority and authenticity, although sometimes this could only be achieved through aspirations to 'universalism' (Miller, 1999: 24). It was this claim of Latin American intellectuals and of their work, as well as their ambiguous relationship to both the nation and the metropolis, that came to be questioned within the revolutionary process and that has to be taken into account when using the term 'intellectual'. This is especially true when contrasting its use with the categories of *escritor* or *creador*, which were increasingly used during the Revolution.

The second dimension of the Latin American intellectual has been their role as public figures. Beyond their function as a producer of literary work, many intellectuals were considered to be public figures with the ability to influence opinion and whose names could potentially come to be associated with authority and meaning beyond any particular text they had written (Miller, 1999: 24). As such, intellectuals could lend their prestige to, and critically intervene in, political movements, both within, but more often than not in opposition to, governmental politics. Although the effectiveness of intellectual involvement in politics was often questionable, and not all intellectuals chose to be public figures, the Cuban Revolution and its aftermath particularly problematised this aspect of their role, both in Cuba and Latin America. This was accentuated in Cuba by the fact that many Cuban literary intellectuals had been conspicuously absent from public political life prior to the Revolution.

After 1959, Cuban literary intellectuals clashed with a political leadership which expected their public interventions to support the Revolution. However, it is important not to view this relationship as a straightforward binary opposition between the 'writer' and the 'state'. Intellectuals were often given positions of responsibility within the emerging cultural bureaucracy; this confirmed their status as

public figures. Moreover, revolutionary writers have always been given opportunities by, and worked within, state institutions which themselves varied considerably as spaces and did not constitute a monolithic entity. Many Cuban writers and intellectuals were also educated entirely within the revolutionary process, and became established within the system. Therefore, although it is tempting to draw conclusions about intellectual freedom, it is essential both to contextualise and problematise the category of intellectual. Finally, focussing on intellectual freedom versus state control, in terms of two fixed positions, plays down what Hernández stresses has been the important role of the public sphere in Cuba, as the place where the discourses of and about intellectuals, literature, and other issues have been openly debated (Hernández, 2008).

Towards a broader perspective of cultural policy

Despite their differing approaches, what most of the studies of Cuban literature and intellectuals mentioned above have in common is that they define revolutionary cultural policy as a primarily regulatory force. It is seen as a series of events and official statements, usually beginning with the period leading up to Castro's 1961 speech *Palabras a los intelectuales*, and evolving through different periods, which set the parameters for writers and textual production. Amaya argues, however, that this tendency to highlight restrictions on intellectual work is overly reliant on a liberal, Western notion of freedom, which itself is highly contested (Amaya, 2008: 2). He advocates instead viewing cultural policy as a productive force that not only set boundaries but was also responsible for promoting new institutions and movements and facilitating general creative output. Using a Foucauldian notion of dispersed, productive power, he "examines the ways control and repression have served both to reduce freedoms and, paradoxically, to increase them" (Amaya, 2008: 1). Indeed, a similar position is also taken by many Cuban analyses (Fornet, 2006; Hernández, 1999; Navarro, 2007).

Here we can also return to the studies mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, those that propose that literature in Cuba be seen as part of the wider cultural revolution, and in terms of changes within the processes of cultural production and consumption, as well as the transformations in products and producers. These widespread socio-cultural changes that, amongst other things, massively increased levels of cultural participation, were also enabled by cultural policy. Yet whilst the democratising thrust of cultural policy is often noted, its practical outcomes and consequences are rarely more than

alluded to in studies of literature, and are treated separately in studies such as UNEAC's collection of essays on *La difusión masiva de la cultura* (2000) and Craven's article on theatre groups (1990). Thus, a broader conception of literature (and culture) leads to a broader notion of cultural policy, as consisting not only of ideological positions but as also responsible for generating, and progressively defining, new institutions and practices. In this sense, cultural policy can be seen in a holistic way as underlying the conditions for all officially-sanctioned literary and artistic practice.

Often, for example, Castro's speech *Palabras a los intelectuales* (1961) is mentioned because of its statements about intellectuals and the unacceptability of culture deemed to be "contra la Revolución" (Castro Ruz, 1980: 14). However, it is seldom noted that during the same speech Castro launched the programme to train *instructores de arte*, who would be able to go out and teach the wider population about art (Castro Ruz, 1980: 28; Kapcia, 2005: 169). It is apparent then, from that speech, that Cuban cultural policy had different directions: a strand directed at established intellectuals and artists, and a strand aimed at cultural 'democratisation', which had extensive social consequences. Over the years, and building on experience, each strand developed its own set of discourses, which, although linked by an overall purpose, nevertheless were specific to the particular time, movement, institution or public it happened to be describing. Therefore, cultural policy should be seen not only as helping to create the conditions for the new literary process, but also as a collection of many discourses that were responsible for defining and enabling specific elements of it.

Consequently, a broader perspective on the literary process and on cultural policy as linked to widespread social transformation and development moves away from the questions of how literary texts have reflected Cuban society, and whether intellectuals have worked freely, towards the question of what the social function of literature has actually been. Moreover, this perspective also moves further away from using a concept of ideology as the only prism through which to view the role of literature in revolutionary Cuba. Of course, this is not to say that ideological factors have not helped to shape the discourses of cultural policy, which have in turn defined the boundaries for literary and intellectual work. It is important at this point then, to outline how *cubanía revolucionaria* had consequences for Cuba's literary process from the start.

Literature and core values of cubanía revolucionaria

At its intellectual-theoretical level, the codes and values of *cubanía revolucionaria* informed cultural policy in both its regulatory and enabling sense. To begin with, all cultural policy was directed towards the pursuit of *cubanidad*, the independent culture and identity which was the central driving force of *cubanía* (Kapcia, 2000: 24). As with any nationalist ideology, at the centre of *cubanía*, the supreme value was that of the *nación* itself, the *patria* to be safeguarded at all costs, particularly against perceived external threats. This concept of *nación* as an ‘imagined community’ had a long history in Cuba and arguably was originally a cultural idea rather than a specifically political one (Anderson 1991; Kapcia 2000: 21). However, for much of the revolutionary period, *nación* was conflated with *Revolución* in discourse, until the post-1990s period saw a renewed emphasis on the *nación* as a separate entity. The changing definitions of the *nación-Revolución* adopted in the evolving framework of *cubanía revolucionaria* then set the boundaries for the content of intellectual and artistic work, through the discourses of cultural policy. At times, these could draw on anti-imperialist, Third Worldist, internationalist or other elements.

In terms of the broader, enabling dimension of cultural policy, the historically-embedded values within *cubanía* of humanism, culturalism, egalitarianism, and collectivism informed the processes of institution-building and cultural democratisation as they are described in official discourse, and gave value to the activities they promoted. Although each value has its own history, the belief in humanism and the focus on developing human potential, arguably one of the key features of the entire revolutionary process, were particularly relevant to a cultural policy that emphasised cultural education and the creative potential of all. So, *cubanía* values, through cultural policy, helped to create the conditions for the literary process, informing its defining discourses. However, it was the way in which it was hoped that individual citizens would access the resources of *cubanía revolucionaria* that would have more consequences for the literary process.

At the popular-empirical level, it was thought that individuals would develop the values of *cubanía revolucionaria* through developing *conciencia*. *Conciencia* was the set of value-beliefs and corresponding behaviours that would help achieve the goal of *cubanía* and create a new society. An

early codified version of these values appeared, famously, in Guevara's 1965 essay about the ideal new Cuban citizen (Guevara, 1967). It was hoped that these individual and collective values, and their associated ideological justifications for behaviour, would help shape the evolving political culture. This required a process of socialisation, and although discourses changed over time, literary texts (and wider culture), defined as dialogic communication, came to be seen as one way of communicating values and thus promoting the development of *conciencia* in citizens. However, accessing *conciencia* through literature required an active engagement with the text.⁵ The emphasis on action was derived from one of *conciencia's* key value-behaviours, the value of participation, through which the values and behaviours of a new political culture would both be developed and sustained.⁶

Throughout revolutionary history, participation and the other behavioural attributes related to the values of *conciencia revolucionaria*, were also used in the various discourses about intellectuals. At times, the value-beliefs of moralism, voluntarism, heroism and self-sacrifice, and egalitarianism, amongst others, were used in discourses and debates judging the social function of the intellectual. Furthermore, in so far as these codes and values became embedded in the wider political culture and influenced new cultural institutions and activities through an idea of participation, there were further consequences for intellectuals whose pursuit of *cubanía* may not have involved such action. In other words, it was the lived experiential dimension of ideology, in the form of political culture, which shaped the environment in which not only the dialectical development of *cubanía revolucionaria* would be played out, and cultural policy would emerge, but also within which intellectuals and writers lived and operated, and their texts were received.

Writers and their texts in Cuba

The pre-revolutionary context

As mentioned above, the pre-1959 situation was pretty unfavourable for Cuban intellectuals and many chose to live abroad in self-imposed exile. On the island, the institutional support for writers and their

⁵ For more on the active reading process in the Cuban context see Kumaraswami 2003

⁶ For the difference between political culture and ideology see Chapter Two and Hernández & Dilla (1992: 31)

texts was severely limited and the sphere of their communication remained confined to small, educated circles. Nevertheless, a look at this period is necessary in order to highlight the ruptures and continuities in the literary world brought about by the Revolution. Faced with the absence of either a significant publishing industry or a developed domestic market for books, many authors during this period had to finance the publication of their own works (Casal, 1971: 447). However, even then, the distribution of these texts was restricted to limited numbers of people. Many intellectuals received little or no help from the state and were marginalised by or excluded from both the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Culture. In fact, there were hardly any incentives for writers, as they had to rely on scant private patronage, could only compete for a single existing literary prize, and had no mass readership.

In general, the dominant ideological framework at the time was a product of the United States' neo-colonial influence in Cuba; it privileged North American cultural models above all else and denied authority and prestige to home-grown cultural forms and producers. An example often given for this is the way that the print market was dominated by North American mass products such as *Reader's Digest* (Smorkaloff, 1997: 75). Within this environment, any sense of a Cuban cultural identity was insecure, fragmented, individualistic, and felt to be inferior (Kapcia, 2005: 107). Nevertheless, despite these conditions, there were some groups of intellectuals active in Cuba during the period immediately preceding the Revolution. One of the most productive was the group of poets associated with the magazine *Orígenes* (1944-1957). Headed by José Lezama Lima, "its volume and quality of production made it the most important literary group in the Cuban literary scene of the forties and fifties" (Casal, 1971: 448). It produced anthologies of poetry, essays and criticism.

Although it was by no means the only cultural group, in terms of literary tradition, the members of *Orígenes* provided a core of works, an aesthetic, and a model of the intellectual that the emerging revolutionary cultural elite could feed on, and react against, from within their new literary context. According to González Echevarría, the limited literary activity was paralleled by a similar lack of criticism (González Echevarría, 1985: 157-8). Within such a fragmented literary field, the system of valorisation of literary texts and intellectuals in Cuba relied heavily on the writers themselves. This reliance on self-definition and legitimation may well help to explain the reaction of certain writers to

their new circumstances after the Revolution. In general, a study of the unfavourable conditions for writers before the Revolution stresses the extent to which their world was transformed by the triumph of the rebel forces, a movement with which, importantly, they had had very little involvement.

1959 - 1968

As has been widely documented, during the first few years of the Revolution, the new government moved quickly to create new institutions and spaces for Cuban intellectuals and artists, and to broaden the scope for their communication (Casal, 1971: 458-9; Kapcia, 2005: 129-30; Menton, 1982: 137-170). Such rapid change indicated almost immediately the new value given to the notion of a more democratic literary and artistic culture; established and developed by Cubans for Cubans at the national level. Although there were initially no guidelines for how this cultural revolution should develop, soon the rapid radicalisation of the revolutionary movement, coupled with its need to unite the population against external threat, meant that demands started to be made for cultural production to become more inclusive and popular as well. Thus culture was promoted by the revolutionary leadership for a number of reasons: to assert independence and create alliances, to encourage social (and political) development, and to promote internal unity. The rebels had already learnt the importance of mass culture and communication during the time in the Sierra Maestra, when tools such as *Radio Rebelde* had been invaluable for generating popular support.

In this changing context, intellectuals quickly found themselves not only working within a political movement but also having to justify their writing and individual roles to this movement (Kumaraswami, 2007: 72). A new system of valorisation began to develop, with the Revolution as the supreme patron, awarder and symbol of value, and in which a variety of institutions and spaces could provide further recognition in a much broader and ever extending literary field. This first decade, as the national literary process began to establish itself, was characterised by debates between different institutional ‘poles’, with competing discourses on literary value and the function of the intellectual, played out in struggles over who would be allowed to become the ‘gatekeepers’ of value under the new system (Kapcia, 2005: 131). For many intellectuals, such a radical process of change undermined the

foundations of their very self-definition as intellectuals, and they struggled with the process of self-transformation that the new circumstances required.

The new national literary process: institutions and spaces

The first two years of the Revolution are often described as a ‘honeymoon’ period, as a general lack of direction within culture allowed different cultural activities to flourish (Casal, 1971: 448). During this time, money was channelled into the Dirección de Cultura, the section of the Ministry of Education, and new important cultural institutions were established. Two major new institutions, the Casa de las Américas and the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), were able to offer recognition, support and space for intellectuals and their projects. The magazines, prizes and space of Casa de las Américas, in particular, forged links between the Cuban and wider Latin American intellectual communities, setting a standard for intellectual work, and attracting international attention and prestige for Cuban intellectuals (Campuzano, 2001: 31).

At the same time, the beginnings of a national publishing industry were established with the Imprenta Nacional. It heralded an ambitious publications programme which had as its objectives both the drive for national identity and support for wider educational and cultural initiatives (Kapcia, 2005: 129). The press, which became the Editora Nacional in 1962 under Carpentier, alongside the newly reorganised Biblioteca Nacional, were important drivers of the democratisation process and they were joined in this by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura (CNC) in early 1961. With the new importance given to culture, many writers returned from exile, excited by the new opportunities offered. Menton describes these years as a time of “espontaneidad y desorientación” (Menton, 1975: 2).

The lack of any consensus about the new cultural direction, beyond the commitment to developing national culture, meant that different groups started to emerge with different visions of how the cultural revolution should unfold. One of these was based on the weekly literary supplement *Lunes de Revolución*. It consisted of a heterogeneous group of young writers and artists who published a wide range of international and Cuban intellectual work. They saw themselves as the cultural “arbiters and the first generation” of the Revolution, attacking previous groups such as *Orígenes* and taking it upon

themselves to try to bring Cuban culture up to date (Kapcia, 2005: 131). Yet, at the same time, a different 'pole' was also emerging, mainly with the cultural activists of the CNC, many of whom were former members of the PSP, the disbanded former Cuban Communist Party, and those with a more radical agenda inside ICAIC. They were more clearly dedicated to the process of democratising culture, and aware of the need to educate Cubans up to a level of literary and artistic appreciation (Kapcia, 2005: 132).

Tensions between the two groups emerged early in 1961 over the production of a documentary film called *PM*. When the film's release in cinemas was banned, the ensuing conflict led to a series of debates held at the Biblioteca Nacional, at one of which Castro gave the speech *Palabras a los intelectuales*, the first statement outlining revolutionary cultural policy. Given in an atmosphere of siege mentality just after the attack at Playa Girón, this speech ushered in a new phase; *Lunes* was shut down, ending one of the independent poles of influence, and intellectuals had to start justifying their work to the Revolution. At the same time, and as mentioned above, within the same speech, the process of cultural democratisation was launched on a large scale. 1961 was already the year in which the Literacy Campaign was working to eradicate illiteracy in the island. After *Palabras*, the schools to train *instructores arte* were set up for teachers in music, dance, theatre and visual arts and the newly empowered CNC could support the expansion of cultural activities at the grassroots level, a role that it publicised in its new magazine *Pueblo y Cultura* (1961).

However, despite the change in atmosphere for intellectuals, they continued to benefit from the creation of new institutions and spaces. Of greatest significance was the establishment of UNEAC, the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, a prestigious institution with established intellectuals on its executive, that was to protect the interests and rights of writers and artists.⁷ It soon provided an extra stimulus to literary activity, sponsoring a new set of prestigious literary prizes from 1965, and publishing two magazines (*Unión* and *La Gaceta de Cuba*) that would provide forums for the discussion of cultural policy and the work of Cuban authors. The founding of UNEAC was closely followed by the beginnings of the Brigada Hermanos Saíz, an organisation supported by UNEAC and the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC), which would organise meetings and activities for less

⁷ A congress in 1961 led to its creation, but a second congress was not held until 1977.

established, younger writers (UNEAC, 1961: 19). Although the BHS took a while to become active and dynamic, all round the country regional meetings of writers, new magazines and prizes were also motivating literary activity amongst writers yet to make a name for themselves.

In terms of the conditions for already active intellectuals, 1967 saw further developments in the publishing industry with the abolition of copyright and the setting up of the Instituto del Libro to oversee publishing activity. This made published intellectuals further dependent on the state for their income but also increased the number of books entering Cuba's public sphere. In an atmosphere of continuing tension, two years previously, the last independent printing house El Puente (formed in 1961) had been shut down, some of the younger writers grouped around it being sent to UMAP "re-education" camps, accused of homosexuality and decadence (Kapcia, 2005: 196).⁸

Despite the uncertain conditions, as many intellectuals struggled to get accustomed to the rapid transformations and changing ideological framework, spaces for publication continued to flourish. Two other magazines, *Caimán Barbudo* (1966) and *Cuba* (1964), provided important sites where intellectuals could publish as well as negotiate positions for themselves as workers for the Revolution. However, as the developing system of literary valorisation encouraged internal struggles for influence within the intellectual field, these spaces also experienced tensions, and there were repeated changes in editorial boards. In fact, several high-profile intellectuals left Cuba during the decade. Nevertheless, in general, the 1960s saw the emergence of a new literary vanguard created by the new national spaces and institutions for literary production, even if members of this intellectual vanguard, which rapidly turned into a new elite, found it hard to dictate the terms on which they would operate. Yet at the same time, many of these, especially those considered 'cultural heavyweights' like Alejo Carpentier or Nicolas Guillén, gained positions of institutional responsibility, bestowing on their particular organisations both prestige and added legitimacy.

⁸ UMAP camps were *Unidades Militares para la Ayuda a la Producción* and existed from 1965-1968 when pressure from UNEAC helped to force their closure.

Competing discourses and the intellectual

The experience of the transformations of the first period of the Revolution fed into a rapidly evolving and radicalising ideological framework, which in turn influenced the discourses and debates about literature and the intellectual. Even during the initial spontaneous and undirected years, a radicalising *cubanía*, both popular and at times defensive, was the force behind the new cultural institutions and activities. It was represented by the drive to develop a strong national culture and identity, different from metropolitan culture, that could be enjoyed by all Cubans and it was manifested by institutions such as ICAIC. It also included the humanist idea that culture as an emancipatory force had to be taken to the *pueblo* who had previously been denied that right (Castro Ruz, 1980: 20). However, within this framework, this period was characterised by competing discourses on how and who best to fulfil these objectives. In terms of literature, this meant debates over both its form and content and the role of the intellectual.

As mentioned above, initially there was no guidance about the direction that culture should follow. Although the Revolution quickly emerged as the main protagonist of all cultural endeavours there were different ideas about how revolutionary literature should develop in form and content. Whilst different institutions produced their own discourses, in the main, the 1960s were characterised by a debate between those that stressed literature's ideological function, and favoured a literary style that was realist and accessible to the masses, a position favoured by 'cultural leaders' and former PSP members such as García Buchaca and Portuondo, and those that advocated a more pluralist literary production that still allowed room for experimentation, argued for by Fornet, and Guevara amongst others (Fornet, 1980; García Buchaca, 1961; Guevara, 1967; Portuondo, 1980).

What became clear, however, was that the collective nature of the Revolution was to determine the future of literature and intellectuals. Castro's 1961 speech *Palabras* affirmed that it was the Revolution of the *pueblo*, and that the role of literature and culture was to be the patrimony of the people. In this speech, he defined literature as dialogue between artist and *pueblo* and suggested that this involved a two-way process of the artist getting closer to the people, and the people raising their cultural level to meet the artists (Castro Ruz, 1980: 16). Dealing with the pressing issue of artistic freedom, Castro

asserted that there would be no restrictions on form but that content should take the opportunity to document the Revolution and not threaten its right to exist by playing into the hands of its enemies. The famous phrase he uttered was “Dentro de la Revolución todo, contra la Revolución nada” (Castro Ruz, 1980: 14). This was an inclusive statement, acknowledging that not all intellectuals were necessarily revolutionaries but that they could still produce valid work. He affirmed that the new authority, the CNC, was created in order to orient artistic creation but more importantly also to stimulate it.

However, there was also a clear egalitarian drive within the speech, as Castro mentioned that the main aim was to stop literature and art being the preserve of a privileged few. The objective was to satisfy the cultural needs of the *pueblo* through policies of *extensión cultural*. In this way, new talents would be discovered and the *pueblo* would be able to unleash their creativity, eventually becoming the artists themselves. Although the ideological potential of art was mentioned in the speech, specifically in relation to the fact that some forms were more readily accessible to the ‘masses’ than others, and therefore better at transmitting ideas, it was not emphasised as its most important function. In general, Castro stressed that the production and consumption of art and culture in the Revolution were to be considered more important than ever before.

The actual literature of the first period of the Revolution has been documented in various studies (Casal, 1971; Kapcia, 1982; Menton, 1975). Of particular note were new, colloquial trends in poetry, short stories by established authors and a novelistic output that dealt with exorcising the past or documented the events of the Revolution. During the second half of the decade, as writers produced more mature works in a variety of styles, commentators agree there was a significant literary explosion from established as well as young writers (Redonet Cook, 1993: iv). In the main, however, the literature written by Cuban writers during the 1960s remained a minority concern in comparison to more immediate artistic forms such as theatre and cinema. Literature did reach the ‘masses’, however, in the form of mass print-runs of classic literary works, famous examples being *Don Quixote* and the works of José Martí.

Yet this did not stop many polemical debates about the function of the intellectual. Although Castro had recognised the heterogeneity of intellectuals, debates raged in a variety of magazines about the

appropriate behaviour of this group. There was virulent anti-elitism present in Portuondo's contention in several articles that intellectuals should come down from their ivory towers, and participate in the same process of transformation as other citizens, although this position also contrasted with the elite spaces being founded (Kumaraswami, 2007: 32). As the characteristics of the new ideal citizen developed and were codified, they were applied by critics such as Portuondo to judge the behaviour of intellectuals, with perceived levels of participation in the process being used as a key criterion for levelling accusations at certain intellectuals. It was also the moralistic strain, and the gendered nature of the new ideal citizen in developing *cubanía*, that amongst other things encouraged homophobia amongst cultural officials, and helped to justify the closing down of El Puente.

The intellectuals themselves had a range of self-definitions, from cultural 'authorities', through critical public figures with access to truths, to individual aesthetes. However, they were all suddenly forced to ignore their self-conceptions, and work to "eliminate alienation and further the Revolution" (Davies, 2000: 118). In this environment, intellectuals also contributed to the redefinition of their role. For example, in an essay on the revolutionary intellectual, Fernández Retamar positioned his generation as the first of the Revolution, and in particular attacked the previous *Orígenes* group for their lack of political commitment (Fernández Retamar, 1967). However, still at this time, Fernández Retamar could confirm the natural public role of the intellectual as a critic within the Revolution (Navarro, 2002: 189). Indeed, this discourse of critical participation was supported by the editorial positions of various magazines. So, differing discourses about literature and intellectuals competed throughout the decade, although overall, Castro's declaration that "vamos a librar una batalla contra la incultura" perhaps best represents its dominant, democratising strand (Castro Ruz, 1980: 31).

1968 – 76

A turning point: institutions and spaces

The year 1968 is cited as a turning point in revolutionary history in both political and cultural terms (Casal, 1971: 440; Mesa-Lago, 1974: 8). Yet whilst some studies use events occurring that year to confirm Cuba's turn towards a more orthodox Soviet-style socialism in culture (Medin, 1990: 23;

Reed, 1991: 111), less partial accounts have shown that this was not necessarily the case (Kapcia, 2005: 138; Wilkinson, 2006: 68-80). For example, the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana attracted a wide range of foreign and Cuban intellectuals and confirmed a commitment shared with other Third World countries to cultural 'decolonisation', rather than a move towards Soviet socialism (Kapcia, 2005: 138). In the literary world, however, tensions over the role of the intellectual that had been simmering since 1961 started to come to a head with the beginning of *Caso Padilla*. This affair, which erupted when the poet Padilla published a critique of a work by the favoured intellectual and official Lisandro Otero, whilst simultaneously praising the work of the anti-regime émigré Cabrera Infante, lasted nearly three years and involved several institutions and spaces.

It provoked public debate in a variety of magazines, with a particularly accusatory series of articles being published in *Verde Olivo*, the journal of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR). In 1968, under difficult political circumstances, Padilla and another intellectual, Arrufat, won two of UNEAC's literary prizes. However, their works were deemed to be controversial, and critical of the Revolution, so UNEAC would only publish them with disclaimers distancing itself from their contents. Later, in response, foreign intellectuals were banned from acting as judges for UNEAC literary prizes and the polemic moved into other spaces such as Casa de las Américas. Eventually, the FAR also established its own ideologically sound literary prizes. As several authorities have agreed, it was probably a combination of factors, political as much as ideological, that increased tensions between certain members of the intellectual community and the leadership during the years of 1968-1971 (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 102-3; Wilkinson, 2006: 68).

Already, the political system was under a fair amount of pressure: Guevarist economic policies were failing to produce results, the Revolutionary Offensive to nationalise all remaining enterprise was causing widespread social upheaval, and resources were beginning to be poured into an ill-conceived attempt to produce a ten million ton sugar harvest in 1970. When foreign intellectuals chose this moment vociferously to end their backing for the regime because of Castro's support for the Soviet crushing of the Prague Spring, it seemed that the political leadership's trust in intellectuals, especially those seen to ape their European, or other Western, counterparts, had fallen to an all-time low. Not all institutions were immediately affected by the tightening of controls, however, and 1968 saw the

founding of new intellectual magazine *Revolución y Cultura* and the emergence, if only for a short-time, of a pluralistic, critical space with the journal *Pensamiento Crítico*.

In 1971, the *Caso Padilla* concluded with the brief arrest of the poet and some of his associates, followed by a humiliating public confession of his inappropriate behaviour read aloud in front of UNEAC members. Later, the Congreso de Educación y Cultura, partly as a response to widespread condemnation of Padilla's treatment from the international intellectual community, sought to define in clearer terms what the role of revolutionary intellectual was to be. The result of the Congreso, and the extra authority it bestowed on an expanding CNC, was a purge, thanks to which several self-defined intellectuals found themselves out of a job, unable to publish and even imprisoned. On the watch of Luis Pavón Tamayo, the new hard-line leader of the CNC, a sizeable portion of Cuba's intellectual community, its writers in particular, became somewhat marginalised from the institutions and spaces in which they had previously operated (Kapcia, 2005: 154). This remained the case until 1976, forming the period that was subsequently labelled by the intellectual Fonet as the *Quinquenio Gris* (Fonet, 2006: 3).⁹

At the same time, however, the Congreso de Educación y Cultura expanded cultural activities all over island. The CNC, now increased in size and authority, worked alongside other mass organisations in a massive expansion of grassroots cultural activities. What had started out as fairly spontaneous amateur groups and gatherings were formalised during this period into national movements with a centralised bureaucratic administrative system. Despite tighter controls making politics dominate the system of valorisation, and less importance being given to maintaining cultural and literary hierarchies based on perceived aesthetic merits, new literary and artistic communities were forming all the time, and even being provided with space to present their work in the new-look *Revolución y Cultura* and other printed material produced around the island. Hernández says that this period saw the public sphere begin to be dominated by one way of thinking, including many more imported cultural products from the Soviet Bloc, but that it managed to retain some plurality (Hernández, 2008: 6).

⁹ Some say that Fonet's term has come to be a euphemism for a much longer and darker period (Navarro, 2002: 198). However, in an article revisiting the term, Fonet justifies his own position (Fonet, 2006: 3)

The ideological function of art

The politics of the post-1968 period represented a move towards strains of Third-Worldism and anti-imperialism in the ideological framework but also the need for greater social control. In the discourse about culture, this saw a move towards cultural decolonisation reflected in different ways in the statements of the *Congresos*, and in magazines. During this period, the discourses that had criticised the Western, liberal definition of the intellectual received a boost and gained authority when several Western intellectuals publicly broke with the Revolution. Navarro argues that these events helped to draw out a latent anti-intellectualism in Cuban culture, and that, by 1971, official discourse had created the intellectual as an ideological Other to the *pueblo*, a figure to be criticised and ridiculed (Navarro, 2002: 191). In line with this, the discourse of the Congreso de Educación y Cultura described the writing of literature as a job like any other, and undermined the role of the intellectual as a public figure by attacking foreign pseudo-leftist intellectuals, and those who believed themselves to be the “conciencia crítica” of society (Menton, 1975: 151).

Confirming the moralistic homophobia already present in the 1960s, the same Congreso passed a law banning homosexuals from working in education and culture, thereby further reducing intellectual influence in the public sphere. In their place, new artists and *escritores*, as opposed to intellectuals, would be ideologically trained to produce new art. As the CNC position gained ground, Western culture was no longer deemed to be the yardstick by which Cuban culture should be judged, and the ideological function of art now came to the forefront. The famous phrase “el arte es un arma de la Revolución”, although not an explicit endorsement of socialist realism, encouraged greater cultural conformity (Menton, 1975: 149). Anti-elitism and egalitarianism also increased: revolutionary art was not just bringing culture *to* the people, or producing a culture *of* the people but culture *by* the people (Kapcia, 2005: 147). Accordingly, the CNC intensified the generation of discourse about *masificación* of culture.

From this time, the content of literary and artistic works would be judged on its political value. In discourse, it was suggested that the *pueblo* would be the ultimate judge of quality as the *pueblo* are the true critical conscience of society. It was thought that art could not only not have an aesthetic value

without human content but that it should also have a didactic function, as art and literature were good for training youth in revolutionary morality. As these discourses started to dominate across the institutions, certain intellectuals disappeared from the evolving literary canon, as a totally different set of valorising criteria gave spaces to different writers. Literary discourse published during this period was dominated by realism, and it saw the flourishing of the more ideologically acceptable genres of *testimonio* and detective fiction. As such, literature became a mass enterprise.

1976-1990

Increasing openness: new institutions and spaces

By 1976, the relationship between self-defined intellectuals and the state institutions responsible for culture was at a particularly low point. However, that year was also a turning point in these relations. Following the general trend of institutionalization within the revolutionary process, the CNC was dissolved, signifying the end of the dominance of the advocates of strict ideological control over culture, and the situation gradually improved (Wilkinson, 2006: 80). In place of the CNC, a Ministerio de Cultura was created, absorbing much of the former CNC and integrating the entire publishing industry. Its establishment initiated a set of changes that would affect the process of cultural production in subsequent decades. The new Minister, Armando Hart, was proactive from the outset (Kapcia, 2005: 163). As head of a Ministry that had been set up to incorporate and consolidate all spheres of cultural activity, Hart, himself a powerful figure, used his influence to end some of the restrictions placed on intellectuals and writers.

During his first two years in office, he moved to publish previously banned authors, released those who had been imprisoned, ended the blacklist of works and lifted the ban on homosexuality on those working in education and culture (Kapcia, 2005: 156). Attempting to renew dialogue with the intellectual community, Hart also reduced bureaucratisation and created new institutions and organisations that provided creative space and facilitated communication, such as the Centro de Estudios Martianos (1977) and the Centro de Estudios Culturales Juan Marinello (1981). In addition, the decentralisation of the national publishing industry through the dissolution of the Instituto del Libro

in 1977 created a new and more diverse set of publishing and distribution networks. Smorkaloff notes how the period of 1977-86 saw a relative 'boom' in book printing with a large number of Cuban authors, and specifically first-time authors, getting their work published (Smorkaloff, 1987: 241).

In short, Hart helped to restructure the system of valorisation, giving new opportunities at the elite level to established intellectuals and writers as well as new ones coming through. Politically, by 1976, the system had stabilized somewhat compared to 1971, with the Constitution, institutions and the new electoral system ending the upheaval and rapid changes of the 1960s. This may well have helped lift the pressure somewhat off the intellectuals, with brief periods of exception, such as the Mariel exodus in 1980 when some of them chose to leave. As the new institutional framework began to consolidate itself, intellectuals and emerging writers enjoyed new spaces for creativity and publication (Kapcia, 2005: 167).

At the same time, Hart expanded the institutionalisation of the more grassroots cultural movement, ensuring that every municipality could count on a basic set of cultural services, including importantly a Casa de Cultura. Its expansion, professionalisation, and the sheer number of people participating further undermined the privileged status of an elite, intellectual 'authority' over culture. The movement reached its peak by the mid-1980s, but soon after went into a period of decline as a combination of factors such as saturation of teachers, a declining interest and a changing society led the leadership to cease its expansion (Kapcia, 2005: 164). In elite institutions and spaces, however, there was a creative surge during the 1980s, as new waves of writers reached maturity, and other younger groups closely followed in their footsteps, taking advantage of an enlarged UNEAC, and a more active BHS.

New, younger cultural producers, entirely educated by the Revolution, vied to restore some of the intellectual's public role as social critic and to create found spaces and institutions where this could be fulfilled, although they were not always officially sanctioned.

One of the unusual characteristics of many of these new spaces was the appearance of spontaneous interventions that were not previously reviewed, authorized, or programmed (i.e., the public reading of texts not submitted days or weeks beforehand to diverse cultural and political institutions for their approval, correction, or rejection). (Navarro, 2005: 192)

At this time, new trends in both narrative and poetry emerged, and younger writers started their own groups such as *El Establo* and held their own spontaneous cultural gatherings. Established intellectuals and writers were also given a further boost with high-profile events focusing on literature and criticism, such as the 1981 Congreso de la Literatura Cubana. The system of valorisation and canonisation of literature also expanded with a new *Diccionario de la literatura cubana* (1984), ever more literary prizes, including the Premio Nacional de Literatura, formally recognising some of the cultural ‘heavy-weights’ who had been erased from the collective memory in the 1970s. After 1986, the revitalisation of elite-level spaces and institutions continued with the reforms and debates sparked by the *Campaña de Rectificación de errores pasados y tendencias negativas*, a new political phase of the Revolution.

The political and economic move away from the more orthodox, Soviet-style system was mirrored by reorganisation in the cultural sphere. For example, UNEAC was restructured as Hart spoke of the need to ‘rectify’ past errors within the cultural bureaucracy as well. A period of intense discussion was initiated, and, in 1987, *Unión*, the journal of UNEAC, announced a ‘new age’ with a “new format, new authors, new helmsman and new energy” (Domínguez, 1993:112). Furthermore, the BHS was disbanded and turned into a new, larger and more dynamic organisation, the Asociación Hermanos Saíz, giving space and organisation to the new wave of young, critical artists. As more attention was focussed on these professional organisations and spaces, the largely amateur mass cultural movement stopped being the priority and the schools to train *instructores de arte*, first opened in the 1960s, were shut down.

Yet despite the growing confidence amongst the different generations of intellectuals, social and political changes in the 1980s, coupled with an emerging youth culture and demand for more commercialised cultural forms, meant that some artists, writers and intellectuals felt alienated from both up-to-date literary trends and their intended audience (Kumaraswami, 2007: 76). Even with two high-profile reading campaigns to re-engage the population in literature, as Menton shows, in the 1980s writers were still leaving Cuba. He quotes Reinaldo Arenas, Benítez Rojo, Edmundo Desnoes and Ricardo Bofill as examples (Menton, 1990: 927).

Discourses

During the period 1976-90, there were initially no major changes in cultural policy. In fact, many of the 1971 statements had been ratified in the First Communist Party Congress and later in the Constitution promulgated in 1976. However, Hart's own discourse started to reflect both a new openness and willingness to engage in dialogue. For example, Hart encouraged artists to look outside Cuba for inspiration. In what represented a significant change from the position adopted in 1968, when there had been official condemnation of the influence of foreign 'bourgeois' intellectuals, Hart aimed to prevent the 'provincialisation' of Cuban cultural production. He confirmed the new openness to external influence:

Libramos nuestra Batalla cultural sobre los principios en que se inspire la cultura occidental y sobre su aspiración o vocación de universalidad. No para aislarnos, sino para abrimos al mundo: no para limitarnos, sino para enriquecernos. (Báez, 1986: 35)

Several scholars have noted that the structural changes of the 1970s encouraged new levels of artistic experimentation, with authors treating personal psychological themes that would have been unthinkable in the earlier part of the decade (Domínguez, 1993: 103; Kapcia, 2005: 157). However, as Kapcia also suggests, the intellectual community took a while to trust the more open position of the state, and so, despite the new receptivity, there was still a tendency towards self-censorship and cultural conformity. This appears to be corroborated by Menton who, in his article on the Cuban novel from 1975 to 1987, focuses on the dominance of the genres of detective fiction and the historical novel that were deemed to be ideologically acceptable and consistent with official policy (Menton, 1990: 917).¹⁰

From 1986 onwards, the ideological framework of *cubanía* shifted once again. In cultural discourse, the term *vanguardia* regained significant prominence, over and above the *pueblo* and their mass cultural projects. For example, the declaration of the 4th UNEAC Congress in 1988 addressed the issues that had been debated since Castro's *Palabras a los intelectuales* in 1961 and offered more

¹⁰ Menton mentions the increase in works dealing with the history of Cuba's blacks and with slavery. As Cuba was pursuing an aggressive foreign policy in Angola and other African countries, Menton says the new thematic was linked to: 'la nueva política oficial de hacer resaltar las raíces africanas de la nación cubana' (Menton, 1990: 917). Only very briefly at the end of his article does Menton acknowledge the emergence of a new generation of writers such as Senel Paz, José Soler Puig and Manuel Pereira who, in the late 70s and early 80s, started to publish more experimental work.

support to intellectuals. Interestingly, it was Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, a member of the old PSP, who argued most strongly for an intellectual opening. He said: “intellectuals should be as far removed from dogmatism as from liberalism, as far removed from intolerance as from complacency” (Domínguez, 1993:113). This was added to earlier comments that there should no longer be official state doctrines on aesthetics, thereby making the ideological function of literature less important.

Amongst the membership of UNEAC, confirmation of the new ‘openness’ was welcomed. However, the fact that many of the other main debates focussed on ensuring artistic quality and improving working conditions suggests that, by that stage, writers and artists were less unsure of, or concerned with, their role in society. By the end of the decade, new currents in literature such as that of the early *Novísimo* writers continued the trend of exploring hitherto unexplored themes that had begun to emerge earlier in the decade (Araújo, 1999; Valladares Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, this decade saw some of the discourses of *cubanía revolucionaria* and its vision of a single, unified Cuban national identity challenged in fiction by women and by work that explored questions of race, gender and sexuality (Valladares Ruiz, 2005).

1990s - 2007

Crisis and revitalisation: spaces and institutions

By the end of the 80s the atmosphere was changing once again. On the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, ‘foreign ideas’ were rapidly losing legitimacy and the space for debate about the Soviet reforms was closed down, as Spanish translations of Soviet newspapers started to disappear from news-stands (Eckstein, 1994: 97). When the crisis hit Cuba in full force in 1990-1, the effects on the process of cultural production were severe in both the elite and popular spheres. The scarcity of materials meant the publishing industry almost ground to a halt and many of the spaces for performance or publication were also shut down or reduced to a bare minimum. In general, the new context and the need for the Revolution to redefine itself in a post-Soviet world changed the cultural concerns of the elite and contributed to a ‘retreat into individualism’ that mirrored the social transformations and informal networks created under the *período especial*. Although some art flourished under the new and

challenging conditions, the same was not true in the literary world; many of the *Novísimo* writers tried to get their work published abroad and others chose to leave (Kapcia, 2005: 195).

So, despite the leadership's efforts to revitalise the publishing industry from mid-decade, particularly by increasing the number of local publishing houses, many intellectuals and writers could now also operate within diasporic spaces. Although this had a considerable effect on the domestic literary process as some writers' work became separated from domestic reading publics (Whitfield, 2008: 14), it did not prevent the creation of new spaces within Cuba. The decade of the 1990s saw the phenomenon of 'plaquette' publications, which were book editions made in the midst of a grave paper shortage. It also witnessed the flourishing of new unofficial and official spaces for meeting and publication. For instance, groups of writers and other artists met informally in private houses, such as that of the poet Reina María Rodríguez, and produced their own non-sanctioned magazines, such as *Diáspora*. Yet at the same time, new, official magazines such as *Temas* represented a continuing trend towards greater criticism and plurality in intellectual publications. An example of this is the devotion of a whole edition of the magazine to diversity (Geddes Gonzales et al., 1998).

By the mid-nineties, as the *período especial* reforms started a slow process of economic and social recovery for the country, efforts were made to reinvigorate the cultural scene: yet more literary prizes were created and regional publishing was encouraged. The new Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, generated new enthusiasm amongst the cultural community, and literature seemed to gain in importance (Kapcia, 2005: 194). Perhaps related to the success of Cuban literature abroad, events such as book launches and presentations gave writers a new visibility (Kapcia, 2005:195). This trend only increased as writers began to get unprecedented coverage on television, and at events such as the Feria. At the same time that intellectuals and writers gained in importance, the policies and practices of the democratising strand of cultural policy were also revived. Having been in a state of decline since the mid-1980s, the institutions of the more grassroots cultural movement were given renewed impetus under a reorganised central department responsible for their administration: the Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura.

A new importance for culture

The emphasis within the ideological framework for most of this period has been on culture as the means of rescuing *cubanía revolucionaria*, the *nación* and by extension the Revolution. As *cubanía* sought to redefine itself within new circumstances, political leaders stripped it down, whilst seeking to preserve its 'essence' (Kapcia, 2000: 247). Culture was considered crucial for the attempt to recover and re-codify *cubanía's* essential values. Although 'culture' was evoked here in its broadest possible meaning, the change in direction also had consequences for discourses on literature, intellectuals and writers. In the search for a new revolutionary identity, the cultural vanguard and intellectuals and their critical function were given new importance across a range of official discourses. An example of this is an edition of the magazine *Contracorriente*, in which the former culture minister Armando Hart engaged in a round-table discussion with young intellectuals from AHS about the role that intellectuals should play in Cuba at the time. The conclusions imply that it was the ideas and, importantly, the actions of intellectuals that would critically engage with the altered Cuban reality and help drive it forward (Rojas et al., 1996).

There is evidence, however, in the discourse that intellectuals still felt uneasy during this period. Navarro mentions a statement from UNEAC in 1992 trying to combat prejudice against intellectuals (Navarro 2002: 200) and, in 2007, a series of television programmes about the cultural officials of the 1970s triggered a huge email debate amongst writers and intellectuals which, although focussing on the difficult time of the early 1970s, also reflected the thoughts of this group on their current situation. This attempt to come to terms with the excesses of political control in culture in the past also appeared as a theme within literary and other artistic discourse, with Padura and others writing about cultural policy in their novels (Buckwalter-Arias, 2005: 367-9). Furthermore, there is a suggestion that the international success of some Cuban authors had put further pressure on the self-definition of writers at home, as they looked to write for a global audience (Whitfield, 2008: 73). However, in the new context, it is clear that the prestige generated by the reputation of intellectuals was highly valued.

The discourses on the value of Cuban literary works were also somewhat ambivalent. For although there was less emphasis on the political value of texts, literature was still lauded for its ethics and

human-value content, as well as aesthetics (Hernández Alén, 2007). Also, some writers were able to publish abroad whilst remaining unpublished in Cuba (Whitfield, 2008: 14). Yet this period also saw a flourishing of texts demonstrating what Álvarez describes as displaying “a confluence of thematic and formal innovation” (Álvarez, 2002: 43). For novels, Buckwalter-Arias suggests that this was the period when the aesthetic was ‘re-inscribed’ into Cuban fiction (2005: 365). There were trends amongst this new literature, particularly in the short story, of writing from positions of marginality, and later even of a realism aimed at a foreign audience, both of which challenged official discourse (Whitfield, 2008: 75). Some have even argued that, during the early 1990s and beyond, textual production was “standing in for state-controlled journalism” (Martín-Sevillano, 2008; Whitfield, 2008: 32).

However, as well as the changes in discourses aimed at elite intellectual production, practical measures were taken to develop a new revolutionary identity within the more popular sphere of cultural production (Kapcia, 2005: 195-200). Since 1998, the discourse emphasised a need to develop a *cultura general e integral* amongst the population (Hernández Alén, 2007). Although this continued the humanist thrust of previous *masificación* discourses, it also included more specific references to cultural education and engagement leading to social development. This was manifested by Congresos de Cultura y Desarrollo and increasing recognition of UNESCO’s 1982 statement on cultural policy (Carranza, 1998: 83).

Conclusion: the culture of literature

One could summarise this outline of the history of the main spaces, institutions and discourses governing the role of literary texts and their authors, by saying that the main thrust of cultural policy from 1959-2007 was to continue to expand the culture of literary production and activities within Cuba. This can be seen in the combination of the growth of a complex publishing industry, new institutions and spaces to promote literary creation and publication, and the drive to democratise both literary consumption and production. Within this general growth in a national literary culture, I have attempted to show how, during different periods, different attitudes towards literature, intellectuals and writers prevailed, but how discourses never became totally monolithic in their implementation.

[Discourses] presenting themselves as the guarantors of the ideological and political stability of the Revolution,...have come to be hegemonic in certain periods, but, happily, they have never reigned in an absolute way in all the instances and ramifications of political power and cultural institutions. (Navarro, 2005: 193)

Nevertheless, over the decades, intellectuals' and writers' own self-definitions, which were so heterogeneous at the beginning of the Revolution, were forced to undergo a process of transformation, as they found themselves working within newly-defined spaces as subordinates to the political process. From the beginning, it was made clear that their focus should be on communicating with the *pueblo*. At times, discourse strove to limit this communication, when a certain definition of intellectual all but denied their status as public figures with the power to influence. This was compounded by expanding the category of *escritores* who, unlike the more 'universal' intellectual of old, were expected to write national literature as a vocation. When discourses coincided with widespread institutional implementation, this had real consequences for many intellectuals. Yet, as political circumstances changed, and new generations reached maturity, some writers regained some of their former status and role as intellectuals in the vanguard of cultural thought, a position which was further complicated by their re-entry into international markets and spheres.

In terms of their input into the public sphere, Hernández shows how their involvement followed roughly the same pattern. Thus during certain periods, he maintains, intellectuals and writers, through a diverse range of spaces, were able to exert considerable influence (Hernández, 2008). Although literary production never fits into a rigid time-scale, it seems that at certain times, namely during most of the 1960s and most of the 1980s, the political leadership sought answers to important questions from within intellectual debate, whilst, during the other period, 1968-1983, the dominance of a stricter ideological framework prevented intellectual critique from gaining much influence in the public sphere. Navarro argues that the changing discourses and spaces led to one period trying either to erase or compensate for the attitudes of the immediately preceding period.

Thus, employing conventionally the inexact round-number designations of the periods, we could say that the interventions and critical spaces of "the 1960s" (1959–67) were erased in "the 1970s" (1968–83); that the politico-cultural "errors" committed in "the 1970s" against those interventions and spaces were superficially recognized and immediately erased in "the 1980s" (1984–89); and, finally, that the new 1980s interventions and critical spaces were erased in the 1990s. (Navarro, 2002: 202)

Yet, overall, literary and artistic discourse was also able to feed into, and even challenge, the dominant ideological framework.

However, this interaction remained entirely discursive. This chapter began by outlining a particular approach to the concepts of literature, cultural policy and ideology that went beyond their purely discursive functions; and the history of the literary process has made constant reference to the expansion of literary activity beyond elite-level institutions. So, if, as we have seen, values and their expression in ideological discourses have not only set the central parameters for literary work through cultural policy, but also been responsible for the democratisation of literature, then it is necessary to investigate what role the institutions and discourses at grassroots level have played. For, if literature has been valued in Cuba for its communicative potential, as we saw above, reading was deemed to be an active process in which the reading subject would not only feed back into the dialogue but also undergo a process of transformation. Furthermore, this process was not expected to occur in a vacuum but within the individual and collective context of the particular readers.

This context, then, corresponds to the popular-empirical level of ideology, where the 'world-view' of individuals is shaped as much by experience as it is by the transmission of codified ideological messages. As a whole, this experience, as political culture, formed the conditions under which the broader dimension of cultural policy could both take root, and grow, with its own discourses and institutions. The consistency of the policy to democratise literature highlights the fact that literature was valued by the leadership not only because of the ideological content of its communication, but as a socio-cultural practice in which people were actively encouraged to participate. Returning to the example of the Feria, it cannot be understood merely in terms of the discourses and developments at the centre of literary production, although these remain important; it must also be seen as a socio-cultural phenomenon within a specific political culture, which is experiential and not just ideologically-defined. Therefore the evolution of political culture during the revolutionary period is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Forming a Society of Active Citizens:

The Ethos and Evolution of Participation in Cuba 1959-2000s

“...the question of what it is to take part in politics is massively complex and ultimately ambiguous. It raises the question of what constitutes politics”
(McLean, 1996: 241).

“The Cuban Revolution changed the characteristics of participation. All of it became politicized, nationalized and centralized. The government discouraged political indifference and began to harness political participation to transform society...” (Domínguez, 1978: 470).

“La participación popular ha sido una permanente invocación del discurso político revolucionario cubano, particularmente en las instancias comunitarias”
(Dilla, 2000: 19).

Throughout nearly five decades of Revolution, there has been an almost continuous and successful effort by the government, both to mobilise Cubans for the revolutionary cause and to encourage participation in its myriad organizations, structures and institutions. There is little doubt that over the years such a high level of citizen participation in Cuba has been crucial for maintaining the hegemony of the revolutionary process. However, there have been different interpretations of what participation in Cuba represents and also of what kind of hegemonic system is in place. If a definition of hegemony as ‘shared social values’ is used (Hall in Fernandes, 2006: 23), participation over the years is said to have reflected the ongoing majority consensus enjoyed by the revolutionary government and its ideology (Acanda, 1996: 17; Kapcia, 2000: 258). Yet, on the other hand, it is also said to demonstrate the ability of the leadership effectively to control and coerce the population into obedient compliance (Aguirre, 2002; Bunck, 1994). This latter, more top-down vision of domination is compatible with the perspective that grew out of studies of Eastern European socialism. These criticise the previous definition of hegemony as ‘idealist’, suggesting that: “citizens [can] participate in rituals that give the appearance of public consent”, whilst remaining privately cynical (Fernandes, 2006: 24; Yurchak, 2005: 16).

Yet it is possible to see both explanations of participation co-existing in Cuba. For example, the post-1990 *período especial* is seen as a time during which the realities of everyday existence directly contradicted some of the main ideologically-defined social values of the system (Fernandes, 2006: 24).

Under the influence of the *doble moral*,¹¹ many Cubans continued to show their public support for socialism at events like the annual May Day rally, whilst privately undermining its principal tenets as individuals struggling to survive within a dual economy (Fernandes, 2006: 25; Kapcia, 2000: 260). This situation, where participation was more likely a result of peer pressure and indirect coercion than active political support, leans more towards the second explanation of hegemony. However, in 1999, the dispute with the Cuban émigrés in Miami over Elián González led to a prolonged period of mass mobilisations campaigning for his return, in what seemed a genuine outpouring of emotion (Kapcia, 2000: 262). Although the rallies were carefully orchestrated by the leadership, they revealed the persistence, at least, of some shared values. Moreover, in addition to this high-visibility case, Cubans have participated in large numbers in a multiplicity of other activities, many of which did not necessitate a display of direct support for the government.

Therefore, to opt wholeheartedly for either model of hegemony-participation mentioned above seems ultimately inadequate. As well as homogenising what actually constitutes a wide range of participatory activity into a single interpretation, these definitions do not account for the complexities of both the values and actions of Cuban citizens. In contrast, the definition of power and hegemony arrived at in the Introduction (13 - 15) opens the path for a more nuanced interpretation of participation. By characterising hegemony as a combination of the dissemination of values through the social order and the material practices that shape everyday meanings, it is possible to see how participation can mean different things both at the *macro* and *micro* levels as well as across different institutional contexts. Although, in a holistic sense, participation in Cuba has exposed citizens to the dominant values of the Revolution, it has also consisted of a variety of local-level practices within differently defined structures. These practices, each with their own associated discourses (see Chapter One) have both regulated and enabled the production of meanings by which Cubans have shaped their everyday experience.

As well as providing an approach to the motivations for and meanings of participation for individual citizens, such a concept of hegemony provides a framework for addressing the wider political questions raised by the outcomes of participation and how they relate to the revolutionary process as a whole.

¹¹ The *doble moral* is the name given by Cubans to the contradiction between the public support of certain values and private behaviour which reflects different values.

This is important as, by moving participation away from the control-consensus dichotomy, it highlights the weaknesses in some recent arguments about the relationship between Cuban society and politics. Immediately following the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, and the crisis this precipitated in Cuba, there was a tendency within certain academic circles to look for the signs within Cuban society of what they considered to be the country's imminent and inevitable political transition (*Cuba in Transition*, 1991-4). Research focussed primarily on the increasing number of organisations that were acting on the margins of, or even in opposition to, official leadership positions, such as Church or human rights groups (Fernández, 1993: 100). Using this increase in 'alternative' participatory practice as evidence of a fledgling 'civil society', commentators have analysed its potential for undermining a significantly weakened Cuban state.

Beyond the fact that the predicted transition did not materialise, and perhaps even because of it, talk of 'civil society' sparked off a debate about the relevance of the term to the Cuban context, which in turn put the spotlight on the issue of participation (Acanda, 1996; Amony, 2005; Dilla, 1999). To begin with, Cuban scholars refuted the suggestion that 'civil society' in Cuba only began to appear in the 1990s, that it was entirely opposed to the state, and that it would aid a possible 'transition to democracy' (Hernández, 1999: 40). They did this not only on theoretical grounds by following a Gramscian conceptualisation of civil society, but also on the grounds that it revealed a deep misunderstanding of how Cuban society and politics had historically functioned during the revolutionary period (Chanan, 2001: 387; Hernández, 1999: 47). They have argued that such a notion of civil society did not take into account the dynamism of political culture in Cuba since 1959, or the complexity of a process which relied on such a high level of participation.

For several commentators, participation, perhaps even more so after the 1990s, had been the means by which an increasingly educated Cuban population had taken an active role in both furthering and, at times, challenging the aims of the Revolution, even if this was from primarily within leadership-sanctioned structures (Eckstein, 1994: xii; Hernández, 1999: 42; Kapcia, 2008: 22). Clearly this notion that social forces have effected change through so-called 'state' organisations makes a loaded term like 'civil society', viewed as entirely separate from the state, unable to describe the Cuban situation. Instead, participation demands an alternative conceptualisation of state-society relations and political

change in Cuba, based on an empirical analysis of the role that political culture and participation have played in both. Only by exploring the actual outcomes of the different forms of participation is it possible to draw conclusions about the revolutionary project's maintenance of hegemony in Cuba over time.

Therefore, an analysis of participation has two dimensions: its meaning for participating citizens, as well as its role in 'state' and 'society' interaction and the development of the political process as a whole. However, it is also important to remember that, historically, participation in Cuba has included involvement in a broad range of practices and, consequently, that these are likely to have contributed to the revolutionary process and affected individuals in different ways. As such, participation signifies a vast terrain, a detailed and full analysis of which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to track significant developments in the forms and types of participation during different revolutionary periods, a discussion of which will provide the second important contextual background to the main focus of the thesis, the function of the *talleres literarios* as specific examples of cultural participation.

In particular, notwithstanding the recognition that participation has been a dynamic process, the fact that all participation has been channelled through official structures shows how the revolutionary leadership has, over time, played a decisive role in attempting to shape both dimensions of its impact. The leadership has not only determined which practices have been considered official, but also set the parameters for both the practical and the ideological contexts in which they have been carried out. It is a combination of these ideological and practical motives that has formed the ethos behind the leadership's continued encouragement of participation. In terms of ideology, as mentioned above, different types of participatory practice have been associated with different discourses. However, as we also saw in the previous chapter, each separate discourse fell within the general framework provided by the evolving ideology and value system of *cubanía revolucionaria*.

Yet just as participation has had practical outcomes, so the ethos of participation has been shaped by more pragmatic objectives. As we shall see, the motives behind the leadership's encouragement of participation have also been related to the perceived demands of changing historical circumstances. It

is here, then, that an assessment of the general evolution of participation will reveal not only how it responded to times of change, but also how it played a part in bringing that change about. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to trace the developments in the ethos and evolution of participation during different periods of revolutionary history. The objective is to arrive at an idea of general implications at different times for individuals, groups, state-society relations and the political process as a whole.

Political culture and the formation of citizens.

Despite the acknowledgement of participation's role as a key factor in the revolutionary process, there is not a single book-length study in the literature on the Revolution dedicated entirely to its unique development. Unsurprisingly, the main approach to the ethos of participation has come through an analysis of the revolutionary government's attempt to forge a new political culture. However, even this field is limited in size. Although many analyses make passing reference to political culture, to date, only a handful have addressed it as their central theme (Bunck, 1994; Domínguez, 1978; Fagen, 1969; Fernández, 2000; Kapcia, 2008; Medin, 1990). The concept of 'political culture' is itself highly contested and, methodologically, it is notoriously difficult to measure (Almond & Verba, 1963; Chilton, 1988). Nevertheless, from the studies on Cuba, an idea emerges that it refers to a notion of both Cuban citizens' attitudes towards, and behaviour within, the political process. It is the behavioural element which separates political culture from a concept of ideology. Moreover, central to these two aspects of citizenship in revolutionary Cuba has been the mass participation in a range of practices.

The first work to deal significantly with these issues was Fagen's 1969 study *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*. Commenting on the rapid transformations of the first decade of the Revolution, Fagen maintained that the leadership encouraged participation in the process both as a means to get Cubans to carry out vital developmental objectives and to socialise them into a new way of being (1969: 7). Furthermore, as Fagen noted, the need for a high level of participation in a national project was not unique to Cuba. As he and others have argued, nationalist and revolutionary systems have typically required the participation of citizens in their programmes for several reasons (Fagen, 1969: 7; Hobsbawm, 2000: 317-18). Firstly it is needed as a means of self-protection, in order to channel any discontent generated by rapid social change; secondly it is a means of uniting citizens in

active support of the new government's programmes and thirdly it is a way of socialising citizens into having the values and attitudes required to create a new society (Fagen 1969: 8).

Basic to all of these functions is the idea that participatory structures provide a channel of communication between the leadership and the population. For Fagen, however, communicating a coherent message to the masses was not the main objective of the revolutionary leadership in the 1960s, which instead concentrated on mobilising, uniting and socialising, with action at the core of a process of subjective and collective transformation: "participation [was] organically related to socialisation" (1969: 7). It was through the collective experience of taking action that the leadership hoped that citizens would become more integrated, identify with the Revolution's main ideological values and gain *conciencia revolucionaria*. Furthermore, Fagen recognised participation as a dialectical process; through participation, Cubans would become motivated to continue to participate, and a new society would emerge from this process of cultural change. Finally, although Fagen recognised the difficulty in assessing the extent to which citizens fully internalised ideological elements, he showed how early examples of collective participation were both empowering and transforming for many Cubans and helped to shape future participatory experience.

Later studies on the developments in Cuban political culture after 1970 follow Fagen in showing that part of the leadership's ethos of participation was about the formation of citizens, but fail to build on his more important and enduring insights. For example, Bunck's 1994 study of different participatory structures attempted to infer the extent to which the leadership was successful in achieving cultural or attitudinal change amongst Cubans indirectly, through a historical analysis of their behaviour during different periods. Basing her study largely on readings of official discourses, Bunck posits that most actual participation in revolutionary organisations was the result of a combination of perceived personal gain and government coercion. Overall, she concluded that the attempt to change culture can be represented as the leadership trying to impose its ideology on an unwilling population, and that ultimately the Cuban project failed, because it did not produce its ideal citizen (Bunck, 1994: 219).

Such a top-down analysis of change reveals a partial vision of ideology and lacks a more subtle analysis of the dialectical nature of participation. It omits how it may have impacted on the individual

and collective 'world-view' and how it might have fed back into the process as a whole. Other analysts incorporate the private, psychological or informal sphere into their analysis of political culture (Aguirre, 2002; Fernández, 2000). Yet whilst this prevents the assumption that political culture was entirely dominated by official participation, no study has yet surpassed Fagen's in-depth analysis of the relationship between the two. One Cuban critic, Hernández, has even gone as far as to suggest that Fagen's study is "*un hito solitario*" in the literature on the theme (1999: 17).

More traditional sociological studies, however, are able to provide greater insight into the motivations of Cubans who participated in the process during different periods (Butterworth, 1980; Lewis, 1977; Zeitlin, 1967). Although few and far between, the individual focus of these studies offers a useful counterpoint to the work that concentrates exclusively on leadership-led policies. Drawing decisive conclusions about citizens' beliefs from this material though, remains difficult as they were based on small group samples and were still beset with the difficulties inherent in measuring changes in attitudes (Domínguez, 1978: 474). Additionally, *testimonio* accounts of experiences by individual Cuban citizens offer accounts of the motivations for and direct consequences of participation, although they too fall short of exposing deep and lasting cultural change.

Nevertheless, collectively, despite their limitations, these studies cover a broad range of participatory practices. As well as involvement in mobilisations, mass organisations and formal political structures, they include membership in youth organisations, participating in sport, and even going to work, all within a general concept of participation. Furthermore, citizen participation across this wide range of practices can still be considered political both in theory and practice. As has been said, the leadership's ethos of participation, and the fact that it was all channelled through official structures, automatically politicised many practices. Yet over time, the actual outcomes of the different types of participation both for individuals and groups at the popular-empirical level and for the process as a whole did not necessarily match the ideologically-defined intended functions of the practices.

The evolution of participation; 'state', 'society' and the revolutionary process

The fact that most participatory structures until the 1990s were established with direct support from central government has led to them being included within an umbrella definition of the Cuban 'state' (Fernández, 2000: 126; Otero & O'Bryan, 2002: 44) Yet, despite the hierarchical nature and apparent centralisation of the Cuban system, participation has always existed at many different levels: from a national mass rally, to a block-level Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, and increasingly since the 1990s, community organisations. Therefore, communication between the leadership and participating sectors of the Cuban population has operated in different ways. At times it has been one-way and direct and at others, it has moved in both directions. In the latter case, this has only been as effective as the many administrative strata and individuals involved in both passing the messages on and fulfilling their objectives. Furthermore, although centralised messages in the form of directives set the parameters for a particular practice, during different periods of the Revolution there was also considerable room for local-level input. This then made it difficult to assess where the state ended and society began.

An awareness of all the different institutional and structural contexts in which communication took place has made it more difficult to accept the leadership's own idealistic definition of this process of participation and communication as a 'true democracy'. Consequently, studies with a political focus have analysed various participatory structures in order to address the extent to which the Cuban system can be, in any way, described as democratic in an empirical sense (Bengelsdorf, 1994; Dilla, 2000; Domínguez, 1978; Harnecker, 1975; Rabkin, 1985; Ritter, 1985; Stubbs, 1994). As well as studies on participation in the electoral system created in 1976, there are also studies of the democratic nature of the participatory institutions and organisations set up by the Cuban leadership to promote directly the interests of various social groups. Although all recognise the non-liberal nature of the political system, from different political viewpoints, these analyses contribute to an understanding of how far certain participatory structures have allowed Cubans from the grassroots upwards to influence policy at different levels and therefore reveal some of the ways in which Cuban 'society' has been able to influence the state.

Yet although these studies include analyses of participation in communication, discussions and debates directly related to policy formulation, the majority only focus on how far participation has been able to influence the overall regulatory framework. Subsequently, they leave out any analysis of the more everyday politics of empowerment mentioned above. Furthermore, and importantly for this thesis, they do not investigate the potential impact of participation on activities not considered to be traditionally political. Specifically, they ignore the possible political ramifications of the high level of cultural participation, which grew out of the policy of cultural democratisation. Therefore, as one critic has put it, what is ultimately required in an analysis of participation is not only a broad concept of participation but a broadening of the concept of politics (Fernandes, 2006: 6).

However, in Cuba, this can only be understood within the context of the wider revolutionary developments. To arrive at this bigger picture, participation has to be understood within the context of the “rupture and continuity” in policy directions that have punctuated the entire revolutionary process (Kapcia, 2000: 221). Accordingly, an additional body of work which covers participation comes within what has been termed the Revolution’s “literature of explanation” (Kapcia, 2000: 5). Historical studies that attempt to explain the origins and course of the Revolution have included a general analysis of the ways in which Cubans have participated in the process set within the context of social, political and economic developments. Of particular relevance are the studies which have attempted to show how much of the revolutionary leadership’s encouragement of participation has been driven not by their ideological pursuit of cultural change but by pragmatic policies which in turn have been shaped by both global and domestic political and economic dynamics (Eckstein, 1994; Pérez-Stable, 1993).

These studies, which have recognised that the forces within Cuban society have often been able to affect what the leadership and the ‘state’ has been able to do, have had consequences not only for how the state and society are conceptualised, but also specifically for a notion of participation (Eckstein, 1994: 22-30). In these analyses, participation is viewed as being able to affect change both directly and indirectly through the way in which people choose to participate. In this way, the ideas of passive participation and non-participation are added into the equation, as is participation in covert, illegal, and informal practices, because they are ways in which people could not only express personal or political discontent but also put pressure on positions of authority (Eckstein, 1994: 10). In what follows then, I

shall trace the general ethos and evolution of participation over the years, in the context of the major changes in policy direction which have punctuated the revolutionary process.¹²

The 1960s: forming a culture of participation: radical change, direct democracy & ‘conciencia’

When the Rebel Army assumed power in Cuba in 1959, it did so with widespread popular support (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 61). The overthrow of an unpopular Batista had left a country riddled with social inequalities, an economy almost entirely dependent on that of the United States and political institutions widely thought to be corrupt and defective (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 62). Therefore, a movement which professed a *cubanía* claiming that it wanted to return Cuba to the Cubans, to address social injustice and to end corruption and tyranny, was practically guaranteed an enthusiastic reception. Furthermore, this popular enthusiasm for the Revolution, its discourse, and its charismatic leader Fidel Castro, was soon reinforced by a series of popular reforms. Such popular support in the context of the structural upheaval set in motion by the revolutionary process was crucial for stimulating an initial ‘participatory impulse’ (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 67).

Thus the participation of ordinary people in the Revolution emerged empirically from the very start. Initially arising in the form of labour unrest, and local and mass meetings, the ‘participatory impulse’ helped to radicalise the agenda of the new revolutionary leadership, which, during 1959-61, was still debating ideological and policy direction (Kapcia, 2005: 119). Yet it was during that same period of radicalisation that the leadership started its deliberate attempt to channel the participatory impulse into newly-formed structures, thereby harnessing it for its own ends. Once in power, channelling participation became ever more important to the Cuban leadership for several reasons. As well as bestowing the Revolution with visible legitimacy, citizen participation helped to spread the revolutionary message, carry out developmental projects, and to unite the population behind the attempt to protect the Revolution from the increasingly evident threat of its enemies.

¹² Most attention will be paid to the 1960s, as it is important to understand this initial period in order to see how subsequent periods have developed new, parallel participatory structures and built on the early experiences of Revolution.

By the end of 1961, the Revolution was defining itself convincingly as the long-awaited realisation of the nearly one hundred years of struggle for national sovereignty that had begun with the Wars of Independence. The economy was no longer capitalist and all production had been nationalised (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 61). Furthermore, educational initiatives and urban and agrarian reforms were causing rapid and radical transformations in the social fabric, which were exacerbated when many of the Revolution's opponents, largely found amongst the middle classes, chose to leave.¹³ In general, the whole of the decade of the 1960s was characterised by this fast pace of change; the new leadership experimented with several economic policies, there was political manoeuvring at the governmental level and, internationally, Cuba became increasingly isolated from its traditional allies.¹⁴

Direct democracy: acting in their own interests

It was within this highly charged atmosphere of 'siege mentality' and rapid social change that the revolutionary leadership operated a system of mass mobilisation and an ethos of participation began to emerge. The leadership mobilised Cubans to carry out specific policies, join militias and mass organisations, and attend rallies. The pattern followed by the new culture of participation was referred to by the leadership as a kind of 'direct democracy' (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 79). This involved direct communication between the leadership and the 'people', and was represented by, amongst other things, the mass rallies attended by thousands of people at which Fidel Castro spoke at length about the policies and direction of the Revolution.

The high level of participation in these mass meetings, and the other new participatory structures, initially showed the overwhelming support for Castro and his policies. Although the communication was largely one-way, such support created the sense that Castro was close to the 'people' and encouraging them to act in their own interests. As such, the first half of the 1960s witnessed a variety of mobilisations related to the immediate needs of the new leadership, as yet, without a clear policy-direction. However, the second half of the decade saw the 'push for communism', during which people

¹³ By 1969, 400,000 had left (Kapcia, 2005: 122).

¹⁴ The United States and the Organisation of American States broke relations with Cuba. Moreover, although in the 1960s Cuba had economic ties with the Soviet Union, relations between the two countries were by no means straightforward, especially after mid-decade (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 110).

were encouraged to work, volunteer and participate in response to ‘moral incentives’ as the government pursued economic development based on communist ideals (Eckstein, 1994: 33).

At the early stage, rapid changes in policy prevented the leadership from developing a clear institutional framework. Consequently, it was the people themselves who were entrusted with much of the grassroots organisation of participatory practices, the collective experience of which was instrumental in shaping its outcomes. During this period, popular input at the local level of participation was encouraged by the considerable support for policies that often directly benefited the population. However, as policy changed from the mid-decade onwards, the pressure to participate, combined with the lack of proper feedback channels for communication, caused many Cubans to refuse to continue participating on the leadership’s terms.

Forming citizens with ‘conciencia’

In order to encourage participation in these new structures, the leadership appealed directly to the patriotism and central values of *cubanía* already shared by many Cubans. According to Fagen, two themes lay at the core of this early ethos during the 1960s, and arguably remained crucial concepts within *cubanía revolucionaria* until the 1990s. These were the themes of *lucha*, or struggle, and utopia. Cubans were called upon at different times to participate in the struggle against “colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, counter-revolution, bureaucratism, sectarianism, discrimination, illiteracy, absenteeism, low productivity, and much, much more” (Fagen, 1969: 11). As both a counter-point to and reward for the sacrifices inherent in so much struggle, Cubans could look forward to a future better society, the main goal that gave significance to all their action in the present.

In the context of the hardships brought about by the U.S.-imposed trade embargo and the fear of invasion and other counter-revolutionary actions, as well as the early optimism generated by popular reforms, it is possible to see how the *cubanía* discourse of struggle and utopia at the intellectual-theoretical level could take root at the popular-empirical level. Yet, it was the collective experience of participation in directed practices that aimed to reinforce identification with the Revolution’s key

values, as individuals underwent the transformative process of developing *conciencia* and the awareness of measures needed to bring a new society into being.

Although Fagen suggests that all revolutionary policy had been based on a model of subjective change, at the time of the policy move towards communism, Guevara's ideal Cuban citizen discourse mentioned in Chapter One came to the fore (Fagen, 1969: 13). As suggested in the previous chapter, the specifics of exemplary behaviour depended on the particular institutional setting; nevertheless, it is worth repeating that some central value-behaviours were: "cooperation, egalitarianism, sacrifice, service, hard-work, self-improvement, obedience and incorruptibility" (Fagen, 1969: 14).

The evolution of participation in the 1960s: mobilisation in 'transitory structures'

Participatory structures I: The Literacy Campaign

Launched as part of the 'Year of Education' in 1961, the Literacy Campaign was a mobilisation on a massive-scale to try to eradicate illiteracy on the island. As an early, successful, mobilisation, it set a precedent for future mobilisations and represents a good example of the terms on which Cubans were encouraged to participate during the early 1960s. The year represented a crucial moment for the young Revolution; Cuba had undergone major economic changes, and, following the total breakdown in relations with the United States, was facing the threat of invasion. Stressing the need for both unity in collective struggle and strong leadership to protect the Revolution, Fidel Castro initiated the year-long educational drive that at its height was able to unite a quarter of the Cuban population in a common purpose. As well as its immense symbolic power and real results, the Literacy Campaign exemplifies how many ordinary Cubans initially used their voluntary political agency in support of the Revolution's efforts. Moreover, it shows how the leadership valued both the support that mass participation brought the Revolution and the sense of empowerment it inspired in people (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 87).

From the start, the discourse of the Literacy Campaign gave it an explicitly political function. Combating illiteracy was seen as a way to rectify the inequalities inherited from the previous

educational system which had discriminated against the poorer classes. Drawing on Martí's ideas which he would repeat in *Palabras a los intelectuales*, Castro asserted that a lack of education coincided with high levels of political oppression and therefore eradicating it would empower people (Fagen, 1969: 37). Thus, in line with the atmosphere of 'siege mentality' and revolutionary struggle, the whole Campaign was framed in military terms and people were recruited into brigades to be given the training to 'go to war' against illiteracy. However, the Campaign was not without its more pragmatic objectives. Education was considered vital for equipping Cubans with the skills necessary to operate in a modernising, developing economy.

Furthermore, after a year-long Campaign focusing on eradicating illiteracy amongst the adult population all over the island, it was hoped that the newly-literate and literacy workers alike would emerge from the process with a deeper understanding of national problems, *conciencia*, and a greater willingness to continue to participate in the ongoing transformation of society. To this end, two primer manuals to be used by literacy workers, (*Alfabetizamos* and *Venceremos*) aimed to give lessons in reading and writing through the teaching of revolutionary orientation (Fagen, 1969: 39). The explicitly ideological content of the teaching materials has been a point of contention in certain studies of the Campaign (Medin, 1990: 8; Serra, 2007: 28-52). However, these criticisms of the Campaign not only assume that the ideological message was both coherently transmitted and received, but also ignore the many other outcomes of the Campaign as an example of the culture of participation. Furthermore, they are based on the implicit assumption that liberal education is ideology-free.

Above and beyond the educational component, the Campaign undoubtedly helped to spread news of the Revolution to the more marginalised areas within Cuba (Fagen, 1969: 56). With such a huge percentage of the population involved, the Campaign also promoted greater social integration, as many closer ties were forged between the rural and urban sectors of society. As one commentator has suggested, it was the Literary Campaign that: "In essence...transformed [the Revolution] into a mass movement" (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 86). Just at the time when Cuba seemed under siege, it must have given many people the empowering sense of contributing to the greater effort, and of working together with their fellow Cubans. This sentiment was constantly reinforced by the mass media, which focussed

especially on the experiences of the young *brigadistas*, the ‘martyrs’ killed by counterrevolutionaries, and the idea of being under attack.

The Literacy Campaign was a temporary mobilisation that relied on the energy and enthusiasm of the people, rather than any fixed structures or advanced planning. Whilst people did not have great input into the content of the programme, they had a considerable effect on the manner in which it was implemented. Furthermore, although the communication with the leadership during the Campaign was mostly one-way, there was opportunity for some feedback into the system via the letters sent by new literates to the press. These show that as well as fostering greater identification with the Revolution and its aims, the Campaign had a positive effect on many individuals. In his analysis of the campaign, Fagen stresses the need to view it as a process rather than an event, as this better shows the dynamic relationship that existed between government direction and participation (Fagen, 1969: 65).

However, it is harder to measure whether the experience of participating in the campaign led to more permanent changes in *conciencia*. Although all the action was framed in discourse appealing to values of *conciencia revolucionaria* such as struggle, heroism and sacrifice, it is unclear whether it was these, or the more simple identification with the *cubanía* values of defending the nation and social justice, that actually motivated people. Nevertheless, besides the actual beneficiaries of the Campaign, the volunteers stood to gain little materially from participation. Furthermore, even though participants were acting within relatively narrow parameters, the newness of the experience, its centrality to their lives during that year, and the intimacy of relationships forged in the countryside had a profound effect on many people. It is known for example that the campaign was transformative for many of the female participants; by going unaccompanied into the countryside, these urban girls transgressed pre-revolutionary gender codes relating to the appropriate behaviour of women (Padula & Smith, 1985: 82).

The lack of coercion involved is represented by the substantial percentage of people who avoided any involvement with the Campaign. However, it could also be argued that the 28% of illiterates who could not or would not be educated were participating politically by refusing to participate at all. Nevertheless, in the main, the Literacy Campaign was a powerful legitimising symbol for a Revolution

that claimed to be 'of the people'; as the Miami exiles prepared to invade, Cuba was sending its young people off into the countryside armed with pencils and paper.

Participatory structures II: Mass organisations

Comités de la Defensa de la Revolución

The majority of studies on participation in the various mass organizations set up and developed in Cuba from the early 1960s onwards tend to focus on whether they can be considered in any way democratic (Bengelsdorf, 1994; Domínguez, 1978: 260-306; Harnecker, 1975). Less attention has been paid to what participation in them meant for people in terms of a sense of empowerment, such as the results of the Literacy Campaign. Even the issue of the democratic nature of the mass organisations changes according to the time-frame. For if, during most of the 1960s, mass organisations were still fledgling structures, over the years they became major institutions within the Revolution, and therefore more established channels for communication. What is clear is that developing both the desired and actual functions of mass organisations, designed to harness the participation of nearly the entire Cuban population, reflected the leadership's ethos of participation at the time.

Launched during a mass meeting in September 1960, as the counter-revolutionary threat intensified, the most important of these organisations, because of the scope of its members, was the Comités de la Defensa de la Revolución. The CDRs were small, localised committees initially set up to provide vigilance against counter-revolutionary activities in neighbourhoods, schools and factories and later to carry out any number of important functions in their local area. As their roles evolved, so did the specific discourses describing the CDRs and their practices. However, in all the discourse it was made clear that, by working at a local level, people were contributing to the national effort. In this way, as the organisation expanded, Cubans' first identification with the Revolution was through their own community.

Furthermore, in line with the leadership's ethos of participation, the CDRs, as well as mobilising people, implementing policy and protecting the Revolution, had the implicit functions of integrating,

socialising and forming citizens. Central to this was the idea that *conciencia* would be developed through action (Fagen, 1969: 84). As such, the CDRs provide a model for the many other structures later established to channel participation. Yet, perhaps due to their high visibility, the CDRs have often also been the focal point for detractors of the Revolution (Aguirre 2002: 76; Rabkin, 1991: 88). Even early critics of the regime accused them of being a form of internal spy network and means of social control (Fagen, 1969: 102). Nevertheless, discussing such a large structure in terms of 'freedom versus control' ignores both the enabling element of the opportunities for collective action and empowerment that it provided and the complexities of the culture of participation.

During the first few years of their existence in the early 1960s, the activities and organisation of the CDRs depended very much on the agency and willingness of people to participate across different localities. As their numbers expanded rapidly, and they grew out from the cities into the countryside, in reality many CDRs were disorganised, showing the organic nature of their initial development. They were by no means a planned, top-down, stable, state structure (Fagen 1969: 102). Although a National Directorate was created, and was charged with delegating lists of local responsibilities to the various CDRs, in the early days, vigilance remained their primary concern. During the 1961 attack at Playa Girón, which was defeated partially by voluntary militias, the CDRs took on the task of defeating the counter-revolution in other urban and rural areas.

In 1962, when the immediate external threat was over, the initial spontaneous structure of many of the CDR was reorganized and a traditional pyramidal structure of control established, including directorates at sectional, regional, provincial and national levels and cadres were trained. Sessions of self-evaluation were encouraged throughout the local level CDRs so that they could assess and regularise their activities. At these meetings, there was open discussion about the role of the CDRs in which anyone could and did participate, although directives now came directly through the hierarchical structure. Increasingly after this, the focus of the CDRs and the other mass organisations was on the implementation of certain national programmes and policy. The CDRs were the administrators for local programmes for health, housing, education, savings and supplies. When rationing was introduced in 1961, they were responsible for organising it and guarding against irregularities. They also mobilised people for service for the Revolution, to deal with disasters or to attend mass rallies.

The CDRs also played an important political educational role. At meetings key speeches of the Revolution were read and discussed, and classes at different educational levels were set up throughout the organisation. The lack of many qualified teachers, or trained cadres, meant that often complex theories such as Marxism-Leninism were not fully understood. However, the classes provided a further means to explain and legitimise the Revolution. In this way, the leadership-mass communication of the so-called 'direct democracy' was followed up with local-level face-to-face communication in order to build consensus. Remembering that participation in the CDRs was voluntary, though subject to peer pressure, they signified political participation on a large scale.

During the second half of the 1960s, the CDRs lost their vigilance role and were further institutionalised (Domínguez, 1978: 264). They became primarily neighbourhood organizations as the sections in workplaces and elsewhere were closed down. This ended any relationship the CDRs had with the labour movement and actually gave the CDRs more autonomy. The flexibility required of the individual branches to free them to respond to local issues meant that they were granted a further degree of autonomy from the National Directorate, although, in 1968, local power in decision-making was still minimal (Domínguez, 1978: 265). At this particular time, all Cubans were also being encouraged to mobilise to achieve the 'Ten Million Ton' sugar harvest the leadership had promised to deliver to the Russians in 1970. Even though the goal was now economic modernisation rather than physical survival, the leadership continued to exercise strong central control and demand unity.

Although CDR members had no input into policy decision-making at a national level, they did exercise some control over local matters. The constant discussion of policies and decisions about activities at the local level contributed to what Fagen has labelled a "subculture of local democracy" (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 84). This level of local involvement is often overlooked in macro-studies of the Revolution. However, the active and willing involvement of so many people in policy implementation, through the CDRs, shows that Cubans politically supported many policy decisions, although this is perhaps not surprising as many policies were of direct benefit to them and the local community.

It is still also possible to argue that people were subjected to pressure and propaganda facilitating their identification with the policies. But the assumption that all the people were effectively coerced into participating is not really tenable either. This can be seen by the various ways in which people showed their resistance to certain measures taken by the CDRs when they chose to. For example, CDRs were generally more successful in carrying out polio vaccinations rather than mobilising people for voluntary labour; in getting people to open savings accounts rather than controlling the distribution of scarce goods (Fagen, 1969: 98). Yet in the main the policies that were seen as real benefit to people could count on a high success rate.

One of the explicit functions of the CDRs was education for citizenship in the new society. The invasion at Playa Girón, which gave enormous impetus to the organisation, shows how many Cubans had internalised at least some of the aspects of what was required of the revolutionary citizen even at this early stage. During the three-day battle, CDR members arrested large numbers of people and, whilst some of those arrested were genuine counter-revolutionaries, many were just people who had not exhibited the correct revolutionary behaviour (Fagen, 1969: 73). However, this also meant that what constituted revolutionary behaviour was a matter of individual or small group judgement. As initially, membership of the CDRs was restricted to good revolutionary citizens, their inauguration created the first potentially divisive elements within revolutionary society, as some citizens were 'in' and others 'out'. One commentator concluded therefore that the CDRs, instead of forging the united political culture that the leadership desired, may have actually contributed to ruptures in the political culture at a local level (Domínguez, 1978: 508).

Yet, this division did not last; as the CDRs lost their vigilance role, they soon became more inclusive, and encouraged a broad membership. There was some social pressure to join, as the ubiquity of the CDRs meant that citizens who were apolitical, or non-participatory, could no longer hide and failure to participate was seen as a serious failure. Membership of the organization grew as it was institutionalised throughout the 1960s. In 1961, it had totalled nearly 800,000 members, but by 1970, after further recruitment drives, this figure had reached 3.2 million (Domínguez, 1978: 262). Yet, the sense of coercion implied by the peer pressure to join a CDR was countered by the way that, once in them, people exercised their political agency by choosing at what level to participate and which

government policies to support more than others. For example, some people were little more than members in name.

CDRs, then, were only as effective as the people participating in them and meant different things to different people and at times were even unpopular. For example, in Oscar Lewis' book *Four Cuban Men*, there is an interview with a man who describes his local CDR as being riddled by personal rivalries and being led by a man who not only did not want to be a leader but neglected his duties and was by no means an 'ideal citizen' (Lewis, 1977: 200). What all this suggests is that, although the CDRs were successful in promoting a culture of participation, they were not necessarily automatically creating a *conciencia revolucionaria* in all who participated in them, though they undoubtedly generated shared experiences within communities..

La Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC) and other local organisations

Another mass organisation, the FMC, was established specifically to incorporate women into the revolutionary project and to ensure their full inclusion within the culture of participation. It carried out a number of practices related to women's 'interests' such as re-training domestic servants, running seamstress programmes for rural women, running day-care centres, promoting women's health and supporting women in the workplace (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 109-10). In many ways, it paralleled the CDRs in terms of how it was organised structurally. Although its sphere of activity was smaller than that organisation, it still allowed for considerable popular involvement and autonomy at the local level. As well as furthering the 'interests' of women, the FMC had as one of its objectives the formation of the new Cuban woman as a complementary citizen for the new Cuban man.

In contrast to the CDRs, the FMC may actually have been more successful in achieving the stated goal of participation, leading to cultural change. The huge increase in the numbers of women participating in the public sphere through its localised activities transformed the lives of many women and gave them a sense of empowerment (Stubbs, 1994: 191). Yet, as an organisation, over the years it did not necessarily increase women's access to positions of power or the decision-making process (Stubbs, 1994: 191). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that, within the FMC, women's gender interests

were subordinated to those of the nation (Molyneux, 2000: 295). However, the FMC during the 1960s added to the 'subculture of local democracy' and the face-to-face organising around the implementation of revolutionary policies. Also, this first decade of the Revolution witnessed the establishment and gradual growth of several other official channels which facilitated local-level communication, organisation and participation in legal, administrative and other social matters.

For example, the People's Courts were locally-run courts set up to hear minor grievances between members of a community. Nevertheless, whilst participation in the courts as judge and jury was both empowering for those involved and an expression of support for revolutionary structures, they actually had very little authority in real terms. In addition they provided a convenient means by which local disputes could be aired and resolved in a way that was satisfactory to the Revolution, i.e. following directives without the disputes escalating or undermining the Revolution itself in any way. In contrast, Poder Local was a structure set up in the late 1960s which had the objective of getting people directly involved in the administration of their local communities (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 111). It was a system of political representation through chosen delegates, which would have opened a two-way channel of communication with the leadership. However, in the midst of the structural crisis and mass mobilisation at the time, it failed to establish itself properly. As well as these more formal activities, government policy facilitated the growth of many new local social, cultural and sports groups, all of which both encouraged participation and endowed it with national significance. Young people, small farmers and students also had their own organisations.

Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos (CTC) and participation in the workplace.

A culture of participation in a number of material practices was successfully formed in the 1960s through a variety of voluntary mobilisations and organisations. However, a comparison with similar organisations formed in the key area of work and the workplace can show how very different outcomes came from different contexts. In particular, the development of the CTC and the trade unions was an example of how the leadership's ethos of participation in the 1960s, of 'direct democracy' and the pursuit of *conciencia*, was ultimately flawed. To begin with, although the leadership restructured all unions, expecting them to serve the Revolution and increase production, they were not new

organisations (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 62). As such, initially, the leadership entered into a complex two-way process of negotiation with these organisations that did not always produce the behaviour amongst workers which it desired. Workers' councils, elections of union leaders, strikes, and disputes were some of the ways in which workers at the grassroots participated and negotiated their position. However, later in the decade, as the negotiating power of the unions dwindled, workers turned to absenteeism, low productivity and other measures in order to register their non-compliance.

The victory of the revolutionaries in 1959 had actually reignited labour tensions. Inspired by the claims in the discourse that the new government would represent the interests of the working class, workers themselves took the opportunity provided by the initial disruptions to strike and demand higher wages and other benefits. (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 67) The leadership responded by voicing the need for the workers to develop *conciencia*, to struggle and sacrifice and to pursue the goals of eliminating unemployment and improving conditions for their class as a whole. However, whilst calling for *conciencia*, the government also actively intervened in labour disputes often siding with the workers. In other words, the government granted many of the workers' wishes (but not all) whilst claiming to be doing so in the interests of the Revolution.

Yet even the granting of concessions to the workers and the real improvement in standard of living that many workers experienced was not enough to galvanise them into acting as a class rather than in their different sectors. This had such an effect that: "By 1961, the revolutionary government had come to view the negative response by labour to the state as a political act of resistance against the state" (Bunck, 1994: 133). Some of this resistance was played out in the turbulent elections of union leaders and increasing levels of absenteeism (Bunck, 1994: 135). Nevertheless, the leadership's effort to create a new attitude towards work continued, the leadership took a number of measures, introducing both increased worker participation in the workplace, and a punishment and reward system for worker behaviour.

Workers' councils were an attempt to involve the workforce in the running of enterprises and to give them a forum to air grievances. This empowered workers by giving them a voice and a sense of their bargaining power, but ultimately gave them no control over the final decisions being made (Bunck,

1994: 136). Workers' councils started to decline by 1962, but as tensions persisted, commissions were set up to mediate disputes, although regular government intervention in these also severely limited their decision-making power. Moreover, as the unions became increasingly professionalised and centralised under the National Directorate of the CTC, they became more concerned with increasing productivity and enforcing labour discipline rather than representing the 'interests' of workers.

In terms of participation, Pérez-Stable notes how by the end of the 1960s the CTC was no longer a real political force as the boundaries between union, management and state became blurred (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 107). Progressively over the decade, then, workers were called upon to sacrifice their labour for the greater good of the Revolution, rather than for personal, material gain. In order to improve their attitudes, workers were to be educated by cadres of vanguard workers who had *conciencia*, in an attempt to get them to emulate their behaviour. However, although a general nationalism united many workers, fewer displayed all the qualities of what would become the new man thesis and continued to resist the pressure to work harder. Moreover, despite measures by the government and professional wings of the unions to crack down on this un-revolutionary behaviour,¹⁵ the problem was only to increase when the government pursued the 'push for communism' economic policy based on moral incentives (Eckstein, 1994: 40).

During this period, the whole focus of the Revolution turned to work and *conciencia*. Huge swathes of the population, including manual workers, were mobilised into working on a voluntary basis as well as working their normal shifts, as the drive to achieve communism and produce a 10 million ton *zafra* in 1970 got under way. In what amounted to a quasi-military operation, all other participatory structures also turned their attention to mobilising and developing the necessary *conciencia* required for this effort (Bunck, 1994: 144). However, by 1970, when the 10 million ton harvest attempt failed, the leadership was faced with economic crisis and a severe blow to its legitimacy. Discontent was manifested through the high levels of absenteeism at work, which in some cases amounted to unofficial strikes (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 119).

¹⁵ One example of this was the creation of the UMAP camps, mentioned in the previous chapter.

The ethos of participation 1970 – 1990: institutionalisation, new channels & exemplary behaviour

After 1970, the revolutionary leadership was forced into making major policy changes that would affect the direction of the revolutionary process for the next decade and beyond. Faced with the reality of economic disaster and the failure of the 1960s appeals to ‘moral incentives’ and *conciencia* to achieve the necessary types of participation, Bengelsdorf argues, the Cuban leadership had several options in order to pursue the main objective of economic growth (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 104). However, instead of physically stifling discontent (which had been the policy of the Soviet Union), the purpose of the Cuban leadership “...was to channel discontent, to redefine the space for its expression within a framework moulded, in the end, by the same paternalism that had haunted the 1960s” (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 104).¹⁶ Therefore, in line with Fagen’s explanations given above, participation in Cuba after 1970, as well as being the way to pursue revolutionary goals, became a means of ‘self-protection’, and actually increased over the decade.

So, after admitting that the realities of Cuba’s economic problems were much more complex than first thought, and that the leadership-people communication of the ‘direct democracy’ had not been the best way to find solutions for these realities, the leadership opted for more orthodox paths to socialism. As members of the former Cuban communist party, the PSP, returned to power, a process of institutionalisation was begun which aimed both to slow down the process of change and to consolidate some of the achievements already made (Kapcia, 2000: 194). From the start, participation and popular involvement were to be central within this process. In the immediate aftermath of the 1970 crisis, meetings were held all over Cuba so that people could discuss what had gone wrong and the possible ways forward (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 100). One of the outcomes of these meetings was the idea that there was a need for a greater level of participation by Cubans in the decisions that directly affected them.

¹⁶ Even though repressive measures were not directed towards the population as a whole, this period initiated the ‘disciplining’ of artists, academics and intellectuals and the closing down of critical forums (see Chapter One).

New channels

Consequently, as the leadership embarked on its process of systematic institutionalisation, a key aim was to develop new and more permanent channels for communication and participation. However, unlike during the 1960s

the idea was to give the people direct control over an entire spectrum of issues that had evoked daily discontent;...to involve the entire people in either seeking the means to their resolution or understanding, as active participants, the difficulties involved in resolving them. (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 104)

At this time, the mobilisations to carry out revolutionary developmental goals along the lines of the Literacy Campaign and voluntary labour brigades were no longer economically or politically viable. Participation had to take place within defined structures that gave people the sense that they were voicing their feedback into the process.

Following this, the leadership took a two-pronged approach to developing participatory structures: the continuation and formalisation of the organisations set up in the 1960s and the setting up of new structures with the specific function of broadening the access to decision-making. New types of 'political' participation had their practical manifestations in worker assemblies, the newly invigorated trade union system, and ultimately an electoral system, Poder Popular, established nationally in 1976. The reformed and expanded mass organisations set up in the 1960s had provided the bridge between this new form of participating and the former kind which remained concentrated on the traditional objectives of mobilisation and socialisation.

As the process of institutionalisation evolved, the increasing levels of bureaucracy meant that the state itself also greatly expanded its reach. A consequence was the creation of a system within which the various structures had much more clearly defined roles. "One of the principal charges of institutionalisation was the differentiation of political leadership, administrative responsibility, and popular involvement" (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 123). At the same time that new channels for participation encouraged more popular input, their rigid nature allowed for less spontaneous organisation than in the 1960s, and created a more extensive regulatory framework. The dual objectives of economic

development and mass participation in the decision-making process had led to tensions between centralisation and a tendency to decentralise, which in turn affected the level at which Cubans were able to participate. If during the 1970s a culture of participation was still one of the main goals of the leadership, they not only changed the channels for participation, but also its stated objectives in terms of political culture.

Well-behaved citizens

Alongside the structural change, participation in the 1970s was to retain its key relation to socialisation and the formation of citizens. Yet the former ethos of participation that had relied on the development of *conciencia*, the formation of new Cuban man and a limited institutional framework, had failed. In fact, Bengelsdorf suggests that

.... [during the 1960s] the leadership had spent badly its most important currency, the *conciencia* of its people; that is, ironically, it had achieved entirely the opposite goal than that which it had sought. (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 100)

After 1970, although personality change through participation was still a key element in the leadership's ethos, the 'new man' discourse fell out of favour, and emphasis was placed more on *conciencia* being represented in exemplary modes of behaviour, rather than appeals to the Guevarist values of heroism, sacrifice and voluntarism (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 103).

Therefore, less emphasis was placed on the transformation of the values of the individuals who would bring the new society into being and more put on the mass, active, participation of Cubans in all the necessary tasks in the construction of socialism. This change in ethos paralleled the use in *cubanía revolucionaria*, economics and politics of references to more orthodox socialist methods. Following this, all forms of participation, in educational or cultural activities, in mass organisations, workplaces and structures covering nearly all sectors of the population, were directed towards encouraging identification with a model type of behaviour. From 1970 onwards, the ideal citizen that would emerge from participation was one who worked hard, studied hard, had a sense of civic-mindedness, and was obedient and conformist (Bunck, 1994: 48). The values that would lead to this behaviour were those of solidarity and collectivism.

Furthermore, as socialisation was to take place within more stable structures, there were more opportunities to attempt to regulate behaviour, and to punish instances of non-conformity. Yet still, as was the experience in the 1960s, participation in these structures did not necessarily guarantee that citizens would behave in the required manner. For example, Bunck shows the many ways in which sectors of the Cuban population resisted pressures to conform (1994). However, her study leaves out any analysis of how effective different structures were at transmitting and enforcing central directives at the local level, or of what effect the increased levels of communication actually had on people. In terms of a broad general ethos of participation, the leadership's pragmatic objectives and the discursive justifications for them were undergoing considerable change and development. At the forefront of all policy were economic productivity, and the need to produce citizens capable of achieving it.

The evolution of participation 1970 - 1986

New structures I: the workplace

Participation in economic activity had been one of the key areas in which the policies of the 1960s had failed. The attempt to socialise citizens into new revolutionary ways of being had not produced ideal citizens who were willing to sacrifice their material interests for the pursuit of the greater good. As the leadership's main goal was to increase productivity, they needed to change the terms on which workers would be encouraged to participate. At a practical level, there was a return to a system of 'material incentives' for productive work and new laws passed to force greater worker compliance and to reward exemplary socialist behaviour. However, at the same time, new structures were designed to give workers more of a say in the running of their workplace, and to encourage them to develop *conciencia* as owners of the means of production. Thus, from the start, the workplace provided an example of the potential contradictions inherent in the new ethos; workers faced discipline from 'above', whilst being empowered from 'below'.

During this period, new workers' assemblies were set up to give workers a voice in decision-making in their enterprises and to mediate their relations with their managers. However, although 85% of the

labour force participated in these assemblies, in reality, participation was often restricted to the discussion and approval of the new economic plans (Domínguez, 1978: 300). Moreover, instead of giving workers a creative role in management, assemblies were often accused of being mechanical, where figures were presented rather than real problems debated, and where worker input was ultimately side-lined. However, the assemblies, and other structures for workplace participation, were also accompanied by a revitalisation of the unions as a mass movement, offering workers a larger organisation in which to participate and voice their concerns.

After the political force of the unions had withered away during the 1960s, due to a merging of interests between workers and the government, local elections in 1970 resulted in a nearly entirely new union leadership (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 128). Furthermore, the umbrella body, the CTC, increased in activity, holding three congresses before 1986 at which rank and file members were well represented. However, at the same time, the newly expanded Communist Party had considerable influence guiding and directing the unions, making them appear, according to one analyst, like the other mass organisations, little more than vehicles for the transmission of directives from the top (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 122). In addition, even though unions were charged with defending the interests of the workers against management, often these were subsumed into the superior objective of raising national productivity.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, trade unions were represented at all levels of the policy-making process and evidence shows that the participation of workers in unions was able to have some effect at dealing with bad management (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 129). The trade unions were also able to push for an improvement in the effectiveness of assemblies and towards the end of the 1970s more worker input was being included in plans. Also, at a congress in 1984, the CTC berated managers for the lack of effective feedback at these assemblies which conspired against getting the workers' active participation. Yet when stricter labour laws were passed in the early 1980s granting management full authority over labour discipline, the unions only managed to have these partially amended without any sign of acknowledging that their basis contravened the ideal of worker participation as 'owners of the means of production' (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 134). In general, then, participation in the workplace,

although vastly expanded, did not necessarily lead to a greater concentration of power over decision-making for the workers.

A culture of discussion

In the 1970s, the vast majority of workers participated in the new structures. The institutionalised nature of these structures set specific boundaries for, and placed a value on, a particular type of participatory behaviour. Furthermore, these formalised settings constantly reinforced the main objectives of Revolution and the behaviour required to achieve them. However, this did not necessarily effectively socialise citizens into the desired way of thinking and being. For example, in this new environment, *conciencia* meant different things to different people:

Meaningful participation was supposed to promote the *conciencia* of workers as owners as well as advance enterprise performance. Good socialist managers needed to acquire *conciencia* with the double function of participation. (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 133)

Yet, in reality, the exigencies of the new economic planning system meant that often workers and managers colluded in promoting their enterprise, rather than acting to further the interests of the working class or the nation as a whole. “The SDPE [socialist economic plan] reinforced the immediate *conciencia* of workers and managers, without also supporting *conciencia* about the national economy and *la patria*” (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 133).

In terms of behaviour, although increased participation and pressure to conform may have had an overall effect on worker behaviour, it was not entirely effective. Labour discipline remained a problem throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless, participation may well have helped workers to feel that their individual contributions were well valued as well as improving their self-esteem. As participation was collective, these meanings would have been generated in a socialised context. However, socialisation may well have remained at the small group level rather than engendering political awareness of the Revolution’s needs because, when the Revolution entered a new phase of policy change in 1986, an erosion of *conciencia revolucionaria* was one of the leadership’s main criticisms of the preceding period (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 155).

Yet an increase in participation in the discussion of future plans was extended to organisations beyond the workplace. Throughout the 1970s, major plans such as that for the Family Code in 1974 and the Constitution in 1975 were discussed at the grassroots level during hundreds of meetings of the Party, CDRs and other mass organisations. They were approved by the overwhelming majority of the population, with only minor amendments. Although popular input in their original formulation was minimal, this suggests that the leadership could still rely on widespread political support. Moreover, the introduction of the national Poder Popular (OPP) system, in 1976, further facilitated political participation in an electoral process which, although originating with involvement at the local level, theoretically allowed people to have their voice represented during decision-making at the highest level.

The OPP consisted of five tiers of assemblies. These existed at the neighbourhood level, moving through *circunscripción* electoral level, the municipal, and the provincial level to the national level. Citizens participated in meetings at the neighbourhood and *circunscripción* levels where they elected candidates to sit in the municipal assemblies. Then the municipal assemblies voted to elect the provincial delegates and delegates for the National Assembly (Roman, 2003: 71; Ritter, 1985: 234). However, provincial and national delegates did not need to be members of the lower level assemblies in order to be elected, although at least 55% of national delegates had to be municipal representatives as well. At the executive level, the National Assembly selected a Council of State, of which Fidel Castro was named the President.

At the provincial and municipal levels, the assemblies were charged with overseeing the local administration of services and enterprises. By 1985 over a third of the economy in services, commerce and industry were under the control of the OPP (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 111). However, there were often multiple lines of control between the various assemblies and centralised ministries, and the latter ultimately had overall authority, limiting the power of localised bodies. Furthermore, although assemblies could help with budget plan formulation, they did not have the capacity to raise their own revenue and so fundamentally lacked autonomy:

Their mandate was to supervise the state, not to debate investment policies or resource allocation. Involvement, not substantive participation, was the key characteristic of Popular Power at the local level. (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 126)

It was at the local level where people's participation was actively encouraged, not only in elections, but also in meetings where they could voice local concerns and hold their municipal delegates accountable for their satisfactory resolution. Again, face-to-face communication was an important factor in participation and delegates of PP at the municipal level retained their normal jobs in order to remain close to other working people and the problems of their local communities (Roman, 2003: 77). Twice a year every municipality held local level meetings called *rendiciones de cuenta* in which people participated by voicing their complaints, needs and concerns. Open floor discussion at these meetings was characterised by "...a general sense of spontaneity in participation" (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 115). Furthermore, there is some evidence that local issues and interventions in these meetings were addressed at a national level, although issues considered to be national problems were not discussed locally.

Also, while Cubans were offered the opportunity to voice their problems, and act collectively to carry out their solutions, they did not have a chance to work themselves locally on the possible solutions. Their grievances had to rise up the chain of command and a response be sent back. This had the secondary consequence of 'atomising' participants. Participants made their claim or complaint as individuals, based on their personal rather than collective interests (Dilla, 2000: 21). Although this appears odd considering the ideological emphasis on the collectivity, this method prevented any autonomous local-level organising, based on group interests. These meetings were initially well attended. However, numbers began to decline after a few years. This, plus the high turnover in delegates at elections, and by recall from the electorate suggest that people may have been using their participation to express their dissatisfaction with the system.¹⁷

Although the OPP supposedly emanated from the power of the people, Party involvement, at all levels bar the municipal, was very high, as candidates were often chosen for their political, rather than their leadership credentials (Bengelsdorf 1994: 113; Ritter, 1985: 275). Nevertheless, despite the system

¹⁷ It is of note that throughout the system, the number of women representatives remained fairly low, until a directive from the Party in 1986 substantially increased the number of women delegates (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 109).

being modelled on the Soviet system, at the local level it had different features and participation was, at least partially shaped by the spontaneity of popular involvement. As Dilla says “la clase política revolucionaria tuvo la virtud de proteger diversos espacios de autoctonía y en que la cultura popular no fue capaz de dirigir los rasgos más léxicos de los [otros] regímenes socialistas...” (Dilla, 2000: 20).

By training many local leaders and involving people in constant discussion and debate, the new political structures also contributed to an increase in the sense of empowerment at the local level seen in the 1960s. Dilla asserts that:

la población involucrada en estas actividades tenía ante sí una oportunidad de participación que contribuyó a modelar una cultura política permeada por la idea de que la arena pública también pertenecía a la gente común mientras que cientos de miles de personas se entrenaron en funciones de liderazgo comunitario. (Dilla, 2000: 21)

However, in spite of Cubans having some control of their localised lives, the system lacked autonomy from the Party and limited people’s say in major policy decisions, although sometimes issues from the grassroots could be forced onto the central agenda (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 112, 121; Roman, 2003: 80).

Outside the workplace and the OPP, participation in other activities during the 1970s and early 1980s was also formalised and encouraged to increase. For example, the original mass organisations were greatly strengthened as huge recruitment drives widened their membership and less emphasis was placed on members volunteering and making huge sacrifices. The holding of more regular national congresses meant that, to a certain extent, these organisations could promote their constituencies’ interests to the leadership. For example, by the 1980s, the FMC starting promoting specific gender interests (Molyneux, 2000: 315). However, in the main, they suffered from the same limitations in power as OPP. In terms of communication, the mass organisations still passed down directives from the top but, also with increasing institutionalisation, started to perform an important feedback role. Through surveys and local research, these organisations maintained a channel of communication between leadership and people that worked in both directions (Domínguez, 1978: 262).

Harnessing citizens’ participation also continued to be important for carrying out pragmatic activities, although voluntary work during the 1970s often had immediate material rewards for participants. For

example, microbrigades voluntarily constructed new housing that they could then live in (Kapcia, 2000: 198). Moreover, in other areas such as culture, education and sport, participation also followed a similar pattern; it was widened to include more of the 'masses' and channelled through formal, strictly-defined structures. Furthermore, all the discourses associated with these practices during this period referred in some way to the correct behaviour of the exemplary socialist citizen (CNC, 1973: 5). Indeed, many of these structures also had mechanisms both to reward exemplary behaviour and to punish non-conformity, if only indirectly by reducing opportunities for personal advancement. However, these mechanisms only functioned as well as the people directing them at a local level, and often multiple lines of responsibility created spaces for more covert behaviour (Kapcia, 2008: 29).

In general, the developments of the 1970s and early 1980s can be summarised as the *masificación* of participation at all levels. This led to limited opportunities for direct popular contribution to the overall decision-making process, but increased participatory behaviour and the level of engagement in discussion of both national and local issues. Although there was less room for locally-led organising, as in the 1960s, the high-level of communication encouraged at this level gave people a sense of having a role in the process. That, in turn, helped activities to generate shared meanings based on practical experience. In addition, the changes in political participation in the 1970s were better able to channel any discontent.

However, by the mid-1980s, economic crisis, coupled with the reforms in the Soviet Bloc countries on which Cuba relied heavily, contributed to yet another major change in policy direction. With the *Rectificación de errores y tendencias negativas*, the ethos of participation evolved once more. Although the structures set up in the 1970s remained operational, more emphasis was placed once again on some of the ideals of the 1960s. This was particularly so in the pursuit of a nationalist *conciencia revolucionaria* through participation in mass mobilisations, and appeals to voluntarism and sacrifice for the national good. As with the previous decades, maintaining the culture of active participation was essential.

Change after 1986: Crisis, debate and a return to conciencia

By 1986, the Cuban leadership faced multiple crises. Aside from mounting global pressures and the domestic economic crisis, excessive bureaucratisation, the inefficiency of some state structures and growing inequalities emphasised the need for change (Habel, 1991: 79-115). All this triggered another official period of discussing, debating and criticising policy and led to significant restructuring and a change in direction for both *cubanía* and participation. However, in contrast to the reforms of *glasnost* and *perestroika* being carried out in the Soviet Union, the reforms made official by the Cuban leadership in 1986 represented pragmatic decisions related to the specific problems the island was facing, and an attempt to ensure the survival of the Revolution (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 155-160). Ideologically, the leadership criticised what they perceived to be the dogmatic adherence to socialist doctrine during the previous years. In particular, it was thought that the centralised planning system and focus on ‘material incentives’, profitability and efficiency in the economy had failed to produce *conciencia* in all Cubans (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 161).

At the discursive level, the ethos of participation promoted after 1986 recalled the ideals of the 1960s, and included appeals to some of the values of Guevara’s new Cuban citizen, such as voluntarism, sacrifice etc. Central to the government’s ability to overcome their current situation was a need to reinforce the population’s original commitment to the *patria* and social justice and to be able to harness people’s energies in the efforts to survive, reform and develop. The leadership used the context, in particular the renewed threat from the Reagan administration in the United States, to appeal to these transcendental values and above all to *conciencia* (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 143). People were asked, once again, to respond to such moral promptings and it was hoped that these moral values would be confirmed through the act of participating in the new structures and programmes. Practically, Cubans were mobilised for various causes and encouraged to do voluntary work. However, the 1970s emphasis on mass participation in official structures and productivity was also maintained.

Whether this new drive for participation was successful or not for developing *conciencia* in individual citizens, is, again, hard to measure. The population responding to policy was radically different from the 1960s. The consolidation of many social and educational achievements had created a much more

diverse, and complex society. In particular, the 1980s saw the coming to age of a new, younger generation that was somewhat removed from the initial struggles and changes of the 1960s. Consequently, Pérez-Stable maintains that for mobilising people “compulsion was often a more effective lever than *conciencia*” (Pérez-Stable, 1993: 161). Nevertheless, the government was successful in creating new territorial militias to protect the island, setting up new construction brigades and mobilising voluntary labour. However, despite the increase in openness to criticism that this period signified, when criticism was allowed of various structures but not of the entire system, no attempt was made to reform participation in the main political structures of the OPP or to divide up powers. Instead, the Party was strengthened and gained a more central role. In effect, there was a further drive to incorporate people into the existing organisations combined with an attack on the perceived ideological dogmatism of some of these structures.

Ethos of participation after 1990: crisis and the return to core values

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc countries meant that overnight Cuba lost 80% of its trade and was plunged into severe economic crisis (Kapcia & Gray, 2008: 3). By severely undermining the state’s capabilities to operate effectively, the crisis opened up potential avenues for a change in the ethos of participation in Cuba. A culture of participation became even more crucial than before, but, for the first time, people were able to participate positively without it always being entirely on the leadership’s terms. Such was the severity and timing of the crisis and the nature of the leadership’s responses to it, that the historiography tends to emphasise the post-1990s period as a new phase in revolutionary history (Kapcia & Gray, 2008; Tulchin et al., 2005). As the Cuban state was becoming considerably weakened, the Revolution entered an important process of redefinition in terms of participation and the old structures and ethos evolved alongside newer forms.

Ideologically, the failure of socialism in the Soviet Bloc and new pressures from a globalised, neoliberal order led to the leadership sponsoring a search for, and protection of, those values and ideas which formed the ‘essence’ of the Revolution (Kapcia, 2000: 237). For the ethos of participation this meant a continuation and development of the reforms begun in the mid-1980s when appeals to the core *cubanía* values of *nación*, unity and social justice framed the new mobilisations of that period. During

the worst moment of the *período especial*, 1990-1994, mobilisation was understandably kept to a minimum, as all efforts were focussed on survival. Yet towards the second half of the decade, as Cuba began its slow process of recovery, participation in mobilisations and other structures was again actively encouraged. At this time, the leadership's discourse about saving culture came to the foreground. Included within that definition of culture was political culture, specifically the culture of participation that had been developed over the previous decades. However, the experiences and debates of the early 1990s had significantly broadened the definition of the culture that needed to be saved.

Within this new context, which saw rising poverty, a dual economy and many more social inequalities, encouragement to participate was not always based on an epic appeal to *nación*, but also included the evocation of other moral values such as *solidarismo* that might help to galvanise individual communities (Kapcia, 2008: 28). Practically speaking, participation developed in order to respond to a new set of problems and demands and, in particular, to make up for the reduced capacity of the state to provide services. One analyst sees this as the period during which the Cuban state withdrew somewhat from civil society (Fernandes, 2006: 7). Yet distinctions between both remained unclear in certain sectors as older forms of participation, such as the mass organisations, also adapted concurrently to the changes.

As was the case in 1970, one of the ways in which the Cuban leadership responded to the crisis was to make participation in decision-making more inclusive and to open up new channels for communication. In 1992, the National Assembly of the OPP became directly elected and the ban on religious people being Party members was lifted. Whilst not decentralising any power, these changes significantly broadened the opportunities and reach for popular participation in politics. At the same time, the structures of the OPP in the 1990s could no longer deal adequately with the many demands of the *rendiciones de cuenta* meetings, and these had become mechanical and routine. The huge increase in need for effective local administration meant that the meaning of participation in these meetings came to be reinterpreted. Instead of formulating problems for the state to solve at a national level, people were encouraged to participate in finding collective solutions to local problems (Dilla, 2000: 22).

This resulted in, amongst other things, Consejos Populares being set up at neighbourhood level (Dilla, 2000: 23). Composed of representatives from mass organisations and local enterprises, these councils were allowed some control over the use of local resources and were not given an official set of functions from central government. Yet although this appears to be a considerable amount of autonomy for local participation, their remit was limited to minor activities in the community whilst the state still took care of major issues. Nevertheless, the Consejos Populares also inspired other forms of local participation. For example, the Consejo Popular Libertad in Old Havana organised various participatory projects in the locality. These included a dog interest-group, popular education programmes and a project to rescue a cultural centre (Dilla, 2000: 23).

Other local councils began food growing programmes and received help from the state. Yet another space for participation that did not emanate directly from the leadership, but which grew out of the community experience of the Consejo Populares, has been the *talleres de transformación integral* that have focussed on the regeneration of certain neighbourhoods. In general, community movements organised around a variety of themes, and with participation from a diverse range of the population simultaneously reinforced and undermined the leadership's ethos of participation. Whilst they reinforced the importance of a culture of participation, they undermined the leadership's idea that all participation should be directly linked to the national process and fall within certain parameters. For the first time, people began to participate in activities outside traditional organisations, mobilisations and organised structures. They were movements centred on local identity and impetus rather than the exigencies of the *patria*.

Yet these locally-based structures were not always successful. Some failed to garner widespread participation, whilst others sacrificed their local 'authenticity' in the eyes of the leadership, by engaging merely in entertainment activities (Dilla, 2000: 24). Yet Dilla asserts that they have gone a long way in changing the theory and practice of participation in the areas where they function, as well as helping to raise the self-esteem of local participants (Dilla, 2000: 24). However, despite their initial autonomy, the leadership has also intervened in the functioning of local participatory movements. Where their objectives have coincided with the leadership's, and they are judged to be participating in popular cultural and 'authentic' activities, they have been supported. Where they have carried out

activities in contrast to the core values of *conciencia revolucionaria* they have been undermined and shut down by the state (Dilla, 2000: 25; Rojas, 03/03/07). In this way, the leadership has allowed local organisations to operate but eventually also incorporated them into a central channel of communication.

During the 1990s, the energies of the traditional forms of participating such as the mass organisations were also focussed on trying to provide for the social needs of local communities. As new organisations and NGOs emerged to help plug the gap left by the state's reduced capacity to provide services, the mass organisations such as the CDRs and the FMC were also classified officially as non-governmental organisations (Hernández 1999: 104). Following the trend in other community-level organising, this helped to decentralise the activities of these organisations and give them more socially, rather than politically, focussed functions. Furthermore, active participation in these organisations was still encouraged as a way of forming socially-minded and integrated citizens and of combating a perceived loss of shared values within a much more complex social fabric (Basail, 2006: 1). Nevertheless, again it is not clear at what level individuals actually chose to participate.

During the second half of the 1990s, the leadership was able to capitalise on political events and the gradual recovery from the crisis to launch a renewed drive to increase participation across a whole range of practices. For example, the huge mobilisations around the Elián González case in 1999 were able to frame the campaign in terms of support for the integrity of the *nación* against external threat. Immediately afterwards, the leadership launched the set of policy initiatives known as the *Batalla de Ideas* which was about promoting the traditional values of the Revolution. As well as consisting of various educational and cultural participatory programmes designed to encourage personal, social development as well as citizenship formation, there have been new participatory structures aimed specifically at youth.

From the 1980s onwards, the need to incorporate youth, and new generations born after the struggles of the 1960s into the revolutionary project has been an issue for an ageing leadership. There was a high youth presence during the Elián González campaign, and later the leadership set up the *trabajadores sociales* scheme in order to get young people actively involved in socially useful work. Although it is

difficult to tell what impact participating in these structures under the new context has had on individuals, there is evidence to suggest that as well as training yet more community-level organisers and leaders, the crisis of the 1990s did not fully erode commitment to the *nación*, even though the meaning of *nación* at the time was undergoing a process of redefinition (Kapcia, 2000: 247). After the many challenges to citizen participation brought about during the 1990s, more than a decade later, the official culture of participation, of local discussion, debate and action has continued at a high level and become more inclusive.¹⁸ The culture of participation seems so embedded in the *conciencia* of some Cubans that they are making demands to be allowed more spaces in which to participate critically and creatively as the process continues in the 21st century (Castro, 2007).

Conclusion: Empowerment and the formation of citizens.

Throughout the revolutionary period there have been three main types of participatory structure: mobilisations, (mass) organisations, and formal political structures. Together they have performed numerous and multiple functions; they have implemented specific policies, generated support and legitimacy for the Revolution, and provided important channels of communication. During certain periods (particularly the early 1960s) there was widespread popular support for some of these activities, and at the same time, considerable room for the local interpretation of how they should be carried out. However, during other periods, and with different activities, it was possible that compulsion played more of a factor in continued participation. In terms of the motivations for participation, it is clearly important to distinguish between the different types of practices. Yet in terms of the outcomes of participation for citizens, it is possible to discern some general trends.

The initial participatory enthusiasm of the 1960s empowered many Cubans, and contributed to a subculture of local democracy where face-to-face communication and spontaneous organising was central to furthering the revolutionary process. Then, as the Revolution matured and was forced to change direction, the local culture of discussion was broadened in its reach, formalised, and institutionalised through many new channels of communication. Whether the decentralised local culture had any direct input into centralised decision-making or not, active participation maintained

¹⁸ As a counterpoint to this, illegal, informal and black-market activities have also flourished.

some sense of empowerment, gained from having one's voice heard in the public arena. Into the later 1980s and 1990s, there were more opportunities for critical interventions, and autonomous local organising, which once again created possibilities for further empowerment at this level.

Returning to an idea of political culture then, in general, over the decades, a culture of participation has evolved in Cuba in which citizens engage in participatory behaviour across a range of practices. In organisations, institutions and workplaces, for example, it has developed to such an extent that citizens expect to be allowed to participate at some level. Importantly, however, it is the leadership that has set the parameters for all the types of participation and therefore has also defined in general terms what has been required of citizens during different times. As well as responding to pragmatic problems, the general ethos of participation has changed over the decades alongside the evolving ideological framework of *cubanía*. At different moments, citizens have been asked to identify with different values and behaviours relating to needs of the *nación* or the Revolution at the time. Although not all activities were directly related to socialisation and it is difficult to measure the impact of participation on citizens' attitudes, it is possible to see in a general sense that certain values and behaviours have been more supported than others. For example, in the 1960s protecting the *nación* from attack seemed more popular than working extra hours for the common good.

However, it is essential to remember that within the general ideological framework, each participatory practice was defined by its own set of discourses. Therefore the experience of engagement in collective practice may have facilitated identification with the particular values related to that practice, rather than a wider belief in an entire ideology. Consequently, whilst the revolutionary process may not have produced a population of ideal citizens with *conciencia*, the high level of collective participatory behaviour will have generated many meanings shared by those involved. Nevertheless, Cubans have opted to participate at different levels in official structures, participated in illegal or covert activities or behaved in other ways in order to register discontent and challenge the system. This is one way in which Cuban 'society' has been able to affect the leadership and its state. Yet official participatory structures have also exemplified the mutual interdependence of both state and society and the way they have been able to interact.

The fluctuating strength of the Cuban state suggests that although coercion may well at times have been a factor in getting people to participate, at others, participation in certain structures has been based on local organising and the impetus from the grassroots. As one critic puts it, participatory structures could not be as strong and last as long as they have done if they were not seen as legitimate forms of expression in the eyes of citizens (Carmona Báez, 2004: 85). For that reason popular participation is seen as a pillar of the Revolution and crucial to its maintenance of hegemony. Yet as well as seeing hegemony at the macro-level, it is necessary to investigate the specific sites where this consensus is negotiated every day, at the micro-level. This means assessing how everyday meanings are constructed across a range of sites and through a variety of practices. Thus, what follows in the next chapters will be a theoretical and historical analysis of the *talleres literarios*.

Chapter Three

A Cuban Cultural Citizenship:

A Critical Approach to Cultural Participation and the *Talleres Literarios*

“Art and social thought, as public goods, today have a responsibility to represent and analyze civil society, and contribute to its daily transformation; to criticize and discuss its values; to contribute to an informed, fundamental and authentic debate about its problems and to enrich its culture”

(Hernández, 2007: 3).

“Cultural policy is about the politics of culture in the most general sense, it is about the clash of ideas, institutional struggles and power relations in the production and circulation of symbolic meanings”

(McGuigan, 1996: 1).

“Cultural citizenship [is]...our capacity to be able to participate in the reproduction of national culture”

(Stevenson, 2001: 7).

Chapters One and Two outlined the historical context in which the *talleres literarios* developed during the revolutionary period in Cuba. They separated this contextual background into two distinct dimensions, the first addressing cultural policy and the process of literary production and the second outlining the general ethos and evolution of participation. Although many studies on Cuba appear to maintain a distinction between these two dimensions of revolutionary culture, clearly they form part of the same process and coincide in the area of cultural participation. Historically, the two dimensions of artistic and literary production and political culture and participation in Cuba have been connected by *cubanía revolucionaria*. The discourses used in both cultural policy and the ethos of participation have formed part of the leadership’s pursuit of cultural transformation and the forging of a distinct national identity, using an idea of *nación* to project an image of a united political community that is also a cultural community (Bobes, 2000: 62).

Nevertheless, whilst the evolving ideology has provided a consistent framework for both cultural policy and the wider ethos of participation, as we have seen, numerous historical factors have played a role in the development of both the process of literary production and political culture. Similarly, an understanding of the role and evolution of cultural participation and the example of the *talleres literarios* requires an empirical investigation. However, before embarking on this in the second part of the thesis, it is first necessary to develop a critical approach to the topic based on some of the concepts employed in previous chapters. The *talleres literarios* as sites for participation in literary practice represent an intersection between artistic and literary culture and political culture. As such, they raise

theoretical issues which make them different from other forms of participatory practice. Specifically, the way in which the *talleres literarios* combine a particular kind of communicative practice with structures set up for citizen formation will form the basis of the discussion in this chapter.

We have already seen that literature and art and political culture in Cuba are related theoretically by the concept of hegemony. Within this notion of hegemony, the previous chapters have introduced concepts of cultural policy, art as dialogic communication, the public sphere, ideological discourse, institutions, citizen formation, empowerment and state-society relations. It follows logically then, that these are the themes to be addressed in an approach to Cuban cultural participation. Moreover, the relationship between these themes has been the central concern of a recent body of work that has addressed the concept of cultural citizenship. Covering a broad range of disciplines, and focussing on a number of different issues, broadly speaking cultural citizenship studies theorise the cultural dimension of citizenship or belonging to a particular political community. However, before proceeding with my discussion of how cultural citizenship theory can provide a critical approach to Cuban cultural participation and a study of the *talleres literarios*, it is important to clarify certain key issues. These are: the definition of its central components, culture and citizenship; the difficulty of applying external theoretical models wholesale to the Cuban context; and the need to find a conceptual language that can retain a critical distance from revolutionary cultural politics.

Culture & citizenship: the importance of definitions

A citizenship that is formed and enacted

The main overviews of the different strands of cultural citizenship theory are agreed on two points. They all contend that, while there is no single, coherent theory or even definition of cultural citizenship, a diverse range of scholarly work from across several disciplines has emerged that tends to ignore the cultural dimension of citizenship in academic discourse (Pawley 2008: 596; Stevenson, 2003: 6-7; Turner; 2001: 12). In fact, the field of cultural citizenship studies is so diverse that sometimes works included within this broad category, even though they deal with similar issues, do not actually employ the notion or concept of cultural citizenship at all (Pawley 2008: 597). In general,

studies on cultural citizenship revolve around themes of belonging, inclusion, cultural rights, and the cultural aspect of having a direct and active involvement in political processes in contemporary, developed states. Yet whilst the majority of the work has arisen from First World contexts, the same ideas are now being applied to a much wider range of countries. Much theory begins with the concept of citizenship as developed by Marshall in the 1950s, where he described it as a status of being guaranteed a number of rights: civil, political and social within a national community (Stevenson, 2003: 6). Scholars have transposed this notion onto what they have termed a postmodern, globalised context, and added the missing concept of cultural rights in order to try and plug the gap they see emerging in both theory and practice.

However, this definition of citizenship, which has clearly grown out of a liberal idea of rights, has also been complemented within this debate by a strand of theory that emphasises the active participation of citizens, as well as an abstract notion of rights. Stevenson, drawing on the thinking of Raymond Williams, states: “A society of actively engaged citizens requires both the protection offered by rights and opportunities to participate” (Stevenson, 2003: 8). The “opportunities to participate” builds on the idea of obligations which is the counterpoint notion within the rights discourse, although the issue of precisely what duties or obligations a citizen should have is often side-lined in discussions. Furthermore, this republican notion of an active citizenship, which Williams sees as crucial to a more successful democracy (as shown in Chapter Two), has been the key feature of the Cuban political system since 1959. Key to both notions of citizenship is the process by which citizens are formed, whether through the granting of an external award or set of rights, through being shaped by external forces, or in the *locus* of their active participation.

Bobes applies this more complex notion of citizenship in one of the only studies to deal solely with the concept in Cuba. She notes that citizenship in Cuba,

...must be examined from a dual perspective: the *procedural* dimension, ...rights, the mechanisms for exercising them, and the specific system of relationships in which they are exercised; and the *symbolic* dimension that connects one to the ideal of belonging to a community of citizens and to the socio-cultural sphere in general. (Bobes, 2005: 61)¹⁹

¹⁹ Bobes goes on to outline the evolution of the notion of citizenship in Cuba in both dimensions from the earliest notion of an ‘imagined community’ in pre-Republican history, to the way in which citizenship has become more inclusive during the 1990s (2005).

Specifically she mentions the historic ties of a notion of citizenship in Cuba to narratives about civil society and the ideas of inclusion and exclusion, although she neglects to mention that a concept of culture was embedded in these narratives (Miller, 2008: 685) (see Introduction). According to her study, during the revolutionary period, the narrative of Cuban national identity became identified with the socialist project and a new set of values which determined legitimate belonging to a reconstituted civil society and therefore defined a new, militant, participatory citizenship. However, within this process, the concept of an individual citizen disappeared and was replaced by an idea of the *pueblo*, whose collective rights were enshrined in the constitution (Bobes, 2005: 67). She also shows how, after the 1990s crisis, the concept of the nation was transformed both symbolically and institutionally, creating a much more inclusive ideology of belonging.

Bobes asserts that, in contrast to liberal societies, citizenship in Cuba has in general involved the guarantee of social rather than political and civic rights. However, again, notably she does not mention cultural rights. Nevertheless, her study highlights the importance of the specific sites or spaces for the exercise of citizenship and she acknowledges the link between an active civil society, citizenship and access to the public sphere (76). This is of particular relevance to a study of the *talleres literarios*, which are sites or spaces for cultural participation and therefore potentially for both the formation and enactment of cultural citizenship. So, having established that citizenship can be conceived of as both a status (as in a passive state of being) and a role that needs to be enacted, the question remains as to what exactly constitutes the cultural component of citizenship.

Culture as communication

The various perspectives within cultural citizenship theory employ different definitions of culture. Most such definitions fall within Williams' three definitions. However, there seems to be a division between theorists who use culture to mean 'lifestyle' or 'way of life' and those who employ a more communicative definition of culture. The latter tend to extend Williams' definition of culture as the 'arts' into a broader category of 'communications', which includes the press and other systems of mass communication (McGuigan, 2003: 33). There are also theorists who aim to bridge the divide, recognising that signifying practices should not be divorced from the material world and that the two

definitions and approaches could and should exist in dynamic tension with each other (McGuigan, 2004: 12-14; Stevenson, 2003: 16-21). This last perspective seems more relevant to a study of Cuban cultural participation because the 'way of life' definition of culture is already implied by political culture and the ethos of participation discussed in the previous chapter, and the communicative definition is implied by the Cuban approach to art and literature, outlined in the discourses of cultural policy. Furthermore, as we have seen, in Cuba, the two definitions are linked together implicitly by their connection to *cubanía revolucionaria* and the value system of the Revolution.

However, if discourses both regulate and enable cultural participation, the outcomes of their communicative dimension are what allow participants to feed back into the process. Moreover, unlike the communication generated by other participatory practice (see Chapter Two), the communication implied by cultural participation, as well as being tied to the discourse surrounding the specific material practice of literature and writing, is more directly linked to a notion of a 'world-view', the everyday meanings generated by people and the way in which communities are imagined. In other words, the potential range of meanings generated by this literary form of communication far exceeds those generated by other forms of participation, and, unlike the latter, are able to bridge the divide between private and public experience. Therefore, according to this definition, it is the participation in this communicative dimension of cultural practice that constitutes the enactment of cultural citizenship.

So, in general terms, as this discussion demonstrates, cultural citizenship is actually an empty concept until it is qualified with reference to both specific theoretical traditions and historical contexts. In the main, cultural citizenship theory has arisen out of contexts radically different to the Cuban, particularly in response to the problems generated within so-called developed, postmodern, 'globalised', multicultural societies (Kymlicka, 1995; Rosaldo, 1994; Stevenson, 2001; Turner, 2001). Initially, both the problems identified and the solutions offered by this theory seem far removed from the Cuban situation of a dominant state, a relatively culturally homogenous population, a lack of mass commercial forms of culture and communications and a predominantly socialist economy. However, if we consider the central concerns of all cultural citizenship studies to be social inclusion, belonging, and the desire to make societies more democratic, and if what it entails is the broad reworking of the theoretical

relationship between culture and politics, there is no reason why some of the ideas it has generated may not be relevant to the Cuban context.

In fact, cultural citizenship theories are predicated on the notion that cultural citizenship has always been a feature of nation-states and just needs to be reworked in theory and practice within a changed contemporary society. Therefore, the same tools used by these theories to address and critique the workings of postmodern, information-saturated, globalised society can be used to take a more critical look at historical contexts and less developed countries, as long as what drives the analysis is the empirical data. For Cuba, the specific conditions of the post-1990s context seem to have more, if still fairly tenuous, parallels with some of the descriptions of a 'postmodern' society, particularly because of the partial 'opening up' of the country to transnational markets (Kapcia, 2000: 214-215). It is perhaps this fact that has attracted the recent run of studies on Cuban culture which has attempted to highlight the cultural challenges to the modernist revolutionary project (Davies, 2000; Hernández-Reguant, 2009; Whitfield, 2008). An ideal location of cultural citizenship is thought to be bridging the state and the market without being entirely subordinate to either. However, if we adopt the perspective developed in previous chapters to the effect that revolutionary Cuba, in the absence of the market, has consisted of an often vibrant cultural sphere, a less than monolithic state, an evolving revolutionary process, and a reconstituted but still existing Cuban civil society, then the implication is that some of the theoretical locations for, and outcomes of, cultural citizenship could have been occurring within the process before 1990 as well. Indeed, such is the flexibility of the concept that it can be used with qualifications to refer to the entire revolutionary period.

To summarise, cultural citizenship can be seen as a central pivotal theme, around which a very diverse body of work has developed. It is this lack of a clear-cut definition and its connection to a wide range of theory that makes it useful for the Cuban case. For the remainder of this chapter, I intend to use relevant strands of cultural citizenship theory in order to develop further a conceptual framework capable of describing cultural participation in Cuba and in particular the example of the *talleres literarios*. In other words, I aim to arrive at a working definition of a specifically Cuban cultural citizenship. First, however, it is important to outline why the language of cultural citizenship is especially relevant to the Cuban case.

The language and politics of cultural citizenship

As we have seen, introducing a concept of citizenship into the study of culture is highly relevant to the Cuban revolutionary context, which not only has a concept of culture embedded in its notion of citizenship, but also has, in practice, promoted active, public engagement in literary and artistic activities. It further strengthens the argument that the cultural and political are entwined and should be viewed as such, rather than with the liberal perspective that assumes each sphere should be separate (see Introduction). However, more than just being appropriate for describing the Cuban situation, importantly, the language of cultural citizenship theory also retains the ability to be critical, albeit in a way different to the majority of cultural analyses found within the discipline of mainstream cultural studies. As cultural studies grew out of a political project based on using cultural critique to bring about social and political transformations (During, 2007: 3), the change in language to that of cultural citizenship also has political consequences, especially when it comes to a critique of power.

In fact, some theorists of cultural citizenship,²⁰ Bennett for example, have argued that cultural citizenship studies should replace cultural studies altogether, because he believes the latter has failed in its primary objective to achieve real change (Bennett, 1992). He suggests that the 'Leftist' critique of Neo-Gramscian cultural studies is redundant because it cannot be translated into concrete action, and advocates abandoning its entire rhetoric, including the concept of hegemony. For him and his followers, what is needed is an approach to culture that engages with the real institutions and agents of power, at all levels local, national and global, in order to direct criticism at specific institutional practices and to find openings where more progressive policies can be promoted (McGuigan, 2003: 29).

Yet despite the usefulness of an approach which engages with institutions for a critical analysis of cultural participation in Cuba, it is not necessary to abandon entirely the notion of hegemony, which has already been shown to have continued relevance for a description of the dominance of the revolutionary process, which people 'from below' have played an active role in shaping. Whether one

²⁰ Here I am referring to those theorists that approach citizenship from the starting-point of culture, as opposed to the approaches to cultural citizenship that start from more conventional political science models and add a cultural dimension e.g. Kymlicka (1998)

agrees with Bennett or not, his more extreme position has also been accompanied recently by a general move within cultural studies itself towards trying to forge links between critical research and progressive social and cultural movements in practical as well as discursive terms (Lewis & Miller, 2003: 6). This can be seen in the field of Latin American cultural studies with the publication of works such as Doris Sommer's *Cultural Agency in the Americas* and her associated project of putting cultural research into social action at the University of Harvard (Sommer, 2006).

In the same way, another branch of cultural citizenship theory that emphasises its communicative dimension, as well as the idea of governance promoted by Bennett, has been able to combine more aspects of cultural studies' socially-engaged cultural critique with a greater engagement with institutions, in a generally reformist project (Cunningham, 2003; Lewis & Miller, 2003; López, 2006; McGuigan, 1996, 2003; Stevenson, 2001, 2003). Although the ideas have been debated across the political spectrum, it is perhaps understandable that this more reformist, engaged cultural politics has emerged during the post-Cold War context, as real social issues, aggravated by the dominance of globalised neoliberalism, and the problems inherent to postmodern, information-saturated, and fragmented societies seem to demand both critical attention and urgent action. Moreover, the new language has particular relevance for a discussion of Cuba if it is to retain a critical distance from the revolutionary rhetoric employed by the political leadership.

One need only look at the Cuban official discourse about culture in the post-1990s context, which states that a strong national culture (rooted in the people) would be the means by which Cuba would *resist* the *dominant* forces of global capitalism, neoliberal *hegemony* and cultural *imperialism*, to recognise the similarity of the politically-motivated language of the Cuban leadership to that employed in much traditional Gramsci-inspired cultural criticism (UNEAC, 2000: 19). However, at the same time, by idealising (and naturalising) the notion of national culture, this Cuban discourse ignores the power structures and specific institutions, policies and agents responsible for its production. Historically, the development of culture after the Revolution and the similarity between Cuban revolutionary rhetoric and the language employed by cultural studies has perhaps been a factor in keeping the Cuban context relatively absent from anthologies of Latin American cultural studies and the work of its major theorists. In fact, the prominent intellectual Nestor García Canclini, in a major

statement published in the Cuban journal *Casa de las Américas* about the revolutionary potential of culture in Latin America from the 1970s, proclaimed the Cuban Revolution to be the main inspiration for, rather than the object of, his new critical approach towards Latin American culture (García Canclini, 1975: 100). Since that time, Latin American cultural studies has become established as a discipline and has taken different directions. Yet despite being more directly engaged with actual social movements and the potential for action than much of the cultural critique produced in the developed world, it still tends not to focus on the example of Cuba. Instead, consideration is reserved for capitalist contexts where ‘modernity’ has taken a different trajectory and the effects of neo-colonial economic and cultural domination are still being felt.

Cuba’s unique development since 1959, and its leadership’s appropriation of some of the key language of a revolutionary cultural politics, requires a carefully chosen conceptual language for an analysis of how these cultural politics have operated in practice. Hence turning to cultural citizenship theory becomes a possibility, as it is a field which has left behind some of the ‘command metaphors’ of cultural studies, such as *resistance* and *domination*, used by the Cuban leadership, in favour of a language that addresses the *conditions* of culture and of citizenship, empowerment etc. (Cunningham, 2003: 19). In this way, a method can be found for incorporating, describing and critiquing the (state) power structures within an analysis of official Cuban cultural practice without undermining any genuinely revolutionary and progressive intentions that may be contained within it. Moreover, using this conceptual language will not only reject any binary for/ against or Left/ Right political position, but also will be able to connect the Cuban case to important issues being discussed within very different contexts, thereby contributing to a rejection of the idea that Cuba is somehow unique, isolated and anachronistic.

Theorising cultural policy

“Cultural policy is...a site for the production of cultural citizens” (Lewis & Miller, 2003: 1). The first characteristic of Cuban cultural participation that links it to cultural citizenship theory is that it has been enabled and regulated by a cultural policy. In Chapter One we saw that, despite important ideological debates over key issues within revolutionary cultural policy, in the main, its driving force

has been to extend the opportunity for engagement in artistic and literary practice to as many people as possible. In the same chapter we also saw how this broader notion of cultural policy has been shaped by *cubanía revolucionaria* and is therefore already related to the revolutionary ideal concept of citizenship. According to this ideological framework, increased access to culture helps to disseminate ethical values and to produce ‘cultured’, creative and emancipated citizens.

However, at the same time, the leadership’s discursive ideal of literature and art as dialogic communication was in reality mediated through the creation of institutions and spaces. Although Chapter One dealt primarily with the consequences of this for established writers, this system of mediation extended throughout the entire process of cultural production, including the proliferation of spaces and institutions set up to channel grassroots cultural participation. In addition to this, Chapter Two showed how cultural participation is (in theory) doubly linked to an ideal of citizenship through the deliberate attempt to socialise and form citizens through encouraging their active engagement in participatory structures.

Yet, moving away from ideal definitions, cultural citizenship theory provides a means for discussing the actual process of cultural participation and its outcomes for individuals (citizens) and groups, as well as its wider impact. In particular, critical cultural policy studies offer a conceptualisation of cultural citizenship not as a specific status but in terms of a description and analysis of the *conditions* in which cultural citizens are formed and enact their citizenship (Lewis & Miller, 2003: 2). As with the broader project of cultural citizenship studies, its proponents draw on a number of theoretical traditions according to their particular political positions. Having arisen out of studies based on very different contexts, mostly in Britain, the United States and Australia, where the market plays a large role in cultural production and consumption, not all of this critical theory can be applied directly to Cuba. However, there are two particular traditions of thought that combine the arguments of the previous chapters and therefore are relevant to the Cuban case.

Policing culture: The Foucauldian approach

The opening paragraph of the 2003 volume of *Critical Cultural Policy Studies* begins with a quote from Marx which relates cultural policy to ‘moral power’ and the objective of instilling loyalty in the public (Lewis & Miller, 2003: 1). Thus this theoretical approach to cultural policy immediately acknowledges two factors that are explicitly and implicitly stated within Cuban cultural policy, that culture can be “an instrument of moral and ideological education” (Menton, 1975: 150), and that the purpose of a cultural policy (that encourages and regulates cultural participation) is the formation of (cultural) citizens. At times, theorists extend the definition of policy to cover all activities which fall under Williams’ anthropological ‘way of life’ definition (McGuigan, 2004: 12). However, most studies of cultural policy address policy directly related to the arts and other communicative activities (Lewis & Miller, 2003). The point of such a perspective is to analyse the particular institutions and practices that are the outcomes of such policies, and to see how the “moral power” is disseminated through them.

This particular approach has grown from the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and is the approach advocated by the ‘rightists’ within cultural citizenship theory (McGuigan, 2003: 29). Drawing on Foucault’s ideas, these theorists suggest that culture should be seen as a field of government in which the relations between power and knowledge are mediated through policy and institutions which are thus converted into the mechanisms of social management.

...[For] ‘Right’ Foucauldians, the ‘cultural struggle’ as understood and propounded by cultural materialists and neo-Gramscians, is fundamentally ill-conceived and misplaced because it fails to grasp the finely tuned operations of particular technologies and objects of discourse, whether they are applied to the classification and regulation of ‘populations’ or to the cultivated ‘care of the self’. (McGuigan, 2003: 29)

The focus then is on engaging in dialogue with the organisations and processes that ‘manage’ culture. As one of the main exponents of this position, Bennett treats culture: “as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation” (McGuigan, 2003: 30). It follows from this that cultural institutions should not be seen as part of an overarching, macro-concept of hegemony, but as having micro-level regional properties that determine their roles and outcomes, depending on who they include or exclude.

Clearly this vision has developed from analyses of complex, stratified societies in which cultural institutions appeal to ideas of social differentiation in a Bourdieuan sense (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991: 2; McGuigan, 2003: 31) Whilst an idea of culture as governance and the analysis of individual regulating institutions seem relevant to Cuban cultural participation, the total rejection of a macro-level perspective, in favour of a more policy-oriented language seems extreme. Ostensibly more useful are the more 'centrist' positions, such as that of Lewis and Miller, which place more emphasis on the input from the community 'from below', as well as strategies for social management (2003: 2). These view the purpose of cultural policy to be the formation of cultural citizens, with cultural citizenship being about the maintenance and development of cultural lineage via education, custom and language. They state: "Cultural policies produce and animate institutions, practices and agencies. One of their goals is to find, serve, and nurture a sense of belonging, through educational institutions and cultural industries" (Lewis & Miller, 2003: 2). Ultimately, for them, culture offers the opportunity for a more complete self.

Therefore, from this perspective, cultural policy in general should be seen as directly related to determining the behaviour and attitudes of individuals, a function made explicit in Cuban cultural policy. What it seems to ignore, or at least play down, however, is the extent to which cultural policy allows cultural citizens to exercise their new-found empowerment and agency in the production of culture and meanings and even in the pursuit of change. Citizenship here is very much a status of belonging to a particular community, of producing subjects with shared values, perceptions and identities within the regulating power of institutions. However, it is possible to balance this notion with an approach that uses a more communicative definition of culture.

Space and communication: The Habermasian approach

Several theorists of cultural policy refuse to separate the issue of cultural policy from the issue of communications policy, and as such have combined elements from social communications theory with the Foucauldian approach described above (McGuigan, 1996, 2003: 33). As Cuban cultural policy emphasises the communicative function of art and at the same time delineates a number of sites and

spaces where discussion, debate and communication, centred on literature and art, can take place, the concepts and language offered by this approach are also highly relevant. McGuigan traces how the political economy approach to cultural policy in the British context, although principally concerned with major institutional change and the relations between capital and technology, also emphasises citizenship rights and the conditions of public debate (McGuigan, 2003: 33).

Many of these theorists introduce the Habermasian idea of the 'public sphere' into their analyses as key to showing how far culture and communication operate according to democratic principles (Garnham, 1990; McgGuigan, 1996). One of Habermas' main themes was to address how we make sense of things in public and how we arrive at common purposes (Habermas, 1991; McGuigan 2003: 34). Although his notion of the public sphere grew out of work done on the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the fact that Habermas focuses on a notion of public conversation and debate is helpful for the Cuban case. It takes the attention away from cultural products and looks rather at the "discursive determinations in time and space of cultural production and consumption" (McGuigan 2003: 34). In particular, Habermas emphasised face-to-face communication, an idea which, although criticised in many other contexts, has relevance in Cuba, where an idea of dialogic communication, often face-to-face in practice, has been central to both cultural policy and cultural movements.

Moreover, Habermas showed how certain ideals underlay the foundations for communication and culture within the public sphere. Although, of course, conversation itself can be considered as cultural (enabled by knowledge and beliefs circulating socially), participation in public conversation should be considered a citizenship right and based on "the principles of rational and critical debate amongst acknowledged equals" (McGuigan, 2003: 35). Following this argument, Eagleton suggests that within this concept of a public sphere no one particular viewpoint is allowed to dominate and instead a plurality of voices is allowed to reach logical conclusions. He states:

...what is at stake in the public sphere, according to its own ideological self-image, is not power but reason. Truth, not authority, is its ground, and rationality, not domination, its daily currency. It is on this radical dissociation of politics and knowledge that its entire discourse is founded. (Eagleton, 1984: 17)

Although for Habermas the (bourgeois) public sphere started to disintegrate when communications began to be commercialised, a reworked concept of a public sphere has been evoked by scholars of cultural policy and cultural citizenship.

It has also been applied positively to the Cuban context particularly in relation to literary, intellectual and artistic culture. Hernández singles out the intellectual public sphere as being fundamentally connected to the introduction of progressive ideas and change in the Cuban system (Hernández, 2008). He defines his concept of a cultural public sphere as referring to all available cultural production, including magazines, books, films and public debates. However, in her 2006 work, Fernandes extends this definition to include more everyday conversation and debate (Fernandes, 2006). She develops a concept of multiple public spheres in Cuba, as plural spaces where culture is produced, and discussed within certain institutional limits and contexts (Fernandes, 2006: 12-15). Although Fernandes moves away from Habermas' more ideal notion of the public sphere as being entirely separate from politics, her idea that multiple artistic public spheres can exist even within the parameters of institutional conditions in Cuba is important. It exemplifies the possibility of combining the Foucauldian awareness of institutional power regulating culture with a Habermasian notion of the potential for communication that is grounded in certain values, but at least partially dissociated from politics in Cuba.

As with many other scholars of the public sphere, Fernandes' use of the concept is closely related to a concept of civil society, and she defines her artistic public spheres as necessarily operating both within and outside the state, as institutionally-grounded but with connections to transnational cultural arenas (2006: 14). However, her analysis is only concerned with the changes within Cuban society in the post-1990 context, and therefore does not pursue the potential that the more dynamic concept of state-society relations (see Chapter Two) could have for a discussion of public spheres prior to that date. Nevertheless, the combination of the idea of multiple public spheres and the two approaches to cultural policy start to offer a potential model for the ways in which cultural citizens are formed, and cultural citizenship enacted, through cultural participation in Cuba. Consequently, within Cuban cultural citizenship (as within other contexts) there is a fundamental tension between an idea of culture as government and the regulation of the conditions for democratic participation and communication.

However, whilst the language from both the Habermasian and Foucauldian traditions is relevant to Cuba, what seems missing from these studies is a detailed discussion of the contents of the moral power that equally is disseminated through an institutional system, and which provides the 'norms' and conditions for democratic cultural engagement. As we have seen, in the Cuban case, the key discourses that fulfil this function have been derived from *cubanía revolucionaria*. I shall return to the question of shared values in a later section, but first it is important to discuss the specific relationship between art and cultural citizenship, and its theoretical implications for a concept of cultural democracy.

The arts, education, democracy and the persistence of hierarchy

The privileging of art and literature in any cultural policy over other cultural practices signifies a hierarchy of values, which is closely related to a hierarchy of power. For, along with the power to make the decision to value art, comes the power to decide what is considered art and what is not (Kelly, 2003: 189). Furthermore, the power structures involved in making those decisions are also likely to be involved in assigning value within the artistic and literary field. The relationship of traditionally 'high' culture to social and political structures of power, and the continued reproduction of social stratification, has been a central question within the sociology of art (Wolff, 1994: 139; Swartz, 1997: 6). Historically, in Cuba, the contrasting categories of 'high' and 'popular' culture have been hard to define (Fernandes, 2006: 10), and the Revolution's dual policy of encouraging mass participation in culture and fusing elite with popular elements (Weiss, 1985: 122-3) has only increased this difficulty. This, coupled with significant revolutionary social change, free access to education, and the lack of a market has made the Cuban situation very different from the case studies of the leading sociologists in the field.²¹

Nevertheless, some of the terminology from these theorists, particularly the concepts of cultural and symbolic capital and the artistic field, can be applied to a context in which literary and artistic culture is highly valued, and this has consequences for a notion of Cuban cultural citizenship. In Cuba, it is claimed that the policy of cultural participation has led to a 'cultural democracy'. "El pueblo mismo es un poeta, un artista, un pensador que está incesantemente creándose y pensándose a sí mismo"

²¹ However, Cuban sociologists still apply external theoretical concepts to Cuban culture. An example is the collection of works of young sociologists edited by Alain Basail (2006).

(UNEAC, 2000: 18). Yet, even within cultural policy statements and official discourse about culture in Cuba, there is a distinction between the artist, writer or intellectual of the *vanguardia* and the *pueblo*, and between the professional and the amateur. This fundamental tension shows that, even with the tendency to democratise, a strong sense of cultural authority and hierarchy is maintained. As the sociology of art reminds us, this hierarchy is sustained by power struggles within the artistic and intellectual fields over the power to construct meanings, and is determined by levels of institutional recognition (Swartz, 1997: 117). How that institutional recognition is configured depends on the particular society; in Cuba as elsewhere, ‘cultural intermediaries’ in the form of cultural workers and bureaucracies play a significant role in this process.

There is no doubt that Cuban cultural policy has considerably ‘democratised’ the potential for artistic consumption, which, following Bourdieu, in theory has important consequences for generating more social solidarity and equality and creating cultural citizens who feel they belong to a common culture (Turner, 2001: 19). Yet, in terms of the potential democratisation of cultural production, other factors come into play, which make the achievement of greater equality more problematical. For, although opportunities have been created for many to participate in the production of their own literary and artistic works, not all of these works are judged to be of equal merit. There is a clear hierarchy within the field of cultural production, based on the attainment of institutionalised cultural capital. In Cuba, this type of cultural capital possessed by producers within the literary field is gained through institutional recognition, the publication of work and the winning of literary prizes, which themselves exist in a hierarchy of value, with prestigious national prizes at the top, and locally-convened amateur prizes at the bottom.

More widely, cultural capital is obtained through educational achievements and qualifications, as well as access to cultural products and resources. Within social relations, cultural capital is translated into symbolic capital in the perception of other people. For example, a writer who is a member of a national organisation such as UNEAC and who has several publications in elite spaces and institutions is endowed with significant symbolic capital, and this can be further increased by international recognition. Arguably, however, once gained, symbolic capital has to be maintained, sometimes in the context of institutional adversity. For example, the author Lezama Lima’s symbolic capital, gained

until the 1960s, was reduced when, during a period in the 1970s, his works were blacklisted and his name left out of studies of Cuban literature. Nevertheless, in the main, the gaining of a high level of cultural capital is accompanied by the authority to be listened to and respected. Furthermore, following from this, the voices of those with less institutional recognition and cultural capital are likely to have less ability to influence. The hierarchy of value within this field, as Bourdieu says, alongside generations and cliques, are crucial in the legitimisation of authority (Turner, 2001: 19). Furthermore, often it is agents (with institutional backing) who already possess a high level of cultural capital within the literary field who are able to distribute capital to other agents.

Although Cuban policy has largely been directed towards offering widespread accessibility to educational opportunities, thereby increasing the cultural capital of the general population, inequalities in cultural participation remain at the level of individual educational achievements, of the availability of free time, and of propensity towards certain types of cultural practice (Rivero Baxter, 2006). These inequalities are further exacerbated by the hierarchy of cultural and symbolic capital that exists within a specific field of practice. Therefore, cultural capital determines levels and types of cultural participation, and consequently access to certain public spheres. Moreover, any gain in cultural capital offered by participation in a particular public sphere is contingent on the resources it possesses, and specifically on the cultural capital of the other participants, although this does not prevent an individual gaining cultural capital from within a wider or different public sphere. Nevertheless, in the main, introducing an idea of cultural capital problematises the democratic potential of cultural citizenship and reveals how very few studies have investigated the fundamental educational underpinnings of the concept (Turner, 2001: 18).

However, if the logic of the argument so far is followed, the existence of cultural capital and a hierarchy of artistic value do not entirely discount the empowering potential of cultural participation in Cuba for two reasons. Firstly, if the mechanisms for assigning value and cultural capital are interrogated, then it can be seen that they do not necessarily emanate directly from a central authority but are found disseminated throughout the field and therefore can be fought over at different sites. Moreover, some attention to the relativity of value is not necessarily a bad thing, as one theorist puts it: "...it is not enough to point to processes of cultural democratisation, as important as these might be, but

one should also be concerned with questions related to meaningfulness, quality and aesthetics” (Stevenson, 2001: 6). Furthermore, in the post-1990s Cuban context, some of the strategies for attaining recognition and cultural capital have even come from outside official channels, for example from connections with transnational actors or markets.

Secondly, the enactment of citizenship within defined spaces or public spheres allows both for group struggles over cultural capital and for potentially empowering participation in the communicative practice of debate and discussion and the generation of meanings, even if this occurs at different levels. So, although there may be some cultural citizens and public spheres with access to more cultural capital than others, the emphasis on communication within public spheres means that the cultural citizenship, even of individuals who are far removed from cultural hierarchies, has an important impact. The suggestion that “any act of communication can be inscribed with, and simultaneously impact, the power relations within a polity” is central to the final set of ideas useful for a notion of cultural citizenship in Cuba (Pawley, 2008: 600).

The political and social benefits of cultural citizenship

In what can be characterised as a return to a macro-level perspective, the body of work known as communicative cultural citizenship theory draws on and expands many of the ideas already discussed, such as cultural rights, communication, educated dialogue, public spheres and civil society in order to outline an ideal future project for creating more inclusive democratic societies (Pawley, 2008; Stevenson, 2003). One of its main proponents, Stevenson, broadly outlines his notion of cultural citizenship as encompassing “rights and obligations, civic spaces of participation, respect, identity and difference and individualisation” (Stevenson 2003: 33). Although Stevenson clearly states that his work is based on the problems of what he describes as postmodern society, and that his idea of citizenship can only take place outside the formal institutions of both administrative and market power, if we take the idea of a less than monolithic state in Cuba, many of the problems and ideas he expounds can be seen to be relevant, particularly in the post-1990 context. Stevenson’s development of the idea of cultural citizenship as a dialectical process of “self-making and being made within webs of power” is especially interesting (Pawley, 2008: 600).

The focus on processes of collective subject-formation in this theory is seen as a perceived response to increasing individualisation within postmodern societies (Stevenson, 2003). However, it has parallels in the Cuban case. For example, observations that the post-1990 situation in Cuba has led to increasing social fragmentation have been directly translated into a policy of encouraging more cultural participation in order to combat this (Basail, 2006: 225). This is connected to an idea that shared experience leads to a culture in common, and, therefore, a greater chance of some form of shared identity and social solidarity. When outlining collective processes of subject-formation, Stevenson notes the positive elements of postmodern deconstructions of essential notions of identity. Yet at the same time he argues for the need for some shared values in order to facilitate communication between different identities. These ideas help to provide a critique of the notion of the ideal citizen in Cuba, whilst recognising the benefits of reinforcing identification with certain core values.

However, it is only through the enactment of cultural citizenship that its potential political and social benefits can be realised. As with the Habermasian approach outlined above, the place where citizenship formation and enactment takes place for communicative cultural citizenship theorists is within the public sphere.

The availability of public places where ideas, perspectives and feelings can be shared in modern societies is crucial for the development of the self, the creation of social movements and the fostering of a critically informed public more generally. (Stevenson, 2001: 5)

Ultimately, Stevenson reworks Williams' ideal project of cultural democracy outlined in *The Long Revolution* (1961), based on the full development of human potential. Cultural citizenship then highlights the symbolic dimension of the community and is concerned crucially with the degree of self-esteem that can be accorded to an individual citizen's manner of self-realisation (Stevenson, 2003: 23).

...to raise issues of culture and citizenship is to be intimately concerned with the potential creativity or otherwise of the self. To be concerned with the 'cultural' dimensions of citizenship then is to try and foster the social conditions that make such creativity possible. (Stevenson 2001: 6)

Another communicative cultural citizenship theorist, Delanty, conceptualises citizenship as a learning process. In his ideal project he proposes a citizenship which is a process of collective, constructivist

learning in which a society continually develops new competencies and ideas by sharing experiences and interpretations (Delanty, 2007: 5). Ultimately, communicative cultural citizenship centres on the idea of an accessible, plural public sphere (consisting of many smaller spheres), and it calls for dialogue, and a new mindset (or *conciencia?*), or way of being in the world. The return to an emphasis on values and dialogic communication shows the closeness of much of this ideal project to the Cubans' self-perception of their own project. However, the (partial) critique of essentialism in this discourse, combined with the acknowledgement of the role of individual institutions, and the hierarchies of value mentioned above, help to provide a language which can highlight the same mechanisms at work within Cuba.

Towards a working model of Cuban cultural citizenship

At the most abstract level, cultural citizenship theory provides a critical language that borrows from post-structuralism in order to critique power structures, but that does not entirely abandon the idealist project of modernity, or at least some of its more progressive elements. This language employs the new command-metaphors of citizenship and empowerment, recognises the influence of institutions, and represents a return to the idea that certain values and universals are needed in order for societies to become more inclusive and democratic. A lot of the concepts within this language evoke ideas central to the Cubans' own approach to cultural participation, but using these concepts and their related ideas allows recognition of the power structures involved when that approach is put into practice. In conclusion, a critical approach to official cultural participation and the example of the *talleres literarios*, can be summarised in two key concepts: public spheres and cultural citizenship.

Public spheres in Cuba are spaces defined by the discourses of a cultural policy which are disseminated through institutions. Although the discourses of policy, and the value assigned to the activity they promote, set the conditions for participation within them, momentarily, during their existence, they separate culture (as communication) from politics through the exercise of individual communicative power and the generation of meanings. Many smaller public spheres make up the larger concept of the public sphere and provide the sites where cultural citizens are both formed and can enact their citizenship. A Cuban cultural citizenship is both a status and role to be enacted. Consequently it is

connected to a sense of belonging and inclusion as well as to empowerment. As a status, it is determined by a two-way dialectical process of formation and self-realisation, in which cultural policy and the wider ideological and institutional framework set the parameters, but the creative power of the self and the gaining of self-esteem allow for individual agency.

The enactment of cultural citizenship is represented by active involvement in communicative practice within public spheres. However, the impact of cultural citizenship is determined by the possession of, and access to, cultural capital. Both the status and enactment of cultural citizenship are assigned value determined by levels of education, institutional recognition and cultural capital. This can be gained both within the cultural field and without. Finally, cultural citizenship has a natural appeal to a sense of core values. These core values are promoted as a form of moral regulation, determine the functioning of the public sphere, are identified with in the process of communication and are produced, reproduced and contested through cultural production. It is with these concepts in mind that I shall now, in the second half of the thesis, analyse the case study of the *talleres literarios*.

PART II: The Study

Chapter Four

The Expansion of Literary Public Spheres

A History of the *Talleres Literarios* 1960 – 2000s

“Eliminado el analfabetismo, puesta en marcha la integración de un sistema editorial, creado un público mayoritario para la obra escrita, incrementado el número de bibliotecas y librerías, la organización de los *talleres literarios* fue configurándose mediante iniciativas surgidas del propio seno de los creadores” (Heras León, 1982: 7).

“En el taller se trata de que el joven abra ojos y orejas, y aprenda a expresar con tino lo que ve y oye, tanto como lo que imagina”
(Krauze in Jiménez, 1995: 253).

“El taller se proyecta dentro y fuera del medio en que convive” (Rivero, 1976: 30).

In 2007, Cuba had (multiple) state-run *talleres literarios* operating in every single *municipio* of the island, several provincial and genre-specific *talleres* and a relatively new system of *talleres literarios de vanguardia*, as well as a national literary training institute based in Havana: El Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso. These *talleres literarios*, seen by the Cubans, since the 1970s, as constituting a national literary movement, are the contemporary incarnation of a process that has evolved over more than four decades. During this time, the *talleres* have both been shaped by, and able to influence, developments in cultural policy, as well as in the wider literary process and Cuban society overall. This period has also witnessed successive waves of writers, many of whom had at one point passed through a *taller literario*, reach maturity, publish and gain established reputations. However, despite their longevity and seeming importance for the literary life of the nation, the *talleres literarios* have rarely been written about, whilst as a concept they provoke mixed reactions.

Depending on the particular viewpoint, some literary figures consider the *talleres literarios* to have been a prestigious literary movement that has achieved notable results (Chaple, 09/03/07; Melo, 17/03/07), while others view it with suspicion or deride it for lacking in literary quality or peddling old or limited ideas (Fornet, 07/03/07, González, 05/05/07). Most, however, concur that the Cuban system has been unique, for although *talleres literarios* have existed in many other parts of the world, no other country has had such a large, publicly funded centralised system or one that has been as extensive in its demographic reach. Their visibility in Cuba has been such that certain writers have even referred to the *talleres literarios* in their works of fiction. They appear in a short story by Francisco García González (2007: 130), and are briefly mentioned as the scene of aborted literary dreams in Leonardo Padura’s

internationally best-selling novel *Havana Blue* (Padura, 2007: 156). Conversely, other writers, who were known participants in the movement, rarely mention them in published interviews or consider them an important part of their literary formation. Nevertheless, what remains clear is that the *talleres literarios* have become a permanent feature of the literary landscape in Cuba.

More importantly, they have been integral to the process of cultural democratisation that from 1959 has aimed to transform that literary landscape altogether. In fact, the *talleres literarios* fall between the two main strands of revolutionary cultural policy: that which set the boundaries for the role of literature and the writer, and the strand which advocated ‘culture for all’. However, whilst the *talleres literarios* movement has been defined over the years by official policy and administrative control, their practical manifestation has been as a grassroots movement, involving a large number of individuals, both cultural workers and ordinary Cubans. Furthermore, as a voluntary movement, the impetus to establish and participate in the *talleres literarios* has come both from ‘above’ and ‘below’. Therefore, their historical development represents an example not only of the different ways in which cultural policy has been interpreted and implemented over time, but also of how its outcomes have impacted on citizens and contributed to ongoing literary development. Yet it also needs to be emphasised that the *talleres literarios* have been only one element of a much wider process.

Over the decades, the broader definition of cultural policy has generated innumerable initiatives that have facilitated Cubans’ access to, and engagement with, literature and art. These have included education, promotion, public literary activities and the work of thousands of trained local and community-based cultural workers and activists (Rojas, 03/03/07). Although the *talleres literarios* have been significant mechanisms in the literary dimension of this process, as a movement based on participation in creative literary practice, it has demanded prerequisites from potential participants (*talleristas*) which have ultimately prevented it from becoming a truly mass movement. As well as the need to possess literacy skills, the desire to participate in the *talleres literarios* has presupposed a prior interest in literature and writing. In turn, this interest has depended on numerous factors, including individuals’ predispositions towards literature but also, crucially, the objective conditions under which individuals can develop the interest. Therefore, the existence of the *talleres literarios* implies that certain conditions have been met for the individuals involved. Moreover, once established, the *talleres*

literarios themselves have created conditions facilitating the exposure to literature, which then has had consequences for the wider literary process.

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate the interplay between developing literary conditions and the *talleres literarios* by tracing their history from their emergence in the 1960s to their contemporary form in the 2000s. Following the approach developed in the previous chapter, I will argue that, as plural spaces for the critical debate of literary works, the *talleres literarios* have represented an expanding network of literary public spheres. Furthermore, as Cuban literary public spheres, the *talleres literarios* have operated within a shifting framework of institutional constraints, which during different periods have set different official boundaries for their function as plural spaces. Therefore, as well as outlining the factors that have contributed to their practical development on the ground, I shall chart the changing nature of those institutional constraints in terms of the official discourses and structures that both enabled and regulated their operation. Finally, I will concentrate on the impact of the *talleres literarios* on literary culture. However, before recounting their history, I need to uncover the basic meanings associated with the Cuban concept of *talleres literarios* in terms of their insertion into national literary tradition, their relation to other types of literary activity and their more generic and international definition.

Talleres, tradition and cubanía

Several brief histories of the *talleres literarios* already exist. These are predominantly journalistic accounts by people who were involved with the movement. They collectively create a discourse that locates its origins in the Cuban *tertulias* of the nineteenth century, before providing an overview of their development as a national movement during the revolutionary period (Álvarez 1985: 20-26; Buzzi, 1979: 8-10; Heras León, 1982: 7-11; Rogríguez Núñez, 1986: 26-27; Smorkaloff, 1997: 137-144). As a coherent sense of literary tradition is an important part of the ‘imagining’ of an independent nation, it is understandable that the Revolution as a national movement professing *cubanía* would search for the authenticity of its cultural movements in connections with the past. Literary tradition is particularly important in Cuba because of the historically close relationship it has had with politics as well as national identity (Miller, 2008: 682).

However, despite the apparent continuity shown through *cubanía* and literary tradition, it is hard to see a direct correlation between the nineteenth-century *tertulias* and the *talleres literarios* because of differences in format, social make-up and their relationship to authorities. An earlier form of literary public sphere, *tertulias* were small gatherings of intellectuals sponsored by wealthy patrons where literature was read aloud in public and new ideas disseminated. The most famous of these was established by Domingo del Monte in the 1830s. Although Domingo del Monte is thought to have been conservative in his political views (he was a landowner and slave-owner who did not believe in political independence), he is credited with helping to create a literary *cubanía criolla*, that would help to pave the way for an independent Cuban cultural identity (Fernández Retamar, n.d.). Nevertheless, while this remained largely an identity for the elite, the *tertulias* also contributed to the emergence of a national popular culture. It was through the activity of *tertulias* that the *décima* form of oral poetry spread into the countryside. It was adopted by peasants and came to be considered a popular and Cuban form (Fernández Retamar, n.d.).

Del Monte himself was forced into exile; nevertheless other *tertulias* and small literary gatherings carried on the same tradition throughout the nineteenth century, finding shelter in certain institutions but often clashing with the colonial authorities.²² Many of these groups also produced *revistas*, another tradition which was carried on into the twentieth century, with the more urban literary groups of the Republican period. One historian of the *talleres literarios* mentions the *Grupo Minorista* and its *Revista Orto* as an example of an antecedent for the later revolutionary movement, because of its specifically political and anti-imperialist stance (Álvarez, 1985: 20).²³ However, prior to 1959, these literary public spheres were the preserve of small communities of self-defined intellectuals; they were fragmented, marginalised and received very little state support:

They occurred in an environment in which literature was a marginal, elitist activity and were ways of spreading political, philosophical and literary ideas around an established group. (Smorkaloff, 1997: 137)

²² The *tertulias* of Domingo Del Monte came after the colonial regime banned the establishment of the Academia Cubana de Literatura (Álvarez, 1985: 20-21).

²³ In his survey, Álvarez does not mention the less overtly political literary group based around the journal *Orígenes* (1944-54) (Álvarez, 1985: 21).

The concept of a taller literario during the revolutionary period

In contrast, the *talleres literarios* during the revolutionary period were the result of the new enthusiasm for writing stimulated by the cultural policy of a leadership professing a radicalised *cubanía*. They were literary public spheres that acted as support groups for aspiring writers, had a clearly formative purpose and, instead of being marginalised, they were established with the direct encouragement of the cultural leadership and incorporated into, and therefore defined by, a national process. Moreover, instead of being the preserve of a few self-defined intellectuals, they were open to anyone with an aptitude for writing. Historical accounts explain these differences by claiming that the *talleres literarios* are proof that the Revolution has been able to socialise and equalise literature, formerly only an elite practice confined to *tertulias* (Álvarez, 1985: 21). However, although the *talleres literarios* and many other initiatives may have vastly broadened access to literary practice in Cuba, as we have seen, there was still a literary hierarchy, led by a new form of literary elite.

Yet it is the difference in the format of the *taller literario* as opposed to the *tertulia* that reveals how the assertion of continuity between them, whilst important for the sake of literary tradition, is somewhat tenuous. Even during the revolutionary period, the concept of a *tertulia* has referred to a literary gathering where finished literary works are read by established writers, whilst the word *taller* implied a more productive environment, closer to the definition of a literary sphere based on rational and critical debate.²⁴ Staying fairly consistent in form over the decades, a *taller literario* entails each *tallerista* reading aloud their individual literary creations in front of the rest of the group. The group then offer their commentaries on the work in question to its author, often asking him or her to defend or justify the inclusion or exclusion of a particular aspect. In this way, a debate is generated about both literary form and content until some kind of consensus is reached, and the *tallerista* decides whether or not to incorporate any suggestions into the text in question. The discussion is led by an *asesor*, who is somebody presumed to have more literary experience than the *talleristas*, and who may also offer to teach some theory related to literature or writing.

²⁴ José Martí is recorded as mentioning *talleres* in 1883, when he said “Talleres debiera decirse mejor que escuelas” (Castilla Mas, 1974: 57).

The emphasis on critical debate and productivity rather than on the presentation of finished cultural products makes the *talleres*, as literary public spheres, different not only from *tertulias* but also from the other forms of literary activity that have been promoted during the revolutionary period. These included: *peñas*, book presentations, *charlas*, *ferias*, and *festivales (semanas o días) de cultura*, as well as *círculos*. The *círculos de lectura*, *círculos de lectores*, and *círculos de interés literario* were different types of reading groups during which usually canonical texts were read aloud and discussed. They were founded in schools, factories and within mass organizations. Leaders were members of the group who had been trained by an *asesor*, a member of UNEAC, the Brigada Hermanos Saíz or a local *taller literario*. Therefore, they encouraged dialogic communication but were less focussed on the creative contribution of each individual involved. As such, they were considered a level below the *talleres literarios* but also a potential recruiting ground for them. Furthermore, following the pattern of productivity, as well as *talleres literarios*, other types of artistic public spheres existed such as the *talleres* for music and art. Moreover, during the post-1990s period, the *talleres literarios* themselves were also divided between the *talleres de apreciación literaria*, which were about improving the understanding and critical appreciation of finished literary works, and the original *talleres literarios de creación*.²⁵

Yet the nature of the *talleres literarios* as creative public spheres has also generated polemical debate. Some have regarded the group work within a *taller literario* as questioning the process of literary creation and whether it can be a collective practice or should be entirely the work of the individual (Fornet, 09/03/07; González, 05/05/07). Critics of the *talleres literarios* have accused them of stifling individual creativity and promoting a single, uniform way of writing amongst participants (González, 05/05/07; Pérez Chang, n.d.). However, different opinions on this issue usually depend on a particular individual's interpretation of notions of creativity, talent, and what it means to be a writer of literature, concepts which are debated all over the world. In Cuba, in particular, the existence of the *talleres literarios* movement and the way that, at times, it has been defined by policy has stimulated considerable debate over whether people can be taught to become writers, although such a debate has existed wherever there has been a similar movement. Yet, importantly, these arguments, in their

²⁵ *Talleres de apreciación literaria* seemed to have evolved in the post-1990s period from the *círculos* of the 1970/80s. Most *talleres literarios de creación* devote some time to *apreciación*. Wherever I refer to generic *talleres* in this thesis I am referring to the more established *talleres de creación*.

concern about the impact of the *talleres literarios* on writing, ignore the function of the *talleres literarios* as literary public spheres.

Talleres in other countries

It is not known where the *taller literario* format first originated, although it has existed in some form in many different countries. A possible point of comparison with the Cuban case is the writing workshops that existed in Soviet Russia and other Eastern European socialist states. It is known, for example, that writing groups were common during the proletarian writers' movement in Russia (Dobrenko, 2000) and that during the 1950s Bitterfeld Path cultural project in the GDR, a number of writing workshops were set up in factories and workplaces, at which workers were encouraged to write about their enterprises and keep diaries (Parmalee, 1994: 305). In terms of the accompanying rhetoric, the justification for these movements share many socialist and humanist principles with the Cuban *talleres literarios*.²⁶ Moreover, a comparison of Cuban and Soviet cultural policy documents from the 1970s confirms that there were similarities in terminology and programmes (Saruski & Mosquera, 1979; Zvorykin, 1970). Weiss even goes so far to suggest that the main initiative aimed at community level cultural participation in Cuba, the Casas de Cultura, were an imported Soviet idea (Weiss, 1985: 124). However, while exchanges between cultural policymakers from Cuba and other socialist states were common, the specificities of the Cuban context meant that policies directed at the population, although similar in appearance, were quite different in their outcomes ('Encuentro de dirigentes...', 1974: 28).

Furthermore, there is also considerable evidence to suggest that the format of the *taller literario* entered Cuba via a more Latin American route, in particular that it came from Mexico. Interestingly, the Mexicans also trace the origins of the *talleres literarios* to nineteenth-century *tertulias*, although the roots of the more modern format of Mexican *taller* lay in firstly the publication of the literary magazine *Taller* from the 1940s, and secondly the *taller literario* run by the writer Juan José Arreola during the 1950s, which turned into the Centro de Escritores Mexicanos (Jiménez, 1995: 251-2). Arreola's *taller* promoted the idea that an atmosphere of critical debate was the ideal environment in which young

²⁶ One study on literary workshops in the GDR concludes that the main reasons the leadership made culture available to the 'masses' were less their humanist ideals and more the practical aims of both controlling people's leisure time and increasing labour productivity (Richthofen, 2005: 12).

writers could develop. His Centro rapidly achieved a degree of fame and the state's Instituto de Bellas Artes funded a number of other *talleres literarios* around Mexico during the 1960s, resulting in national competitions between them in the 1970s. Therefore, the Mexican movement actually grew concurrently with the Cuban one, with the Centro de Escritores as the main model for both.

Arreola's *taller* and the Centro de Escritores Mexicanos were known about in Cuba at least from the early 1960s (Heras León, 29/03/07). As well as magazine articles, the Centro and *talleres literarios* may have featured in cultural exchanges between the two countries fostered by Casa de las Américas or the Instituto Mexicano-Cubano formed in 1963, which was directed by a Mexican writer ('intercambio entre Cuba y México', 1963). Writing in 1980, a year after a visit to Cuba by representatives of the Mexican *talleres literarios*, the Director of Literature of the Cuban Ministry of Culture, Sergio Chaple, recognised the Mexican influence in the development of the literary workshop movement: "Para nosotros, la experiencia del hermano país azteca en el desarrollo del trabajo de los talleres literarios fue... de inapreciable valor" (Heras León, 1981: 8). In fact, the concept of a *taller literario* appears to have spread around Latin America from the 1960s. There are records of *talleres literarios* appearing in Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina during the early 1960s (de Bertero, 1988; Leal, 1987; Varderi, 1994). Often run by established writers, the *talleres literarios* in other countries followed the same generic format as in Cuba, which itself had been set out by Arreola (Leal, 1987: 22).

As well as the format of a *taller*, Arreola was also responsible for establishing the generic definition of their function as literary public spheres; he maintained they were spaces for "crítica" and "trabajo colectivo". For him, the necessary ingredients for a successful *taller literario* were:

Una persona capaz de conducir el taller...y un grupo de jóvenes que sean capaces de modestia, humildad y que no tengan mala fe en contra de los demás; que examinen los textos con honradez y que estén dispuestos a exponerse a la crítica. (Jiménez, 1995: 253)

Confirming the egalitarian and plural nature of a literary public sphere, he also stressed that a *taller* should operate on the basis that *talleristas* were aware of both their rights and responsibilities, thereby guaranteeing the regular participation and fair treatment of all members (Leal, 1987: 20-2). From Arreola's definition, it is possible to discern certain core values associated with *talleres literarios*, which consequently are also some of the ideals that underlie them as literary public spheres. First and

foremost, literature is valued as tradition and as a practice which includes both individual and collective work based on dialogue and debate. Other values include participation, respect, education and self-improvement. Representing a strong sense of culturalism, these values were interpreted and expressed differently within *talleres* movements, depending on the local context. Yet, clearly, they are consistent with some of the core values of *cubanía revolucionaria*.

The 1960s: Setting the scene

According to several writers, early forms of *talleres literarios* appeared in the first half of the 1960s, although they did not obtain official recognition as such until the middle or later part of the decade (Smorkaloff, 1997:140). Therefore, unlike some of the other cultural programmes promoted by the government from early on, they did not emerge directly as a result of a leadership initiative. The absence of the concept of a *taller literario* from the main amateur artistic movement launched with the creation of the *instructores de arte* (1961) was probably due to a combination of factors, the most important of which was their reliance on the pre-existence of certain conditions, namely literacy skills, literary awareness and the availability of books. Before the writing of literature could be promoted on a large scale, these conditions had to be met. This meant the development of both literary production and culture, and explains the early focus on reading and book distribution programmes.

Nevertheless, despite not being a direct result of official policy, the first *talleres literarios* were clearly in line with the leadership's overall policy objectives. As well as being consistent with the new value system and policy of *extensión cultural*, they provided practical opportunities for more experienced writers to engage in dialogue with a wide range of people who, as well as being amateur and aspiring writers themselves, were also likely to be their potential readers. Furthermore, as new literary public spheres, they provided a creative outlet for the discussion of experiences within the context of rapid social transformations. Consequently, the *talleres literarios* were soon incorporated into the official policy towards national literature. However, during the first decade of the Revolution, the opportunity for collective literary expression and access to a public sphere, which the *talleres* provided, remained confined to a small group of people. Therefore, a history of the *talleres literarios* during the 1960s

consists of the isolated beginnings of a movement but, perhaps more importantly, the drive to create the conditions in which such a movement could expand and thrive.

Early examples of talleres literarios

A clear indication that the concept of a *taller literario* was present in Cuba early in the 1960s is given by two publications and activities in theatre. As early as 1962, UNEAC published a literary newspaper called *Taller* and sent it to camps of the Milicias (Cossío Woodward, n.d.: 7). The same year, Cuba's University of Oriente Students of the Department of Literature, as well as other amateur writers, were provided with the opportunity to offer their own literary creations for publication in a new magazine called *Taller Literario*. Outside the universities, in Havana, *talleres* in playwriting were also being advertised in the same year (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07). It is unclear whether these early manifestations of *talleres* followed the same format of collective critical discussion which was the basis of the later movement. However, they show that the idea of a *taller literario* was starting to emerge in places that already had an active literary culture and that the wider literary public sphere was being expanded to include a variety of voices. Furthermore, the existence of the magazine *Taller Literario* for students, also reflected the close relationship between amateur writing and both educational levels and access to books. This sector of the population would later be enthusiastic supporters of, and participants within, the evolving *talleres* movement.

In fact, one of the first *talleres literarios* to be founded and later made official was the Taller Literario Roque Dalton. Run by Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera, who was also the general editor of *Taller Literario*, it was held within the University of Havana but was separate from any other academic programme (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07). A glance through the editorials of *Taller Literario* reveals that the students involved were overwhelmingly using their voices to support the Revolution. Contributions by students and first-time writers covered the social and structural changes happening around them, as well as more personal topics, and it was made clear that their literary work represented their support and commitment to the revolutionary effort (*Taller Literario*, 1962 – 1974). Many of the contributors to this magazine would later become established writers; they included Rafael Soler, Efraín Nadereau, and Belkis Cuza Malé. Moreover, as well as pledging their support for the Revolution

through writing, these student-writers were also engaged in practical action. In one 1967 edition of the magazine, the entire editorial board was absent because they were participating in the sugar-cane harvest (*Taller Literario*, 1967a: 1).

Outside the universities, and the expanding theatre movement in Havana (Kapcia, 2005: 141), *talleres literarios* were slower to form as there was a need both for a literary culture to develop and for the circumstances to be created in which new, aspiring writers could meet each other. One early organisation set up to work on these two areas was the Brigada Hermanos Saíz. Established in the years following the formation of UNEAC in 1961, and intended to act as its youth wing, the BHS linked both younger and less established writers and had as its remit the organisation of literary activities, including *talleres literarios* (*Taller Literario*, 1967b: 19). As a national organisation it was slow to get off the ground, with provincial branches only being founded in Santiago in 1967 and around 1970/71 in Havana. However, it had literary representatives in Camagüey as early as 1963, which sponsored early *talleres literarios* there (Heras León, 07/04/07; *Taller Literario*, 1967b: 19). Yet these early *talleres literarios* relied on the existence of groups of young writers and a willing teacher. As the decade progressed, the much wider and multi-faceted drive to expand literary culture facilitated the emergence of *talleres* in a number of different localities.

The first official talleres

If, as Smorkaloff suggests, many early *talleres literarios* were sporadic and temporary (Smorkaloff, 1997: 140), by the second half of the 1960s, some had gained a more permanent presence. This can be seen from the few records of established *talleres literarios* that were given official recognition by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura at this time. These *talleres* existed in different *municipios* around the country and, according to one 1980s article, were established on the impetus of predominantly young and aspiring writers. They formed: "...como expresión del reconocimiento por parte de un grupo de jóvenes escritores de la importancia de la crítica sobre sus obras en proceso" (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 26). As well as being able to count on willing participants, it seems *talleres literarios* were able to become more lasting when they had a designated space in which to meet, but more importantly when they were in areas with an active and thriving literary culture, to which the *taller* itself could contribute.

To this end, they were more likely to be founded in places where more established writers lived or worked, as they often acted as teachers or *asesores*. For example, in 1968, a *taller* was set up in 10 de Octubre, a *municipio* of Havana where many writers lived (Melo, 17/03/07).

Although some *talleres literarios* may have existed for a while before being given official recognition, it was not until they came under the CNC's direction that they were given names and a foundation date. Named after carefully-chosen famous figures from Cuban history or Cuban or foreign writers and intellectuals, the official *talleres* were thus linked symbolically in some cases to revolutionary mythology and in others to national or universal literary tradition. In July 1968:

...como parte de las actividades y festejos para la celebración del 26, se creó el Taller Literario Rubén Martínez Villena en el municipio Camagüey. ('El Taller Literario Rubén Martínez Villena', 1981: 78)

A further *taller literario* set up on the initiative of three writers in the mid 1960s in a *municipio* of Santiago was given official recognition in 1967 by the provincial delegation of the CNC. This was named the "Taller Literario Municipal Carlos Manuel de Céspedes" ('Taller Literario Carlos Manuel de Céspedes', 2006).

The young, founding members of *talleres literarios* may have won a literary prize and even have been published, but they had not yet reached the level of prestige associated with acceptance into UNEAC. In 1967, the Taller Literario Carlos Enríquez had been founded by the young writers David Lovera, Reneál González and Miguel Bruzón. According to an article about the *taller*, it had been set up as a result of the enthusiasm generated by the publication of a collection of poems entitled *Tierra 66* by Miguel Bruzón (González López, 1983: 6). All records tend to allude to this enthusiasm of the aspiring writers responsible for organising the *talleres literarios*. However, this enthusiasm was not generated in a vacuum, and many other programmes and initiatives were feeding into the new excitement surrounding literature and writing.

Rescuing and promoting literary traditions

Occurring under the auspices of revolutionary cultural policy, the fundamental focus of these programmes and initiatives was on rescuing, developing and promoting a Cuban national literary tradition which had its origins far beyond the revolutionary period. For example, the establishment of the Taller Literario Carlos Enríquez, mentioned above, was motivated by events such as *La primera semana de la poesía portopadrense*, a series of activities that celebrated the literary history of the area, thereby allowing young people interested in literature to come into contact with the work considered to be part of the local tradition, to want to contribute to it themselves and also to meet each other. Moreover, one of its founding members was already engaged actively in this promotion of literary knowledge and activity. He is described as being “un miembro de la prestigiosa Brigada Hermanos Saíz” (González López, 1983: 6).

This double project to ‘rescue’ and promote national arts and literature stemmed from the central message of the leadership’s cultural policy, that is, to develop a national culture of the people that had its authenticity rooted in the past but which was being continued in the present. The rescue of tradition and the promotion of Cuban literature amongst the people was thus a parallel process to the discussion of what revolutionary art should be like. However, as this message filtered down through the various organisational channels, a large number of agents became involved in both these processes. These ranged from full-time cultural workers operating at the national or provincial level and employed by the CNC or other cultural institutions to part-time local cultural activists operating within mass organisations, workplaces and schools who could meet each other in organisational meetings (Rojas, 03/03/07). With the end of the Literacy Campaign in 1961, the official drive to ‘rescue’ and promote literature across the island (as opposed to just in Havana) began in earnest in 1962 when the CNC recruited its first intake of students who were to be trained as *asesores literarios* and sent to the provinces to take responsibility for coordinating and encouraging literary activities in the regions (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07).

These young recruits, many of whom lacked a higher education, were trained for their roles over several months in Havana’s Habana Libre hotel, which had been acting as a centre for government

activities. Although their brief training was interrupted as Cuba was plunged into the October Missile Crisis, they nevertheless eventually completed it and took up their posts in provincial government offices. As early literary workers, provincial *asesores* had a broad range of responsibilities. In addition to overseeing the development of book distribution networks, they were responsible, in co-ordination with locally-based cultural activists, for overseeing the organisation of reading programmes and other literary activities. As part of the ‘rescuing’ of national literature, one of the first major tasks of the *asesores* was to draw up a census of all the people writing in their province in order to assess the state of literary culture in each region, so that they could plan measures to support it (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07).

The process of discovering these people took time and involved setting up a bevy of new literary prizes which were advertised in collaboration with the growing mass organisations, and which often encouraged entries from first-time writers. Each significant entry was logged by the *asesor* and if it was possible followed up by a personal visit from the *asesor* or, if there was one available, from a more local cultural activist, thus enabling a picture of local literary activity to be built up (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07). With this information, the *asesores* could tailor literary activities to the region, a process which later included the active encouragement to establish *talleres literarios*. Although it was common for the first *talleres* to be formed in areas with both a historical and a contemporary tradition of writing, such as the city of Havana, in Havana Province, in places like Artemisa, and in Matanzas, Camagüey and Santiago, the efforts of literary workers were soon achieving results in areas where no writers had lived before.

In 1963, Emiliana Pérez Pérez, a cultural worker in Regla and Guanabacoa in the province of Havana, mentioned how a local literary competition had started to reveal people writing in areas thought to have no previous literary tradition (‘Cultura en Regla’, 1963: 13). As more and more amateur and aspiring writers were ‘discovered’ by local cultural promoters throughout the decade, there was more potential to establish *talleres literarios*. Indeed, the winners of local literary competitions seemed motivated to continue to write and to improve their writing skills. One recent winner in a Casa de Cultura in Viñales said that: “le interesa mucho escribir, formarse, estudiar, aprender” (Jorge Cardoso, 1963:15).

Furthermore, once established as members of a *taller literario*, *talleristas* themselves were expected to continue the work of promoting literature in the locality. As people with a certain knowledge of, and experience in, literature, *talleristas* could help in the organisation of other literary activities. In this sense they mirrored the duties of the members of the BHS, which were to:

...estimular la creación de focos de atractivo y actividad cultural...mediante seminarios, conferencias, *talleres literarios*, visitas, concursos, publicaciones. (*Taller Literario*, 1967b: 19)

In other words, *talleres* and the BHS were not just about supporting new writers but about participating actively in the forging of local literary culture as well. Moreover, the development of this local literary culture required a parallel drive to promote the reading of literature and the availability of books.

As well as some of the literary activities and celebrations already mentioned, from early in the 1960s, efforts were made to set up *libreros populares* in workplaces, where workers could not only gain access to books but be invited to *charlas*, *conferencias* and discussions about literature. Also, Comités de Amigos del Libro were founded, whose purpose it was to promote literature in the local area, so were reading circles where people met to discuss certain works ('5 años de Revolución cultural', 1963: 10). As well as *talleristas* and other cultural activists, many established writers (some of whom were members of UNEAC) also became involved in this process and made the promotion of literature at the grassroots part of their regular routine. Some writers took up positions as official cultural workers as the cultural administration expanded, whilst others did so on a voluntary basis. Rodríguez Rivera, as we have seen, worked with students, but other writers such as Félix Pita Rodríguez and Luis Suardíaz held poetry readings in factories and offered talks on literature as well as numerous other activities (de Mela, 26/02/07; Suardíaz, 2007).

By the end of the decade, literary culture had developed to such an extent that there were enough *talleres literarios* in existence to be able to compare them to the wider amateur or *aficionado* movement in other art forms. Having from 1961 expanded at a much faster rate, the amateur arts movement was by that point large enough to organise meetings and competitions between the different groups. In a similar way, amateur writers from *talleres literarios* started to compete against other writers from other *talleres* in order to win accolades from fellow *talleristas* and from judges who were

more established writers. However, competing as a *tallerista* meant much more than simply sending off a text to be read by a panel of judges. Each participant was required to travel in person to a meeting place, which was a larger, temporary public sphere, where they would read their text aloud and then have to defend its content in the face of comments received from the judges and other *talleristas*. The process of debating the text was often considered as important as the text itself (Heras León, 07/04/07).

During competitions, the best work and its authors from one municipal *taller* were selected to participate against other *municipios* in the meetings known as *encuentro-debates*. These events provided another opportunity for writers to establish a dialogue with a broader audience and some writers emerged as strong supporters of the movement. It was at this time that Eduardo Heras León, a figure who would be central in the movement in later decades, first became involved. He was asked to judge in one of these early competitions. Having just won the UNEAC ‘David’ prize for first-time authors in 1968, Heras León participated as a judge in 1969 in a competition, held in a theatre, between the different *talleres* of the region of Matanzas (Heras León, 07/04/07).

Minimal institutional constraints and reliance on local initiative

From the start, *talleres literarios* met in public spaces but, during the 1960s, the institutional constraints on them as public spheres were minimal. Members of the early *talleres literarios* gathered in whichever building designated for cultural use was available in the locality, be it a library, a Casa de la Trova or an early example of a Casa de Cultura.²⁷ A couple of examples are: the *taller* in Camagüey which met sometimes in a library, sometimes in the patio of the Casa de la Trova; and the Taller Literario Manuel Navarro Luna in Manzanillo which began functioning in 1966 in a Casa de Cultura (‘El taller literario Rubén Martínez Villena’, 1981: 78; Escalina, 1981: 80). Yet the institutions themselves did not have a large role to play in the functioning of the *talleres*; all that was needed was a room and some chairs. The objective of the *taller* in Manzanillo was “perfeccionar la obra de los escritores manzanilleros e incorporar a la vida literaria al mayor número posible de jóvenes” (Escalina, 1981: 80).

²⁷ Casas de Cultura and Casas de la Trova were usually confiscated mansion houses, converted into spaces for *aficionado* activities. At this time, these institutions did not yet exist all over the country.

During this initial phase, there were no official guidelines about how best to run the *talleres literarios*, so as public spheres they were defined by the wider process of rescuing and promoting set in motion by cultural policy, which gave considerable value and prestige both to literary tradition and practice. Being defined in this way gave the *talleres literarios* a sense of continuity with the past, as well as a sense of agency in carrying on tradition in the changed circumstances of the present. Therefore, the notion of national culture and tradition represented by the *talleres*, with their names taken from history or the literary canon, tended to naturalise them as part of culture, although it was clear that it was the revolutionary process that created the conditions for their existence. However, the direction that national culture should take was still being debated at this time, so, in the absence of any official discourse about them, the *talleres literarios* were potentially effective as plural spaces, incorporating the individual voices of the people with the will to set them up.

They were also linked to the early ethos of participation and notion of the ideal citizen. An awareness and knowledge of national culture, with the space for reflection that it offered, was deemed an important element not only for developing human potential but for developing *conciencia*. This aim of producing ‘cultured’ citizens was considered vital to the revolutionary process and integral to it from the start. Moreover, the *talleres literarios*, as new public spheres, were likely to form citizens with the other values that were contained within the tacit mutual agreement entered into by all participants in the *taller*. These included participation and self-improvement as well as both the right to be listened to with respect and the responsibility to listen to and comment on others’ work with equal respect; these were the ideas espoused by Arreola in his Mexican *taller*. However, the ways in which individual *talleres* and *talleristas* interpreted either the broader cultural processes of the Revolution, or the concept of the *taller* itself, largely depended on the people who were directly involved, thus guaranteeing their status as plural spaces.

This plural nature was also confirmed by the fact that there was minimal state involvement in the *talleres literarios*, as during this period they were very loosely organised (Heras León, 07/04/07). Although ultimately their establishment was in line with the remit of the CNC’s Department of Literature as well as its Department of Cultural Extension, neither department was responsible for any kind of direct regulation. The organisation of individual *talleres literarios* was by the end of the 1960s

involving agents from a variety of organisations. Cultural activists from the mass organisations and the BHS promoted them and recruited members, whilst other organizations such as the Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) had sufficient interested persons within their ranks to form their own internal (non-municipal) *talleres literarios*. Heras León even set up his own *taller* with a group of friends in the School of Journalism, although it suffered from the lack of an *asesor* which made it, according to him, more like a *tertulia* (Heras León, 07/04/07). Furthermore, *asesores* in other *talleres* at this time were not directly employed for the purpose but were probably local writers with more experience and reputation than the *talleristas* who gave their services free (González López, 1983:6). Therefore, the lack of any central co-ordination meant that within the *talleres literarios* there was room for a variety of local input and initiative on the ground.

The 1970s: Expansion and regulation

The creation of a (mass) movement

If, through its myriad manifestations, the cultural policy of 1960s had broadly changed the frame of reference through which many citizens viewed literature across the island, the policy during the 1970s continued as before, but attached more specific meanings to that framework. Parallel to this, if the *talleres* of the 1960s had been characterised by local initiative and a loose organisational structure, during the course of the next decade they changed considerably as their number increased, and they were brought under much closer control by the state apparatus. Following the general trend of the revolutionary process, the *talleres literarios* became institutionalised and centralised over the decade, putting new institutional constraints on their function as public spheres by setting new boundaries for their operation as plural spaces. As the early 1970s was the time in which the *talleres* became a national movement, this is also the period with which the *talleres literarios* are most associated in the minds of many Cubans.

The main turning point for the *talleres literarios* came alongside the changes in cultural policy ratified by the 1971 Congreso de Educación y Cultura. At this congress, the role of culture and the writer in the

Revolution was more clearly defined and the CNC was given more power and a remit to expand its activities. As a result, this larger central body was able to pursue its policy of *extensión cultural* more aggressively, which included increasing the number of *talleres literarios*. By the early 1970s, many of the conditions necessary for establishing *talleres literarios* in different areas had been met; a mass readership had been created in Cuba, and many more works of literature were now circulating amongst the population. The policy of promoting literature through organised activities was maintained and some of the informal book and reading groups were regularised and expanded as *círculos de lectura* and *círculos de lectores* (CNC, 1974: 5). As these groups were then expected to feed into the *talleres literarios*, it was hoped that the *talleres literarios* could eventually achieve the same scale and national coverage that the *aficionado* movement had reached. However, although the *talleres literarios* movement increasingly started to mimic the latter structurally, both movements remained centrally administered by different departments during this decade.

Therefore, the changes of the early 1970s had several consequences for the *talleres literarios* as both public spheres and support groups for aspiring writers. As well as being vastly expanded in number, efforts were made to link them all to a central administration that produced guidelines in order to standardise and regulate their operation. From that point on, many *talleres literarios* were run by official cultural workers and could only operate using nine fixed literary genres. Furthermore, the first official discourse produced about the *talleres literarios* movement not only clearly defined its role, but also created new meanings associated with the category of *escritor* and who was entitled to claim it. These changes in the definition of a writer were consistent with the new direction in official cultural policy which had also affected the personnel involved in the movement. As the cultural administration took punitive measures against certain writers such as Heras León, they were prevented from working with the *talleres literarios*. However, at the same time, other writers rose to prominence as vociferous supporters of the movement.

Practical developments

From the handful of *talleres literarios* that existed in the late 1960s, by 1974 there were more than 70 *talleres* with more than 1000 members (Leante, 1973: 2). This was because instead of the formation of

new *talleres literarios* relying on local initiative and a group of willing new writers, cultural workers now actively sought to encourage their establishment in as many places as possible. This created the *talleres literarios de base*, which were set up in schools, factories, neighbourhoods and other workplaces with the purpose of encouraging participation from those who had never written before, thus extending literary culture. Even government organisations such as the Ministry of the Interior set up their own *talleres literarios*, and the FAR were able to expand theirs (Heras León, 1986: 9). Newly trained literary *asesores* working in localities, sometimes but not always writers themselves, visited these locations to run the *talleres*. Although membership of *talleres* was still voluntary there were now several incentives to join. As well as the prestige associated with writing and playing a role in the development of national literary culture, participation in a cultural group was considered to be a sign of exemplary behaviour.

As mass organisations already had experience organising *aficionado* groups and other cultural activities at the *base* level (in schools and workplaces), they also helped local *asesores* with the promotion of *talleres* and the recruitment of *talleristas*. At the higher *municipio* level, *talleres* continued to be formed on the initiative of interested people, but they were given official status straight away. These *talleres* were open to anyone who had a proven interest in writing in the locality as well as the best *talleristas* from the *talleres de base*. Furthermore, now that there were more *talleres* and more cultural workers, the competitions that had begun tentatively at the end of the 1960s began to gather steam and more *talleres* started to compete at a regional and even provincial level.

The decision to make the movement national was taken in 1973 and involved discussion between a group of writers active in the movement and the CNC leadership, including César Leante, David Buzzi, Sigifredo Álvarez Conesa, Paco Mir, Marisa Farro and Imeldo Álvarez (Ernesto Ernesto, 28/04/07). Although some remember this period as a time when the amateur movement became quite separated from established writers and literary activity at the elite level, many writers remained involved in running *talleres*, judging competitions or working within the CNC (Heras León, 29/03/07; Rojas, 03/03/07). As a result of the decision to formalise the movement, the CNC produced and circulated a set of pamphlets on how *talleres* should be run, and coordinated its first national event in 1974. After this year, which was recorded and celebrated afterwards as the founding year of the movement,

Encuentro-Debates Nacionales were held annually in different locations across the island. They were huge five-day long events which were attended by *talleristas* who had won in the lower-level competitions all over the country and who came to compete in the nine different genres.²⁸

It can be said that from 1971 to 1976 (and especially from 1974-6) the movement of *talleres literarios* became one of the priorities of the CNC's Department of Literature, and that they received more attention and support than many established writers.

El trabajo de Literatura se ha dirigido fundamentalmente a continuar la formación de jóvenes escritores, integrándolos en colectivos de trabajo, es decir, en los talleres literarios. (CNC, 1975c: 57)

This included the provision of space in elite national publications such as *Revolución y Cultura* for *talleristas*, something usually preserved for those writers who already had a considerable reputation (Cinta, 1974). The move to formalise the movement and increase the number of *talleres* was fairly successful, although by no means were there *talleres* everywhere. Several factors determined which regions had a more dynamic movement, including the number and enthusiasm of the *asesores*, the strength of the existing local literary tradition and the eagerness of the *talleristas* (Chaple, 09/03/07). Nevertheless, by 1976, the movement had 259 *talleres* and 3252 members (Rivero, 1976: 26). During this time, many municipal *talleres* had been encouraged to produce regular leaflets or *boletines* containing the best work from each, expanding their reach into the wider public sphere.²⁹ Although these were printed as opposed to officially published, they were circulated around the local area and to other *talleres* in the movement.

The creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1976 signalled the start of a shift in overall policy and emphasis but did not lessen the support for the *talleres literarios*, which continued to grow under its direction (Buzzi, 1979: 8; Chaple, 09/03/07). At this time, the CNC was disbanded and huge administrative changes were initiated all across the country. New Culture Minister Armando Hart

²⁸ The nine genres were: short story, testimonio, poetry, décima, theatre, and essay, as well as short story, poetry and theatre for children.

²⁹ Some examples of these are *Espiga: Talleres Literarios del Consejo Regional de Artemisa*; *Veintiocho Letras: Boletín Literario de Güines*; *Hacer algo: Boletín de los Talleres Literarios de Matanzas*; *Gente: Boletín Literario del Taller Literario "Rolando Escardó" Nuevitas Camagüey*, all first produced in 1971.

stated clearly that the policy of widening the artistic and literary opportunities available to the masses was central to the work of the new Ministry (Báez, 1986: 18-19). This clearly signified continued support for the *talleres literarios*. However, the disruption caused by the changes meant that their national administration was moved to the Department of Popular Culture for two years (Chaple, 09/03/07). The fact of being lumped with the *aficionado* movement in this department signified that, whilst still important, the *talleres literarios* were no longer a policy priority for literature, the administration of which was now being organised in the new Department of Literature of the Ministry of Culture, in future responsible for all writers, publishing and book distribution.

Although many of the former CNC workers continued to work with the *talleres* in posts below the national level, and many of the writers associated with the movement stayed the same, the movement ceased to grow at so rapid a rate and suffered from the lack of experienced coordination (Chaple, 09/03/07). Yet, conversely, during this period some of the writers who had been previously banished from working with literature, such as Heras León, were allowed to become involved with the movement again. In 1978, the decision was taken to return control of the *talleres literarios* to the Department of Literature under a new Director, Sergio Chaple. During the same year, a law was passed establishing the cultural *instituciones de base*. These were the basic cultural institutions that were to be established in every *municipio* of the island. As well as a Casa de Cultura, a library and a local museum, it became a legal requirement to have a *taller literario* in every administrative unit.

Some members of the cultural administration who worked in literature used this time of sweeping changes to argue the case for adding Casas del Escritor to the list of *instituciones de base* (Hernández, 16/04/07). These were to be institutions at *municipio* level providing space for all kinds of literary activity, including *talleres literarios*, as well as an official meeting place for local writers who could not always travel the long distance to national meeting places such as UNEAC in Havana. Although they were not eventually included in the generalised programme, sporadic Casas del Escritor were later established where there was an available building and a strong community of local writers with an active literary culture (see below). *Talleres literarios* were generally held in existing and newly-formed Casas de Cultura.

Another immediate consequence of the institutionalisation of the effort to democratise culture was the need to train many new *asesores literarios* in order to fulfil the aim of offering a *taller literario* in every *municipio* of the country. Where before, provincial *asesores* had overseen the work of locally-based cultural workers or writers who ran *talleres*, now each *municipio* would have at least one government employee dedicated to running *talleres* and promoting literature generally. According to Chaple, this process took time, and often led to the appointment of poorly-trained personnel (09/03/07). Whilst the aim was to train specialists in literature, not all candidates possessed an education specifically in the field, and still fewer had actual experience of writing. Although some *ex-talleristas* took up posts, and the Ministry tried to ensure that all *asesores* had a degree in the humanities, this was not always possible (Chaple, 09/03/07; Rojas, 03/03/07). Part of the subsequent effort by the Ministry was to provide further training for its *asesores* through meetings and the cultural workers' own organization, the Brigada Gómez García (Rego, 1973: 90-93).

Therefore, whilst a 1978 article was able to boast that the revolutionary effort in Cuba had created the optimum conditions for the development of literature through the systematisation of the *talleres literarios*, and their complementary groups the *círculos de lectura* and *círculos de interés literario*, there was also recognition that the mass literary movement was far from perfect (Rivero, 1978: 4). There were still some regions in which the network of *talleres* functioned better, and specifically, the provinces of Havana and Matanzas had the greatest concentration of *asesores* (Buzzi, 1979: 13; Chaple, 09/03/07). There was also acknowledgement of uneven quality in some parts of the movement. *Talleristas* and *asesores* alike complained of the lack of material support for provincial and municipal printed publications, and about the large distance that still existed between experienced writers and the young writer just starting out. Further, one critic maintained that a movement open to the 'masses', although laudable, was not necessarily producing good literature (Rivero, 1978: 5).

Various measures were taken to try to remedy this situation. To begin with, strong links were forged between the *talleres literarios* and the rest of the literary movement. Where possible, writers with more experience were encouraged to get involved with the *talleres*, as it was believed that writers learnt better from other writers. Also, a provincial *taller* was created in Camagüey at a level above the municipal *talleres* and a proposal was aired for a school of *superación* for the best *talleristas*: "es

necesario el análisis por el Ministerio de Cultura de la creación de una Escuela para superar la calidad estética y ética de los miembros de los talleres” (Rivero, 1978: 5). This, it was hoped, would be based on the model of similar institutions in other countries, possibly referring again to the Centro de Escritores in Mexico. Furthermore, the BHS also played a role in raising the profile of the *talleres*. As the national movement expanded over the decade, so the BHS also grew and acted as an incentive for *talleristas* who wanted to gain more recognition (‘este arte joven’, 1976: 10):

...fue creciendo paulatinamente y ya en el año 1971, después del Primer Congreso de Educación y Cultura, comenzó a cobrar un significativo auge, extendiéndose por todo el país en sus tres secciones: literatura, artes plásticas y música. (‘Este arte joven, 1976: 11)

By 1976 it had 567 members. The Havana branch, founded in 1971, supported *talleres literarios* in the capital and from that year ran a ‘national’ *taller* in one of the UNEAC buildings, as well as working with young writers who had already achieved some status, holding one-off *encuentros* between them and their more established counterparts (CNC, 1975b). Provincial branches of the BHS also continued to be involved with the *talleres*, as is shown by the fact that many of the competition winners from the national events were also members (Buzzi, 1979: 280-5).

Therefore, despite its difficulties, there was enough support to help the *talleres literarios* movement to grow and flourish and, towards the end of the decade, it had gained some renown. Throughout the 1970s, the work of *talleristas* had entered the wider public sphere through being featured in magazines, and from 1978 they could count on a yearly publication to showcase the work of the national competition winners. However, in spite of the fact that they were once again run by the Department of Literature, and in spite of the prestige they had gained through exposure, the *talleres literarios* were, during this second half of the decade, clearly considered a movement of amateur or lower level writers, separate from a higher level of writers, represented by the BHS and UNEAC, who were established or thought to be of the *vanguardia*. As well as running the *talleres*, the Department of Literature was also trying to reinvigorate the literary activity of the *vanguardia* after a barren few years (Rojas, 03/03/07). Nevertheless, the distinction between the amateur *tallerista* and the more established level of writer was challenged towards the end of the decade. At the 1977 UNEAC Congress it was decided to create provincial branches of the organisation, and when by 1979 these became fully established, *talleristas* were recruited to make up the new membership (Hernández, 16/04/07).

Expanding numbers, tighter control

From 1971 onwards, the *talleres literarios* came to be regulated by a rigid set of guidelines and directives that set much more specific parameters for what their purpose should be. Therefore, coupled with a change in the way they were administered during this period, the *talleres literarios* as public spheres started to operate within tighter institutional constraints. Moreover, the guidelines produced at this time tend to be referred to in official writing about the *talleres*, as they constituted the founding statements of the national movement (CNC, 1974). Consequently, even decades later, despite considerable change, the *talleres literarios* are often associated with the years 1971-6 and the related discourses. In these, the relationship between the *talleres literarios* and ideology was made explicit.

According to official documents, a *taller* in the 1970s was “un centro de estudio, un laboratorio literario” (CNC, 1974: 10), which had as its purpose to work:

...activamente por el desarrollo y estudio de nuestras propias formas y valores culturales y...eliminar toda manifestación que incida en la penetración cultural y en el diversionismo ideológico. (CNC, 1973: 5)

So, whilst the *talleres* as public spheres were still underwritten by a belief in the importance of rescuing and promoting national cultural values, there was pressure on them to become less plural as spaces. According to the documents, and following developments in both cultural policy and the ethos of participation, the *talleres literarios* were to be a type of laboratory where both a more uniform new revolutionary writing and a new type of revolutionary writer would be produced.

New revolutionary writing: trabajo colectivo

At this time, the ‘trabajo colectivo’ inherent to any *taller literario* was defined as not only the way in which *talleristas* could learn collectively and improve as individual writers but as the way in which literature should be produced under revolutionary conditions. Instead of the traditional idea of the isolated writer and the individual act of literary creation, one leaflet explains “la labor del escritor no tiene por qué ser individualista” (CNC, 1974: 14). Following this argument, the ideal literary practice

was collectively produced texts and, although the idea did not dominate the entire movement, there is evidence that this discourse was taken literally; certain *talleres* composed of groups of workers were encouraged to produce joint *testimonios* about how their workplaces became co-operatives (Leante, 1973: 3). The collective work of the “Taller Literario de Caibarién y Remedios” and the “Taller Literario de Camajuani”, both made up of fishing cooperatives, were two examples of the way in which the *talleres* were now being encouraged to be about a collective, unified vision rather than a plurality of voices engaged in critical debate.

As well as being made into more of a collective practice, the process of writing was also to be opened up to wider collective scrutiny. The competitions between *talleristas* in particular demonstrated this. Besides being large public events, much emphasis was placed on the physical presence of the writer. A competing work was disqualified if the author did not defend it in person (CNC, 1975a: 3). Alongside the general format of the *talleres*, this rule supported the idea that writers should face direct criticism from their reading public without being able to hide behind a printed text or believe themselves to be outside or above wider society. It was hoped that the social pressure of openly debating work would encourage *autocrítica* in writers and the ability to see the faults in their own texts (Buzzi, 1979: 9). This sentiment, taken in conjunction with the change of direction in wider cultural policy, shows that the *talleres* as literary public spheres were to be used as mechanisms for suppressing unfettered, individual creativity.

In its place, the ideal nature of the communication within individual public spheres was also mentioned explicitly by the new discourses. New revolutionary writing had to come from a solid educational base. During this period, a *plan de estudios* was developed so that *talleristas*, as well as reading their own work, would get a basic grounding in national and ‘universal’ literature. The Cuban literary tradition was to be prioritised, with particular attention to be paid to twentieth-century Cuban writers (CNC, 1974: 18). There were also recommendations about what the content of the *talleristas’* work should be. It was made clear that the Revolution itself should be a protagonist: “Las transformaciones que la Revolución está operando en Cuba deben figurar en los escritos” (CNC, 1973: 21). The political nature of their work was emphasised: “El joven escritor trabaja con ideología que estructura literariamente” (CNC, 1974: 6). Furthermore, just as cultural policy was setting new boundaries for communication

within the *talleres*, the changed ethos of participation was also promoting a new ideal form of citizen-*tallerista*.

The new revolutionary writer: not just a writer

During the early 1970s, the leadership wanted the *talleres literarios* as sites for participation to play a role in forming the new type of ideal citizen. It was clear in the guidelines for the *talleres literarios* that these specific ideal citizens were to become the revolutionary writers of the future. In what was a considerable change from the preceding period, the guidelines also defined the type of person that the *talleristas*, and therefore the new writer-citizens, should be. In contrast to traditional definitions of the writer and intellectual, the new discourse concerning a writer's formation downplayed the role of individual talent. There was a strong feeling that being a writer was not a predestined fact and that writers could be formed through "disciplina y estudio" alone (CNC, 1973: 5). However, there was also a tension in this discourse, as, despite the denial of talent, a hierarchy amongst writers was still valued. Individual authors both past and present were celebrated within the *talleres*, and *talleristas* encouraged to 'emulate' the more experienced writers amongst them (CNC, 1974: 13).

By the second half of the decade, there was more recognition that writers "no se fabrican mecánicamente", but there was still little mention of talent (Buzzi, 1979: 15). Instead, it was thought that aspiring writers should aim to be more 'cultured'.

No existe un escritor verdaderamente grande que no sea a la vez un hombre culto, que no sea un serio estudioso de la técnica del género en que se desarrolló un profundo conocedor de la literatura y historia de su patria y de su tradición literaria que como legado nos ha dejado la humanidad. (Buzzi, 1979:16)

Nevertheless, by undermining any sense of writers being somehow special or different, the official documents about the *talleres* not only promoted the idea that anyone from any background could learn to write, but also that they could practice writing whilst still being engaged in their primary job. In other words, writing was not seen as a vocation or an aesthetic art but as another skill to be learnt. Importantly, those who learnt the skill in the *talleres* would also be good revolutionary citizens, and the

shared experience of participation would reinforce this by adding a new dimension to their citizenship.

Thus, the *talleres literarios* were still considered to be sites for socialisation. To this end, there was a clear emphasis on *talleres literarios* helping young writers, although theoretically they were open to people of all ages: “el joven escritor es la célula básica del taller, se forma al mismo tiempo que participa militariamente en la construcción del socialismo” (CNC, 1973: 5). Therefore, a young writer was a hard worker both inside and outside the *taller*. Furthermore, the experience of the *taller* would guide them not only as writers but also politically, constituting: “la formación estética y política del joven escritor” (CNC, 1973: 5). Additionally, there were even guidelines on the specific character attributes the *talleristas* should have, which reflected the contemporary discourse on the exemplary citizen.

El joven escritor en su taller es un trabajador... y un estudiante...y modesto, incisivo, perseverante, ajeno a la espectacularidad y la extravagancia, sabe que no se atribuye la falsa postura del juez situado por encima de la sociedad. (CNC, 1973: 5)

In order to be able to judge whether participants displayed particular characteristics or not, new *talleristas* were required to present letters from CDRs or the workplace to their *asesores* before being allowed to join a *taller*.

Yet, despite these seemingly restrictive regulations, other guidelines highlighted the more productive elements of the *talleres literarios*, and therefore other aspects of their potential impact as public spheres. For example, there was mention of the rights and responsibilities of the *talleristas*. These attempted to create an atmosphere of camaraderie amongst all participants, offer them some recognition of their progress and the potential to see their work in print, as well requiring them to attend regularly and participate actively. Finally, *talleristas* were also expected to act as literary promoters in their locality.

Cada tallerista labora intensamente en su municipio en pro de la difusión de la literatura entre las masas y fábricas, escuelas, unidades militares y centros de trabajo en general constituyen el marco natural de su actividad. (Buzzi, 1979: 9)

Closer supervision

The change in the discourse about the *talleres* coincided with a tightening up of their administration. As well as those run by writers, many of the new *talleres de base* and the municipal *talleres* were run now by *asesores* who received *orientación* and payment from the CNC. Regulations and guidelines produced at the centre were thus passed down to the local cultural workers, whose job it was to run *talleres* or to train others to do so. However, the direct transmission of messages from ‘above’ was not always straightforward and passed through numerous agents and organisations. At the local level, *talleres literarios* were still founded on the initiative of aspiring writers, although these were co-opted into the movement more quickly and received training from workers from the CNC and later the Ministry of Culture. Yet other *talleres* were able to avoid direct contact with the CNC altogether through being affiliated to the cultural arms of other mass organisations.

Furthermore, once actually established, the effectiveness of the centralised regulation of individual *talleres literarios*, and consequently of the institutional constraints on them as public spheres, depended to a large extent on the figure of the *asesor*. It was their personal discretion which set the limits for communication within the *talleres*. Regulation was more apparent when it came to the production of printed material and the public competitions, although this also depended on judgements made by a variety of individuals. *Asesores* were responsible for choosing the work for *boletines* and for deciding who to enter into Encuentro-Debates, which by this time were working in a traditional pyramidal structure. The cultural administration also worked according to this structure, with the national leadership at the top and the *asesores* at the bottom. However, the hierarchy of control did not always function smoothly. After an initial organisational thrust from 1974-6, during the administrative changes of 1976-8 the national administration of the *talleres literarios* lost momentum, until it passed back to the Department of Literature of the new Ministry of Culture (Chaple, 09/03/07).

From then on, there was once again more direction from ‘above’ and an attempt to improve channels of communication between all the agents involved in culture at the local level. This was the year in which Consejos Populares de Cultura were formed in order to facilitate a better coordination between the Directors of Culture and cultural activists from the mass organisations. In this way, although the

channels of communication within the various lines of administrative control improved, they also became more complicated. Problems arose, when, for example, the role of the members of the new provincial UNEACs clashed with that of the *asesores literarios* (Chaple, 09/03/07). Therefore, although this period witnessed a significant increase in the regulation of the *talleres literarios* movement, the effectiveness of this regulation depended on a number of factors. Whilst their plurality as spaces might have been reduced, significantly, the *talleres literarios*, at all levels, were still offering an unprecedented number of people a voice in a public arena and thus an active role in national culture.

The 1980s: 'The Golden Age'

By the beginning of the 1980s the *talleres literarios* movement had gathered real momentum. They now existed in nearly every *municipio* and during the next few years, the conditions would be created for the movement to achieve its 'golden age'. This coincided with, and was closely related to, what is generally agreed to have been a boom in Cuban literature, especially in terms of the appearance of new trends in narrative fiction (Huertas, 1993).³⁰ Many of those in the forefront of the new wave of writers had been *talleristas* themselves during the 1970s and were just beginning to achieve publication. It was in part the continued involvement of these writers with the movement that helped the *talleres* reach their most dynamic moment (González Castañer, 17/04/07; Rojas, 06/03/07). However, a number of other factors also contributed to their dynamism. At this time, the movement was well-funded and supported, so even though it was no longer a policy priority, there was money available to organise events and visits between different *talleres*. Furthermore, as well as the increased attention that literature and writers were receiving in elite spaces, there was also a new effort to engage people with reading on a massive scale, and this gave added impetus to the *talleres literarios*.

Importantly, this renewed impetus also coincided with the wider developments in both cultural policy and the ethos of participation, making the 1980s a period during which the nature of the institutional constraints on the *talleres literarios* as public spheres also changed. Over the course of the decade, as a result of a combination of pressures from 'above' and 'below', as well as various administrative

³⁰ The 1980s witnessed the 'primer forum de literatura cubana' (1983) and the 'forum de la crítica y investigación literaria' (1987) (Huertas, 1993: 17).

changes, the *talleres literarios*, as literary public spheres, were able to make a considerable impact. By 1989, if no longer at their height, the *talleres literarios* represented a diverse and expansive network.

Continued expansion

The changing attitude towards literary production during the 1980s facilitated the continued expansion of the *talleres literarios*, even as they were reduced to the status of minor component of a newly enlarged national literary programme (ICL, 1986). Furthermore, although this was the period during which they had the closest links to writers considered to be of the *vanguardia*, it was also the time that the *talleres* became more clearly defined as a primarily amateur movement within a secondary circuit of literary production. In 1985, the *talleres literarios* were put under the administrative control of the department responsible for the Casas de Cultura y el Movimiento de Aficionados, which had been set up in 1978, although they had begun to receive methodological guidance from the Literature section of the Centro-Docente Metodológico of the same department from 1981 (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 27). However, it was from 1980-5, when they were still run by the Department of Literature, that extra money and attention was given to the *talleres literarios*, and they were able to thrive.

After new *asesores literarios* had been employed to coordinate literary activities in every *municipio*, they were able to support the establishment of many new *talleres de base* during the 1980s. These continued to be founded wherever there was interest within factories and other workplaces, and gradually there was also a new trend towards setting up *talleres literarios* in schools, prisons and other organisations such as ANCI, Cuba's organisation for the blind (Heras León, 1987: 5). In some of the larger work organisations such as the Ministry of the Interior or the FAR, the network of *talleres* had grown to such an extent that they were able to hold their own internal national competitions as a prelude to the main event. They did this for the first time in 1986 (Heras León, 1987: 5). Whilst most of these *talleres literarios de base* could count on assistance from a trained *asesor literario*, not all could benefit from regular, direct contact with a literary worker. For example, the workers of the famous Hotel Nacional in Havana had a *taller literario*, although they could only receive guidance over the phone from an *asesor literario* ('En la literatura se adentran...', 1982: 5). Nevertheless, the incorporation of such diverse groups into the official movement had the consequence of creating more

literary public spheres, whilst increasing yet further the number of people actively involved in producing national culture.

At a level above the broadening grassroots movement of the *talleres literarios de base*, the number of municipal *talleres* also continued to grow at this time, especially, but not exclusively, in cities. In particular, this period witnessed an increase in the number of genre-specific *talleres literarios*, both affecting the kind of communication within them as public spheres and pluralising the movement overall. Although *talleres literarios* dedicated entirely to *repentistas*, a Cuban form of popular poetry, and the traditional Cuban form of *décima* had existed since the 1970s, the early 1980s saw the revival and promotion of other genres such as science fiction. The Taller Literario “Oscar Hurtado” and Taller Literario “Jules Verne” were both created in different *municipios* in Havana (‘Ciencia Ficción Cubana’, n.d.).

In 1982, literary activity at this local level also received a boost from the creation of Casas del Escritor. Examples of these could be found in Marianao, 10 de octubre and Regla in Havana, with two in Matanzas, another in San Antonio de los Baños, and a total of around twenty in the whole country (Hernández, 16/04/07; Hernández Ortega, 06/05/07; Melo, 17/03/07). Falling under the responsibility of local *asesores literarios* these Casas were spaces for writers, and the promotion and dissemination of literature through public events, although they soon provided the space for new *talleres literarios*. For example, a Casa del Escritor was founded in Matanzas at the provincial level in 1984 “a servir de sede a cuantas actividades desarrollarán el prominente movimiento de escritores de la ciudad” (‘Ediciones Vigía’, 2006).³¹

Therefore, it was at the municipal level that the *talleres literarios* as a movement was most dynamic. Throughout the decade, different *talleres* were able to benefit from available transport and the opportunity to visit each other, as well as a privileged access to writers, many of whom were able to travel across the country to give talks to *talleristas* (Chaple, 09/03/07). Consequently, separate literary

³¹ Another was founded in Matanzas as late as 1995: “... se encuentra ubicada en el foco cultural de municipio, con el propósito de que los escritores tuviesen un local donde realizar su labor creadora, es un espacio de intercambio y diálogo; existen dos talleres literarios y se realizan diversas actividades afines con la creación artística: tertulias, peñas, promociones de libros, charlas, conferencias, así encuentros debates y concursos” (DPC de Matanzas, 2008).

public spheres were able to merge and interact, thereby both incorporating a wider range of voices and increasing their potential impact on literary culture. Also during this period, key figures such as Heras León and Salvador Redonet worked closely with the *talleres*, offering lectures on literature and narrative techniques to young *talleristas*, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the movement and the literary developments in the *vanguardia*. Yet, at the same time, *talleres literarios* were still focused on stimulating literary culture in the locality, and many *talleristas* were mobilised during the 1980s in new campaigns to engage people with literature. In fact, municipal *talleristas* were represented at both ends of the literary spectrum; they helped out in the 1984 mass *campana de lectura*, and were also asked to attend prestigious UNEAC congresses (Calzada Fowler, n.d; Rodríguez Alemán, 1983: 2).

As well as the dynamism at the municipal level, several more provincial *talleres literarios* were created so that the best *talleristas* from different *municipios* had a chance to meet, work and interact with each other. They were part of a drive to improve the quality of the communication and learning within the *talleres* and by 1986 were operational in six provinces. They joined the 154 *talleres* at municipal level with 753 *aficionados* participating in them and the further 521 *talleres de base* which boasted 5580 participants (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 27). Furthermore, by 1985 there were 283 literary *asesores* working at the municipal level, with 20 at provincial level and 4 at the national level (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 27). The number of people participating at all levels of the competition system and the Encuentro-Debates Nacionales also increased year on year, with one even going ahead despite coinciding with Hurricane Kate ('En la fragua de los talleres', 1986: 75). These events continued to be attended by many writers and top cultural officials, and bestowed with prestige and importance, even though the *talleristas* were considered to be some way behind the cultural *vanguardia* (Heras León, 29/03/07). The year 1988 saw confirmation of this prestige, when delegations responsible for *talleres literarios* in other Latin American countries took part in a seminar to learn from the Cuban experience (Heras León, 1989: 5).

However, after the administrative changes of mid-decade, the rate of expansion of the *talleres* slowed down somewhat as the Ministry's efforts became concentrated less on the amateur artistic movement and more on supporting the swelling ranks of the *vanguardia* (Rojas, 06/03/07). As there were now more artists and writers than ever before, it was decided not to train any new *instructores de arte* for

the *aficionado* movement. Similarly, no further literary *asesores* were hired and now they came under the administrative control of the municipal Casas de Cultura. Yet, despite this change in policy emphasis, the *talleres* movement continued to have some force during the second half of the decade, although it was no longer the principle focus for aspiring writers. Representative of this was the fact that, at this time, the BHS, that had developed parallel to the *talleres literarios*, was transformed into a new organisation that distanced itself somewhat from the main movement. It merged with several other cultural organisations in 1986 and became the Asociación Hermanos Saíz (AHS, n.d.). Instead of being primarily directed towards general cultural promotion, this organisation had the specific function of providing support and organisational space for young artists and writers already working (González Castañer, 28/03/07).

A question of quality and space

Although the *talleres literarios* were now seen as a movement focussed on amateur writers and those just starting out on their career, this did not prevent a continuation of the discussion of the issue of quality within the movement, a discussion that had begun during the 1970s. In fact, a combination of factors meant that the issue was intensified at this time, including the changing attitudes towards cultural production and the criticism of state structures, as well as the increase in the number of *talleres* and participants. Very early in the 1980s, actions were taken in response to the criticisms that had been made of the *talleres literarios* movement in the late 1970s. In 1981, Imeldo Álvarez García spoke of “la urgencia de un replanteo capaz de encauzar el movimiento sobre bases y métodos más idóneos y exigentes” (Heras León, 1982: 7). A meeting was called with senior figures in the state Department of Literature, such as Miguel Cossío Woodward, Sigifredo Álvarez Conesa and Carlos Martí Brenes and the provincial literary specialists, and new guidelines were developed for all literary activities at municipal level, including the *talleres literarios*.

Although for many the movement started to improve considerably after this point, there were still claims that it was lagging behind developments in the wider literary scene. For example, it was recognised that competition winners of the *talleres literarios* did not automatically progress to become the next wave of young, professional writers (Heras León, 29/03/07). Yet this focus on what was

happening in the competitions ignores what was occurring at the level of individual *taller*. As had always been the case in the *talleres literarios* movement, although now to a greater extent, many of the *talleristas* who would later become established kept their participation at the municipal level.³² Whilst some may have competed in the lower level competitions, they tended not to compete in the national events and, particularly after 1986, left to join the AHS when they had reached the required standard (Heras León, 1986: 8). This confirmed the fact that the *talleres literarios* had become primarily for amateur writers and those who, whilst they remained participants, were unlikely to gain status or recognition in the more prestigious organisations or publications.

There were further accusations about the development of specific genres in the *talleres literarios* movement. In particular, it was said that the writing of theatrical pieces within the *talleres literarios* did not match the innovations in professional theatre at the time; this reflected a wider criticism that the *instuctores* and *asesores* within the amateur movements were not up-to-date with the latest ideas and theories and thus were not able to pass them onto participants (Heras León, 1984; 6; Melo, 17/03/07; Rojas, 03/03/07). Additionally, some writers, with hindsight, believe that the format of the *talleres literarios* continued to stifle more experimental literary work, especially at the competition level (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07; Melo, 17/03/07). According to them, some of the aesthetic ideas and taboo subjects associated with the cultural policy of the early 1970s continued to influence the judges at *talleres literarios* competitions well into the 1980s (Fernández Robaina, 11/05/07). Although a number of different writers were invited in rotation to be judges, including former *talleristas*, a number of figures who had played a role in the establishment of the movement in the early 1970s remained influential a decade later, including César Leante, David Buzzi and Sigifredo Álvarez Conesa. The exception was Heras León who was not part of the movement in the early 1970s but who subsequently played a key role within it.

Therefore, more clearly than during the 1970s, the *talleres literarios* movement in the 1980s represented a second lower-level circuit of literary practice because of its size and separation from more prestigious organisations. However, this did not diminish the *talleristas*' belief in their intrinsic value nor the value of their role as literary public spheres. In fact, an overall increase in confidence

³² Almost all of the young writers who would burst onto the literary scene as the *novísimos* in the early 1990s were attending *talleres literarios* in the 1980s (Redonet, 1993: 16).

within the *talleres*, some of which had been operating for over a decade, coupled with the enthusiasm of an increasing number of new participants, meant that new demands were made from within the movement for *talleristas* to be given more recognition, space and support for their work in the wider public sphere. As the movement developed, the expectations of those long-term *talleristas* who chose to stay in the movement were also greatly raised. *Talleristas* felt empowered enough to demand access to publishing that went beyond just local *boletines*, based on their merit as *aficionado* writers. In 1982, a prominent *tallerista*, Leonardo Abaroa, leader of the Taller Literario “Aracelio Iglesias” in Old Havana, demanded that there should be more support from cultural institutions for the *talleres*, more talks given to them by prestigious writers and more opportunities to publish (‘¿Cuál debe ser la ayuda a los talleres literarios?’, 1982: 6).

In response, the Director of Literature for the province of Havana defended the *status quo*, blaming a general lack of resources, but also suggested that the *talleres literarios* could function well on limited funds. Publication depended very much on the talent of the *tallerista*, he said, and Havana was actually a very successful province in the movement with 6 *asesores* working over 15 *municipios* (‘¿Cuál debe ser la ayuda a los talleres literarios?’, 1982: 6). However, in theory, the national cultural administration was in favour of offering more support to the movement (Heras León, 1984: 7). Accordingly, some of the more long-term *talleristas* started to gain limited opportunities to publish. This had the consequence of once again blurring the distinction between *aficionados* or *talleristas* and other writers over the claim to the title *escritor*. Yet, unlike in the 1970s, the ambiguity over the title *escritor* did not now derive from any definition imposed from ‘above’ but because of the challenge posed to conventional notions from grassroots writers themselves. Still, by the 1980s there was a difference between the *talleristas* who stayed in the movement and competed within its internal hierarchy and those who used it as a stage in their formation before trying to establish themselves further by gaining membership to higher level organisations such as the BHS, later the AHS and UNEAC.

A return to individuality and the benefits of popular participation

The language relating to the *talleres literarios* entirely changed during the 1980s, reflecting a relaxation of the constraints that had been placed on their operation as public spheres during the 1970s.

In terms of their overall function, from early in the decade, the guidelines laid down that the *talleres literarios* were not “escuelas para hacer escritores” but were about improving and perfecting the skills of people who already had an aptitude for writing, whether these were amateurs or aspiring new writers (Heras León, 1982: 8). *Talleristas* were referred to as *escritores aficionados* or *escritores noveles* (Heras León, 1984: 5). It was accepted that the *talleres literarios* would never really become a ‘mass’ movement, unlike the activities that concentrated on reading, such as the *círculos literarios* and the *círculos de lectores* (Heras León, 1982: 8). This change coincided with the emphasis on quality and a greater level of selectivity. At the municipal level, aspiring *talleristas* had to provide proof that they had already been writing before being allowed to join a *taller* (Chaple, 09/03/07). Concurrently, the question of individual talent amongst *talleristas* was reintroduced into official discourse, alongside a concept of literary aesthetics which stressed more than just the political value of literature. Thus talent, perceived by *asesores* or other writers acting as *jurados*, became a central way of distinguishing between *talleristas*, between those who won internal competitions and those who might be able to pursue writing more seriously.

The new approach to talent also changed the discourse about what kind of communication should take place within a *taller*. It was no longer suggested that writing could be taught directly in a uniform way. Instead, *talleres* were about learning the skills necessary for improving one’s writing, which were first and foremost critical reading skills (Heras León, 1982: 8; 1984: 6). These could be gained from the analysis of literary texts, and the work of other *talleristas*, and crucially they involved a process of learning to pass value judgements about not only the content of a text but also its form and style. Thus, the emphasis returned to critical discussion and debate within the *talleres*, allowing once again for a plurality of voices within them as literary public spheres. Related to this, there was increasing mention of the need for *talleristas* to learn about literary ‘techniques’, in order to recognise them in others’ work and to help them structure their own writing.

The concept of *técnicas literarias*, in particular, began to be central to the work of the *talleres literarios* (‘¿Cuál debe ser la ayuda a los talleres literarios?’, 1982: 6). Drawn from developments within literary criticism, and an increasing openness to the work of theorists of writing from North and Latin America as well as Eastern Europe, a concept of writing techniques was to form the basis of the training of

literary *asesores*, whose continuing professional development was now considered the most important factor for improving the quality of the movement (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 26). Consequently, the influx of new ideas significantly broadened the scope for communication within the *talleres*, the boundaries of which were no longer set directly by ideological directives from above.

However, it was still believed that the *talleres literarios* would have a transformative affect on citizens. Yet, instead of producing writers directly, it was now presumed that the *talleres* would produce critical readers, out of which some writers would emerge. Thus, echoing changes in broader cultural policy, in the new discourse, the writer was afforded a sense of individuality, which would arise from a critical approach developed during the collective experience of a *taller literario*. In this way, it was recognised that although the *talleres literarios* had spawned new literary figures and created an alternative publication system, which in turn had raised the quality of the literature they produced, the main role of the *talleres literarios* was to produce better readers in the community (Rodríguez Núñez, 1986: 26). Abel Prieto, speaking in 1987, said the fact that the *talleres* trained both writers and readers was “la doble ganancia para la cultura cubana de hoy” (Heras León, 1988: 9).

Related to this change in focus, was a reduced emphasis on the figure of the ideal *tallerista* that had prevailed in the 1970s. Instead of the guidelines ordaining that *talleristas* should display certain exemplary behavioural characteristics both inside and outside of the *taller*, it was hoped that the process of participating in the *taller* itself would produce a transformation in the *talleristas*' attitudes and behaviour. This still linked the *talleres literarios* directly to socialisation. However, reflecting the gradual return in the wider ideological framework to the idea of *conciencia*, the discourse no longer proscribed behaviour but relied on the more abstract notion that participation in the *talleres literarios* would produce citizens who shared the same values. Again, this allowed for greater individuality amongst *talleristas*, as shared values did not necessarily mean uniform behaviour. Imeldo Álvarez suggested in 1982 that the *talleres* had already helped to shape beliefs: “es evidente que el mayor éxito de los *talleres literarios* es de carácter político. Ellos han servido para cohesionar la visión política de sus miembros” (Heras León, 1982: 9).

Nevertheless, there were still hints, both in this statement by a stalwart of the movement, and in official discourse, of the persistence of ideological motives behind the change of focus. In fact, there was still an attempt to set some limits for the communication within the *talleres literarios*. The new guidelines still warned of the danger of possible *diversionismo ideológico* in the work of *talleristas* (Heras León, 1982: 9). Yet, at the same time, there was also a shift in the discourse away from placing restrictions on both communication and participation and towards a greater emphasis on extolling the virtues and benefits of participation in the *talleres literarios* for society as a whole. Minister of Culture, Armando Hart, confirmed this, when he stated that the *talleres literarios* were about “participación popular” which was of direct benefit to local communities (Heras León, 1984: 5). In the same speech, Hart spoke about how *talleres literarios* were vital for the development of local literary culture. He supported the production of more *Boletines* and any other *talleres*-related activity that was directed towards “el desarrollo integral de la cultura literaria en la localidad” (Heras León, 1986: 7).

In other words, although it had always been considered a function of the *talleres literarios*, creating the objective conditions for a culture of literary activity in communities was once again their main objective, rather than them being sites for regulating subjectivity. Also, by the 1980s, there was a return in discourse to an emphasis on the social benefits that the much extended popular movement of *talleres literarios* provided, and new weight was given to this discourse after the 1982 UNESCO world conference on cultural policy which focussed on culture, identity and development (Heras León, 1989: 9). However, this specific change in the discourse was also a way of officially describing processes that were occurring organically within the spaces of the *talleres*. As a consequence, the perceived fruitfulness of collective engagement with literature, for both individuals and their communities, fed into the decision to set up more *talleres* in schools, prisons and other centres.³³ In particular, there was an increased stress on the “relaciones humanas muy constructivas” thought to be forged inside them (Heras León, 1982: 10; MINCULT, 1988: 31).

These new discourses about writing and the *talleres literarios* were disseminated through the movement by both structural change and the influx of new people and writers who started to work

³³ The *talleres* and other initiatives were talked about in terms of their *función social* and “la inversión instructiva y creadora del tiempo libre de la población y muy especialmente la juventud” (MINCULT, 1988: 31).

within the movement as competition judges, visiting speakers and *asesores*. Yet, although this process of renewal and development helped new ideas and concepts filter into the movement, as we have seen, it was not necessarily evenly distributed across all the *talleres*. To a large extent, the movement still relied on trained *asesores* who were not writers themselves and who may have held their posts for a considerable amount of time. Therefore, whether they were able to deliver the emphasis on critical reading skills and writing techniques to *talleristas* depended on their personality and educational background as well as their willingness to undergo new training. Ultimately it was still the *asesores*, combined with the groups of *talleristas* themselves, who determined the way in which the *talleres literarios* operated as plural spaces.

In summary, despite being greatly relaxed, institutional constraints on the *talleres literarios* as public spheres remained in place. Communication between the *talleres literarios* and the administration remained a two-way process; guidelines on the *talleres* were still produced centrally and *asesores* were required to write reports on *talleristas* and their progress. However, after the restructuring mid-decade, multiple lines of administrative control also put added pressure on *asesores*, as they found their time divided between the task of promoting literature as directed by the new Instituto Cubano del Libro, and guiding the amateur movement directed by the ministerial department responsible for the Casas de Cultura y el Movimiento de Aficionados.

The 1990s and beyond: crisis, recovery and two-tier talleres

The widespread material shortages during the deep crisis of the early 1990s *período especial* meant the virtual destruction of the *talleres literarios* as a national movement. Overnight, the logistics of planning and funding the many trips between *talleres* and the different level competitions between them became extremely difficult. Attendance dropped at all levels, as problems with black-outs, a lack of transport and new pressures on people's time made voluntary participation in a leisure activity such as a *taller* less likely. As the attention of the administration was focussed on more immediate concerns, and many established writers who had been involved in the movement were forced to devote themselves to more private matters, the *talleres literarios* appeared rapidly to lose much of the prestige they had gained in the 1980s (Hernández, 16/04/07). This was both confirmed and exacerbated when the book containing

the winning work of the national competition ceased publication in 1990, reflecting the wider near-collapse of the national publishing industry.

Nevertheless, despite the reduction in the number of trips and provincial and national-level competitions, individual *talleres* did not themselves disappear. Wherever there were willing volunteers, a suitable space and a willing *asesor*, *talleres* continued to meet during the 1990s, and some even increased in local importance as many people, especially young people in the cities, searched for public spheres in which they could express themselves in the changed environment (Melo, 17/03/07). In Havana, these were most likely to be *talleres* at the municipal level (Melo, 17/03/07). For example, during this period, groups of young people in the *municipios* of Habana del Este and 10 de Octubre independently joined *talleres literarios* in order to work on experimental poetry.

At the same time, however, the reduced funds available for cultural activities, and the weakening of institutional controls meant that many spaces previously used for *talleres literarios*, such as the Casas de Cultura, now became the locations for other types of community organisation that were emerging through the need for economic survival. Whilst this facilitated the appearance of a variety of cultural forms, some of which were fairly new to the island, it took time and space away from the *talleres literarios* (Rojas, 06/03/07).³⁴ The early 1990s, therefore, witnessed a drastic reduction in the space, both physical and within publications, in which writers, established, aspiring and amateur, could meet and interact. At the same time, the exchange and discussion of work popularised by the *talleres literarios* had become such common practice that some writers searched for different, non-institutional settings in which to meet.

However, as the leadership responded to the crisis, it attempted to resolve some of these issues, beginning with a restructuring of part of the cultural administration at the national level. Furthermore, there was a considerable change in policy emphasis as the focus moved from developing literary and artistic culture *per se* towards the explicit social benefits of encouraging local-level participation for the development of individuals and communities hit by the crisis. In fact, a new language associating culture with development emerged, which was expressed in annual conferences and summarised in a

³⁴ These included dog walking shows, flower markets and other activities (Rojas, 06/06/07)

national programme entitled *Cultura y Desarrollo* (1995). As community organising had proved to be an efficient strategy for coping with the crisis, the cultural administration was reorganised to reflect this. A separate administrative body was created to engage in the task of promoting cultural work in the community. Instead of the department responsible for the Aficionados y Casas de Cultura, a new Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura was established in 1995.³⁵ Working in tandem with its provincial and municipal level offices and the newly-formed consejos populares at the *barrio* level, it developed the cultural strand of the *trabajo comunitario* thought to be necessary for the survival and development of communities.

At first this meant incorporating some of the popular forms of cultural expression that had emerged organically during the early 1990s, but from mid-decade onwards, policy reverted to encouraging participation in the traditional forms of literature and art (Rojas, 06/03/07). It was at this time that there was a concerted effort to revive the *talleres literarios* as integral to the reformed and revitalised Casas de Cultura and *movimiento de aficionados* (Rojas, 06/03/07). However, the experience of the first half of the decade had encouraged a change in focus for all cultural activity at the community level, including the *talleres literarios*. From that point on, although still ultimately centrally administered, the institutional constraints on communication within the *talleres literarios* as literary public spheres were considerably relaxed. The *talleres* were decentralised, in the sense that individual *talleres* and *asesores* were allowed to develop their content in direct response to the needs of the local community, instead of all following the same programme.

Furthermore, *talleres literarios* were promoted as mechanisms for socio-cultural development and were encouraged to incorporate more ‘popular’ elements into conventional literary forms, as long as these were an ‘authentic’ expression of Cuban cultural identity (Rojas, 06/03/07). For the *talleres literarios* this meant the inclusion of more oral literature, as well as the traditional promotion of the *décima*; other forms were included, such as popular forms of *pregón* and oral story telling (Melo, 17/03/07). Thus the *talleres literarios* were promoted once again for their core value as sites for the rescue and continuation of national literary tradition, and any reference to their ideological function disappeared. As more and

³⁵ It was briefly the Consejo Nacional de Cultura Comunitaria during the early 1990s.

more people were encouraged once again to participate, the potential for the *talleres literarios* to be truly plural spaces was also significantly enhanced, as was their impact.

From that point on, the *talleres literarios* started to recover as a national movement, a process which was given a further boost when Fidel Castro announced the priority that would be given to culture in the revolutionary process and initiated the *Batalla de Ideas*. The year 1996 witnessed the first Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios to have taken place since 1990, and these events subsequently returned to being annual, although with fewer resources they never regained the same festive nature they had exhibited during the 1980s (Rojas, 06/03/07). From this moment on, an effort was made by the leadership, including the new Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, a writer and former *tallerista* himself, to increase the overall number of *talleristas* so that they would reach and even exceed the number of participants achieved in the 1980s. The effort appears to have been successful. In 2005, the number of participants in *talleres literarios de creación* stood at around 47,000. However, this figure was largely augmented by the many new *talleres* which were set up for children and young people (CNCC, 2005a). The inability of initiatives like the *talleres literarios* to attract the participation of certain sections of the population has remained a source of concern (Linares, 1999).

From the late 1990s on, the movement once again began to thrive. However, its new focus on community participation, as well as continuing economic pressures, meant that, also at the municipal level, it did not recover the dynamism and connections with established writers that it had enjoyed during the 1980s, even though a considerable number continued to serve as judges and *asesores*. For the first time, *talleres* were divided into different age groups, with *asesores* in each *municipio* being made responsible for setting up *talleres* for: children, adolescents and adults. In 2001, children started to have their own national competitions, the Encuentro-Debates Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles. Yet more *talleres literarios* were set up in schools, prisons, other health facilities and *círculos de abuelos*. Ultimately, all still came under the administration of the Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura; however, at a more local level, a *taller* could still be affiliated to another organisation such as the FAR or MININT. As before, writers and other interested parties continued to establish *talleres* on their own initiative, with the *talleres* becoming formally affiliated to the movement later on. This led to many new independent *talleres*.

As we have seen, the precedent for more independent *talleres literarios* had begun in the 1980s, but by the late 1990s the conditions were right for these to increase in number again, as established writers such as Eduardo Heras León and Jorge Aguiar set up independent *talleres* in Havana. In particular, the *taller* established by Heras León in 1998 was aimed at offering a specialised course in narrative techniques to young writers who had demonstrated a proven aptitude for writing (Heras León, 29/03/07).³⁶ During that year he gave a trial run of his course, inviting several writers who had already published but who were still young to participate. Later, Heras León was asked to report on the *taller* to a meeting of the UNEAC executive committee at which Fidel Castro was present; he describes the experience as

...un diálogo vivo, intenso, inolvidable, acerca del taller, las técnicas narrativas, su utilidad y empleo y la posibilidad de ampliar el espectro del curso para hacerlo accesible a una mayor cantidad de jóvenes de todo el país. (Heras León, 2001: 5)

Afterwards, he was asked to launch the leadership's new televised popular education programme, *Universidad para todos*, with a course on *técnicas narrativas*.

Following the success of this programme, which also boosted the membership of the *talleres*, Heras León was given the opportunity to develop his *taller* into the Centro de Formación Literaria Jorge Onelio Cardoso (Centro Onelio). According to Heras León, the Centro Onelio was the final realisation of a dream which had begun in the 1960s to set up a literary training institution modelled after the Centro de Escritores Mexicanos. Other established writers from the cities, taking their lead from Heras León's example, also established specialised *talleres literarios*, and in the year 2000-1, it was decided within the cultural administration, specifically the CNCC and the ICL, to support the foundation of similar *talleres* all over the country. In this way, new *talleres literarios de vanguardia* were established in every province. Although they retained the *taller* format as part of their course, these *talleres*, run for specific lengths of time by established writers, contained a significant taught component designed by the writer. Different *talleres de vanguardia* have focused on the history of poetry, or the practice of

³⁶ Heras León had briefly attempted to run a 'higher-level' *taller* with established writers in 1989 in Centro Cultural Alejo Carpentier, however he said it failed as an enterprise because the writers had very fixed opinions and could not reach consensus.

writing children's literature, for example, as well as continuing the obligatory reading of, and commentary on, *talleristas'* work (CNCC, 2003).

The advent of these special *talleres*, which have proved to be very popular (a *taller de vanguardia* run by the writers David Curbelo, Susana Haug and Roberto Manzano in Havana has attracted more applications year on year), has led to a two-tier system for the *talleres literarios* and therefore created new divisions between literary public spheres. At one level have been the *talleres* run by *asesores* employed by the *municipios*, public spheres theoretically open to mass participation and under the same kind of institutional constraints, and at a higher level have been the *talleres de vanguardia*, more exclusive public spheres run by writers who have been supported by a combination of the provincial sections of the ICL and CNCC, but which are ultimately under a different kind of institutional constraint (CNCC, 2003). The newer *talleres de vanguardia* in some way responded to the discussions about the quality of the educational content of the *talleres* started in the 1980s.

Also, as they have run on the basis of content designed by individual writers, they have been plural spaces by definition, encouraging a much broader range of communication arising from theoretical sources, as well as the *talleristas'* own creations. However, these *talleres* have only benefited a select group of *talleristas* seeking to learn from established writers, reducing greatly the emphasis on local literary tradition and culture found in the municipal *talleres*. Instead, the higher level *talleres de vanguardia* have tapped directly into the national tradition, thereby offering the opportunity for *talleristas* to gain a higher level of cultural capital through participation. Nevertheless, both kinds of *taller* remain closely related to each other through the value they place on literary tradition overall, and the public spheres they create for people to participate in its continuation.

The opportunity to participate in *talleres de vanguardia* is not necessarily evenly spread throughout the country. For most people outside of the major cities, the main municipal-based system remains their most accessible option, reinforcing their broad reach over the population of aspiring and amateur writers. In contrast, the *talleres de vanguardia* created literary public spheres for those already higher up the writing hierarchy. As a step above the main system, they have attracted young writers who are already members of the AHS. For, although this organisation continued throughout the 1990s and

2000s, at times it entered into crisis and its members both felt excluded from the wider public sphere and lacked space for literary events and the discussion of work (González Castañer, 17/04/07). In general, the *talleres de vanguardia* added a new personal link between the writers involved in the first and second circuits of literary production, after these had largely been broken during the early 1990s. This happened just at a time when restructuring within the publishing system was also encouraging overlap between both circuits. However, it did not mean that the *talleres de vanguardia* enjoyed a more privileged relationship with the publishing system than the rest of the movement (Rojas, 06/03/07).

Throughout the 1990s, as a response to the crisis in the ability of national publishing houses to produce books during the *período especial*, new provincial publishing houses were set up. Using old machines, these decentralised publishing houses were able to provide new space for established writers who were on waiting lists to be published at the crisis-stricken national level, whilst also reserving space for the best work of local *talleristas*. Following the example of Ediciones Vigía, which was founded in Matanzas in 1985, several Casas del Escritor were converted at this time into Centros de Promoción Literaria which housed publishing facilities, convened a literary prize and disseminated new literature in the area through presentations, activities and events. Although their print-runs were small, and their distribution systems were less effective, the more community-focussed outlook of these Centros has given the second circuit of literary production more permanence, by allowing it a greater presence within the wider public sphere.

By the 2000s, the *talleres literarios* had become so much part of the social imaginary that their existence, as well as the need for their existence, was taken for granted by most Cubans either involved or interested in literature. Often groups of amateur writers, or writers just starting out, wanted to create their own *taller literario*, and in a way comparable to the situation during the 1960s, could do so with minimal institutional constraints. This was the case with the *taller* run by literary critic Emmanuel Tornés, which was formed in 2004 at the request of some students at the School of Journalism. After it had been running for a while, it became incorporated into the official system through the FEU's cultural programme, although Tornés directed the *taller* as he wished and invited several writer friends to give talks. Similarly, there have been a number of other occasional or independent *talleres* in addition to the official, structured *talleres* system. These take place sometimes in the homes of

established writers, examples being those run by Alberto Guerra and Lizette Clavelo for young people in their own houses, although it is always under the auspices of the local cultural administration.

Summary: The talleres literarios as literary public spheres

This chapter has shown that, throughout their existence, the *talleres literarios* as literary public spheres have operated within a changing framework of institutional constraints. These institutional constraints, in the form of discourses, have broadly mirrored changes in the wider context, in cultural policy and in the ethos of participation. In a more direct way, however, these discourses have been filtered through the structures of the cultural administration responsible for running the *talleres literarios* and were ultimately transmitted by the individual *asesores* who led each *taller*. During the 1960s, these institutional constraints were minimal, and relied on the wider ideological framework of the period. However, the discourses and structures of control started to increase visibly during the 1970s and affected, at least officially, the degree of plurality that the *talleres literarios* could enjoy as spaces, as well as outlining an ideal definition of the citizen-*tallerista*. At this time, the *talleres* were expected to promote collective literary practice and to form writers out of all who participated. Yet as the movement developed, discourses about the *talleres* became more descriptive of their actual functions, without ever losing an idealistic dimension.

It was argued that the *talleres literarios* could not produce writers because this required individual talent and creativity, although the collective process of a *taller* was still considered to perform a number of important functions. During the post-1990s period, the discourse about the main *talleres literarios* movement changed once again, concentrating less on their relationship to the literary process and more on their role in the community. By this time, discourse was not so focussed on restricting communication within the *talleres* and instead mentioned the benefits of the process of participation for individuals. In general, although discourses have generated various meanings for participation in the *talleres literarios* over time, the core values of these meanings, such as literature, nation, participation, solidarity amongst participants and self-improvement, found in the generic *taller literario* format, remained constant throughout. Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that the institutional constraints on the *talleres literarios* were also what enabled them to exist in the first place. Although many of the

original *talleres* were started on the initiative of aspiring writers, the support given to them, and the establishment of later *talleres* by the cultural administration, led to the creation of an expansive network of public spheres.

Active literary culture in every corner of the island

The function of the *talleres literarios* as public spheres has been to give unprecedented numbers of people an active role in national literary culture. In line with cultural policy objectives, the *talleres literarios* have contributed to the development of literary culture in every corner of Cuba. Once the conditions for their existence had been met, the number of *talleres* continually expanded, thereby creating public spheres where literature was not only created and discussed, but also promoted in the community by *talleristas*. Thus, importantly, the *talleres literarios* contributed to a literary culture which was both active and based on a number of collective activities, very different from a literary culture based on a small number of agents who are writers or involved in book production, and a larger group of private consumers or readers. As a more active and inclusive movement, the *talleres literarios* also contributed to the national literary process in several ways. In addition to promoting literary engagement in the community, until the 1980s and to a lesser extent after the mid-1990s, they provided sites for dialogic communication between established writers and other, younger or less experienced *talleristas*, many of whom would have been their readers and some of whom would later become established writers themselves.

The *talleres literarios* also created a second circuit of literary production within the wider public sphere. This consisted primarily of printed versions of the work of its amateur writers but also of the annual book published by an elite publishing house between 1978 and 1989, as well as the many other minor and major publications of the work of *talleristas*. During certain periods, specifically during the early 1970s and again in 1979, *talleristas* were considered to represent the literary *vanguardia* and their work was valued on a par with that of established writers and members of UNEAC. However, in the main, the history of the *talleres literarios* shows that there was a clear hierarchy of writers, prizes and publishing spaces in Cuba, which evolved over time and which the *talleres* played a role creating. Over the decades, as more *talleres* were established, and there were more aspiring writers coming through, a

more stratified hierarchy started to form between the *talleristas* and writers who were gaining reputations for themselves through being invited to join organisations such as BHS, AHS and ultimately UNEAC.

Nevertheless, as the movement developed, the expectations of *talleristas* were also raised and they started to demand chances and spaces to publish. Whenever they got the opportunity to do this, a challenge was made to the conventional notion of a writer and distinctions between writers had to be made by other means. Over time, and with changes in the cultural administration, the *talleres literarios* have not only become more numerous and diverse as spaces, but also more clearly an amateur movement. Despite this, it remained a highly prestigious movement as long as it could count on financial support and the involvement of many important figures. In its current incarnation, the prestige is mainly reserved for the *talleres de vanguardia*, the municipal system having other priorities. Nevertheless, at the same time, at any period in their history, the nature of any one *taller* has depended to a considerable extent on the individuals involved in it.

Chapter Five

Cultural Citizens Belonging to a Literary World

The Experience of the Municipal *Talleres Literarios*

“la literatura cubana ha sido capaz de mantener un nivel creativo en estos cincuenta años con mejores y peores momentos, en gran medida, debido a los talleres literarios” (Hernández Ortega, 06/05/07).

“...nuestros talleres deben priorizar los valores, revelar los ideales y preparar al hombre para la vida. Pensamos que en la Cuba de hoy, donde la tarea socio-política fundamental está encaminada a preservar las conquistas de la Revolución, el fortalecimiento de valores verdaderamente humanistas en los talleristas resulta ser una misión que no se encuentra en la periferia de la labor de los profesores instructores de Literatura sino en su línea principal” (Hernández Alén, 2007).

Over the decades, as literary public spheres, the *talleres literarios* have contributed to the development of an inclusive literary culture in which many thousands of Cubans have been able to participate. Out of these, a small percentage has gone on to become established writers, whilst many others, remaining at the level of amateur writer, have been involved in the movement in a variety of ways for differing amounts of time. However, whilst individual participants may have taken divergent life and career paths, during their period as *talleristas*, they were collectively offered the same opportunities. All were given the chance both to read out their literary creations in public and to receive commentaries and criticism from the rest of the group. They were encouraged to develop critical and communicative skills whilst also being provided with a receptive audience for their own self-expression. In other words, the *talleres literarios* have offered people both the tools and space with which to engage in critical debates about literature. In Chapter Three, it was established that the provision of tools and space, as well as the shared experience of dialogic communication, are all central for a notion of cultural citizenship. Therefore, it is possible to say that one function of the *talleres literarios* has been both to form cultural citizens and to grant them space in which to enact their citizenship.

However, if the notion of cultural citizenship provides a framework for assessing the overall impact of the *talleres literarios* on participants, it does not offer an analysis of the specific characteristics of that cultural citizenship. In contrast, this type of analysis requires an understanding of the various factors that, over time, have attributed meaning to this particular form of Cuban cultural citizenship, and includes an awareness of the relationship between any meanings disseminated from above, and what participation has meant for the individuals involved. It was outlined in the previous chapter that the

talleres literarios as public spheres operated within a changing set of institutional constraints. One feature of these constraints was the official discourse about the *talleres literarios*, which in addition to attempting to regulate the communication that occurred within them, described the transformative impact that participation in a *taller* would ideally have on *talleristas*, and gave a definition of the ideal *tallerista-citizen*. Influenced by developments in wider cultural policy, the ethos of participation and the ideology of *cubanía revolucionaria*, these discourses, although they do not use the concept themselves, outlined the official notion of cultural citizenship as promoted by the leadership.

Nevertheless, following the argument set out in Chapter Two, this description of the ideal *tallerista-citizen* did not necessarily correspond to actual experience of *talleristas*. In that chapter, it was shown how, in general, participation in revolutionary structures did not automatically lead to the formation of ideal citizens. Instead, it was argued that the collective experience of participation in the different kinds of structures had a variety of impacts, such as creating a sense of empowerment amongst citizens, facilitating their identification with certain values as well as generating a local culture of democracy, all of which, over time, had consequences for the wider revolutionary process. With this in mind, this chapter investigates the impact of participation in the *talleres literarios*, on various *talleristas* during different decades. The aim is to arrive at a more developed notion of how Cuban cultural citizenship has functioned in practice, which is not just derived from an official ideal, but based on the experience of *talleristas* themselves. Focussing on the most important components of the main movement, the municipal-level *talleres*, the first half of the chapter will concentrate on the experiences of individuals who, since leaving the movement of *talleres literarios*, have become established writers. Their accounts are interesting for several reasons.

Firstly, although established writers only represent a small sample of former *talleristas*, their experiences help to shed new light on the way in which certain writers have been educated within the revolutionary process. For, whilst Chapter One demonstrated the attention paid to the impact of cultural policy on individual writers, once they had achieved that status and were attempting to publish, little is known about how cultural policy created the conditions under which they were formed as cultural citizens before they were published. Secondly, the time periods during which these different writers participated correspond to the various stages in the evolution of the movement. Therefore, their

experience offers points of comparison between the developing discourse about the *talleres literarios*, and the institutional constraints on them as literary public spheres, and how these changes manifested themselves practically in terms of their effect on individuals. Finally, after becoming established writers, several of these writers have been categorised within groups or generations and credited with making significant contributions to the development of new literary trends. Consequently, their experiences provide a perspective on the long-term impact that their enactment of cultural citizenship within the *talleres literarios* had in the emergence of the subsequent literary movements, some of which posed a challenge to the hegemonic ideas of the time.

The second half of the chapter analyses the experience of two *asesores literarios*, as well as the experience of the contemporary *talleres literarios* based on my own observation of three municipal *talleres literarios* in Havana. An account of the role of cultural workers and the practical operation of existing *talleres literarios* will shed light not only on the actual group dynamics of these literary public spheres but also on the process of cultural citizenship formation and enactment within them. In other words, it concentrates on the short-term impact of the *talleres literarios* on citizens. Ultimately, uniting the two halves of the chapter will offer the opportunity to assess the common themes found within the individual experiences from throughout the revolutionary period, thus preparing the ground for a general notion of Cuban cultural citizenship in practice. It will then be possible to compare this general notion of cultural citizenship pertaining to the main municipal system with the cultural citizenship offered by the so-called higher level institution, the Centro Onelio in Chapter Six. However, before embarking on this analysis, it is first necessary to address two further issues which put the experiences of the former and current *talleristas* in this chapter into context; the debate about whether *talleres literarios* ‘form’ writers, and the way in which their function has been officially conceptualised since 1990.

The great debate: forming writers or something else?

In the previous chapter, it was outlined how the official definition of the role of *talleres literarios* has varied over the years around the issue of whether they are mechanisms for ‘forming’ writers. Early documentation stated that this was their primary function, and despite changes in the official discourse,

the question has continued to be debated by writers and other commentators, and plays a part in shaping even the contemporary perspectives of certain individuals about the movement. Related to this central question is the issue about whether, as centrally-run state institutions, the *talleres* actually promote one particular ‘type’ of writer (Hernández, 16/04/07). At times, the *talleres literarios* have raised the suspicion amongst some that the cultural leadership is training ‘obedient’ or ‘standardised’ writers (Heras León, 29/03/07; Melo, 17/03/07). This has been compounded at the macro level by the production of guidelines and regulations for the movement and at the micro level by some *asesores* who have either lacked adequate literary training themselves or sought to impose their own aesthetics on their group (Melo, 17/03/03).

Moreover, this negative portrayal of the *talleres literarios* is combined with a tendency of some writers to downplay their involvement with the movement. Although it is known that most writers who established a reputation for themselves after the 1970s had been members of *talleres literarios*, few, especially those who participated during that particular decade,³⁷ mention this fact in interviews or official biographies. For example, in an in-depth interview about his literary formation, Senel Paz, who won the Encuentro-Debate Nacional in 1979 with a short story, neglects to mention his time in *talleres literarios* at all (Bejel, 1991: 43). This may be because the writers consider the *talleres literarios* only to be an initial or insignificant part of their formation, but it may also be due to misgivings about being associated with a bureaucratically-controlled movement. In particular, the fact that the movement was born during the so-called *quinquenio gris* may have made certain writers, in retrospect, try to separate themselves from it. Heras León, the writer most associated with the *talleres literarios* after 1976, says: “los *talleres literarios* al principio nacían muy lastrados, socializados, con mucha ideología y política, hubo temas que empezaron a ser tabúes” (Heras León, 07/04/07).

One writer, Rolando Sánchez Mejías, himself a *tallerista* during the 1980s, has described how the early *talleres literarios* were one of the ways in which institutions influenced Cuban literature, if not writers themselves, directly:

³⁷ A small sample of these include Enrique Cirules (1938), Miguel Mejides (1950), Senel Paz (1950), Omar González (1950), Aida Bahr (1958), Arturo Arango (1955), and Leonardo Abaroa (1939) (Álvarez, 1985: 25).

Ahora bien: dichos talleres estaban directamente influidos por escritores cubanos designados por las instituciones. Era difícil que un escritor como Virgilio Piñera – homosexual, burlón y de escritura rebelde – fuera aceptado para influir en algún taller del país. Se fue creando a todo lo largo de la isla una manera de contar relatos modélica, donde un supuesto “realismo duro” se instauró como canon, dejando fuera cualquier otra narrativa, como la de Lezama Lima, Eliseo Diego, Calvert Casey, Labrador Ruiz, Cabrera Infante, Reinaldo Arenas... (Mejías, 2006)

For some writers without personal experience of the *talleres literarios*, this establishment of the movement during the more restrictive 1970s has forever tainted their opinion of them. According to these writers, the contemporary *talleres literarios* are a reminder that the cultural leadership once tried to form new writers out of the ‘masses’ instead of supporting individual talent and experimentation (Fornet, 09/03/07; González, 05/05/07; Pérez Castillo, 08/03/07). However, their pejorative stance, as well as being time-specific, may also be related to their personal beliefs about the more universal issues of the definition of a writer, and whether literary skills or creative writing can be taught. Even they concur that the *talleres literarios*, by exposing more people to literary practice, have ultimately been beneficial. Furthermore, many sources more directly involved with the movement, who have witnessed its later evolution, all categorically deny that the *talleres literarios* were responsible for forming them as writers or even for leaving a lasting impact on what they choose to write about (see below).

Since the early 1980s, the dominant perspective in official discourse has been that it requires a combination of talent and the acquisition of technical skills in order to be a (successful) writer (Heras León, 1988: 9; Rojas, 03/03/07). Following this, the discourse about the *talleres literarios* has been less focussed on the training of writers and instead emphasised the production of critical readers. This trend has continued into the 2000s. Even writers who run the course-based, higher level *talleres* and the Directors of the Centro Onelio are under no illusion that they are in any way forming writers; instead, they maintain that they are providing the tools with which participants can approach both their reading, and their writing both more knowledgeably and more critically (Curbelo, 19/04/07, Heras León, 29/03/07). This trend has also been accompanied by an increasing emphasis given to the outcomes of the process of participating in a *taller*. Although the importance of the collective experience of the *taller* for the socialisation of citizens has always featured in discourse, by the post-1990s period, it was valued more highly than the end results:

Lo más importante en el desarrollo de un taller es el proceso en sí y no el resultado artístico que se pueda lograr. Si la calidad del proceso ha sido favorable, el taller ha sido un éxito aun cuando el resultado final no tenga la calidad artística idónea como para ser presentada en público. (CNCC, 2008)

Thus, during the post-1990 phase of the main *talleres literarios* movement the interminable debate about whether they teach people to become writers has, with one notable exception (see Chapter Six) been somewhat sidelined, and instead the focus has shifted to the other functions that the *talleres* perform as spaces for participation in literary practice. The notion that the primary objective of the *talleres* is their transformative impact on individuals, and the development of their personalities, is central to the post-1990s framework for viewing the *talleres*. Consequently, although to a certain extent it always has done, contemporary official discourse about the role of the *talleres literarios* even more closely resembles the theoretical explanation of cultural citizenship. In particular, the contemporary official description of the impact of the *talleres literarios* on citizens more closely approximates Stevenson's ideal project of cultural citizenship because of its emphasis on values (see Chapter Three).

As mentioned in Chapter Three, theorists of communicative cultural citizenship maintain that it can only function ideally on the basis that cultural citizens share certain values. Similarly, mirroring the post-1990 move in the wider revolutionary context towards rescuing the 'essence' of the Revolution, the contemporary discourse about the *talleres literarios* also stresses that the process of participation in them will reinforce the core values of national culture in citizens. However, this official emphasis on core values remains an ideal promoted by the more recent incarnation of the revolutionary project. Therefore, it is still important to acknowledge the institutional framework disseminating those values, as well to contrast the ideal with the practical experience of *talleristas*. The critical concept of cultural citizenship facilitates this process. Nevertheless, it is worth reflecting a little further on how the return to core values has been expressed in contemporary discourse, as this not only defines the current movement, but also provides the frame of reference through which writers have recounted their past experiences.

Humanism, personal development or a return to conciencia?

The core values associated with the *talleres literarios* have been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. They can be found inherent in the format of the *talleres* themselves, in cultural policy statements more generally, and in the evolving framework of *cubanía revolucionaria*. However, linking them all together is a humanist conception of the role that literature and art has for the individual in their everyday life, attitudes and behaviour. It is this facet that is most stressed in the contemporary discourse about the *talleres literarios*. Although other priorities have sometimes obscured this humanist motivation behind cultural policy and specifically how it relates to the *talleres literarios* (during the 1970s), it has been present since the early years of the Revolution and was expressed in the key 1961 speech, *Palabras a los intelectuales*. Since the later 1990s, however, it has manifested itself through the focus on getting individuals to develop *una cultura general e integral*.³⁸

Ostensibly meaning a ‘fully-rounded’ education, the notion of a *cultura general e integral* includes the state provision of the tools to satisfy the “necesidades culturales” of local people and communities with the view to achieving the overarching aim of cultural policy which is: “la realización y enriquecimiento espiritual de la población” (‘Taller de Creación’, 2008). It requires knowledge of literature and the arts, and is clearly related to acquiring a moral disposition:

La conformación de una cultura general integral está vinculada también a la necesidad de desarrollar una cultura de la moralidad, en tanto que esta es un componente de la cultura asociado al comportamiento general de las personas y expresado mediante su modo de vida, su proceder individual y social y su sistema de valores y creencias. (Hernández Alén, 2007)

Therefore, taken literally, the notion of a *cultura general e integral* suggests a direct relationship between the appreciation of literature, the understanding of its moral value and ‘correct’ modes of behaviour. Moreover, this idea has been directly applied to the function of the *talleres literarios*:

Resulta primordial analizar que las formaciones morales, como parte de la regulación inductora de la personalidad, guían y dirigen la actuación del ser humano y hacen que

³⁸ There is a whole literature about the formation of values in the 90s underlying education in Cuba, including *La formación de valores en las nuevas generaciones* (Isabel, 1996).

asuma una actitud correcta y acertada frente a las exigencias de la sociedad contemporánea. En tal sentido, nuestros talleres deben priorizar los valores, revelar los ideales y preparar al hombre para la vida. (Hernández Alén, 2007)

Consequently, the individual development associated with the *talleres literarios* is what they are valued for:

...el valor se logra en los efectos transformadores que provoca el acto de creación sobre los individuos, en el despertar de su sensibilidad a partir de las vivencias en las experiencias estéticas. (Armas, n.d.)

However, this value is generated not from a passive engagement with literary values, but from the active, and importantly, collective process of participation. Through the act of participating in an open, free and safe environment, the educational nature of the *taller literario* not only facilitates engagement with literature but also the learning of social skills:

El taller potencia habilidades también para saber escuchar, relacionarse, y comunicar ideas, reflexionar, discutir, cooperar en la búsqueda de soluciones y valorar el aporte de cada uno, todo lo cual contribuye a hacer más flexible y dinámico el pensamiento. Esta forma participativa de enseñar, desarrolla a su vez, una actitud activa y transformadora en las personas. (Armas, n.d)

Therefore, the *talleres literarios*, as they always have been, are sites for the socialisation of citizens, whereby they develop both moral values and an active and participatory attitude towards life.

In a way, this contemporary discourse on individual, moral and social development through participation, promoted not only through the *talleres literarios* but also through education programmes, the media and congresses, is highly reminiscent of the 1960s emphasis on *conciencia*. Whilst the language describing *conciencia revolucionaria* and *una cultura general e integral* is clearly different, some of their most basic premises and core values remain the same. Furthermore, although the latter, more evolved discourse which focuses on individual, human development appears less overtly linked to a concept of Revolution than the former version, it is still a status that can only be achieved through participation in revolutionary structures. So, whilst the post-1990s discourse about cultural engagement seems less explicitly ideologically driven than it was in the 1970s, focussing more on individual cultural needs and the spiritual enrichment of the nation, instead of ideological transmission and

exemplary behaviour, it is still firmly located ‘dentro de la Revolución’ both practically and ideologically.

Cuban cultural citizenship in practice part I: The writers

The earliest available recorded experience of a *tallerista* comes from Reneal González, the co-founder of the Taller Literario Carlos Enríquez (1967) in Puerto Padre, Las Tunas. He described his pride in having been able to play a role in a: “movimiento literario que nació con la Revolución y continuar la tradición literaria de la ciudad natal” in (González López, 1983: 6). Reflecting one of the central notions of cultural citizenship, for this *tallerista*, participation in the *talleres literarios* signified a sense of belonging that was both regional (to a local literary tradition) and national (to a literary movement that was linked historically to the revolutionary process). Furthermore, his recognition of, and pride in, his own role in the continuation of these traditions, indicates that he felt empowered as a cultural citizen to enact his citizenship in the form of his own literary creations. However, his statement only reveals the ‘imaginary’ dimension of cultural citizenship, in terms of belonging to an intangible notion of a literary tradition. In order to build on this initial idea, the following selection of written and oral testimonies from established writers offers more details about the more tangible, practical dimension of what cultural citizenship entailed for them.

The 1970s: Ricardo Riverón, Aida Bahr, Marilyn Bobes, Ernesto Pérez Castillo

During the 1970s, the movement of *talleres literarios* became expansive enough to have an impact on a large number of individuals. In an article from 1978, several *talleristas* described their motivations for wanting to join a particular *taller literario* (Feijoó, 1978: 18). Listed as being office-workers, teachers, students, reporters, accountants and workers, these *talleristas*’ reasons for joining a *taller* fit into three categories: the need or desire to express certain events or feelings through literatura; the desire to improve as writers; and the desire to participate in a local and national literary process, which meant both access to books and to other authors. One *tallerista* affirmed that: “la necesidad de participar en este proceso de mi ciudad y de mi patria, en mi tiempo, me impulsa a escribir” (Feijoó, 1978: 19). Others mentioned the poetic nature of events within the country or the desire to write history, about the

beauty of the countryside or for children as their reasons for joining a *taller*, as well as sharing a general need to receive criticism in order to improve (Feijóo, 1978: 18). Clearly, as a prelude to their participation, these *talleristas* placed a high value on both literature and the Cuban nation and were willing cultural citizens.

An earlier article reinforces more of the practical elements involved in participating in the *talleres literarios* and therefore in gaining the status of cultural citizenship. It emphasises the importance that both the learning process and the opportunity to develop personal relationships, provided by the *talleres literarios*, had for participants. It includes quotes from two *talleristas* at the II Encuentro-Debate Nacional in Escambray in 1975, who would later become established writers. Roberto Manzano (1949), who won the national prize for poetry, said that the *taller* had helped people to know the work of diverse authors and to give direction, as well as allowing encounters with a diverse cross section of society, the latter point illustrating how the *talleres literarios* could act as sites for social integration. Furthermore, the poet Rodolfo Torres also highlighted the sense of empowerment as a writer that the *talleres literarios* had given him: “participación me ha dado la experiencia que necesito para mejorar” (Rivero, 1976: 29).

From only these brief statements, it is possible to discern the key themes of cultural citizenship: belonging, shared values, learning (tools), social integration and empowerment in the experiences of *talleristas*. However, again, more embellished and personalised accounts are needed in order to demonstrate the different meanings that these themes had for individuals, as well as how these may have differed from the official ideal of a *tallerista* at the time. One such account of the *talleres literarios* during the 1970s can be found in a *testimonio* by Ricardo Riverón (1949). Primarily a poet, but also a writer of criticism and *testimonio* and current member of UNEAC, Riverón won various prizes within the *talleres literarios* movement and even published a book of poetry *Oficio de Cantar* in 1978 with his Taller Literario “José García del Barco”. Yet his career eventually took off outside the movement, with publications with major publishing houses from 1987 until the present day.

Ricardo Riverón

Riverón remembers his time in a *taller* with warmth based on the relationships forged within the group: “Ninguna circunstancia, excepto la muerte conseguirá apagar en mi memoria la honda impresión de aquella noche en que asistí, en calidad de debutante, a una sesión del Taller Literario “José García del Barco” de Camajuani” (Riverón, 2001: 62). Describing the *taller*, based near a sugar production site, as a family led by a young and talented poet, he also emphasises the integrating function of his *taller*. He comments that his fellow *talleristas* were a couple of gay men, a pretty woman, some *repentistas*, and an outspoken factory worker. In his account, Riverón reflects with humour how the equalising effect of participation in the *taller* and its related competitions sometimes even led to some *talleristas* feeling so validated as cultural citizens that they believed themselves to be better writers than they were.

Ramiro, the factory worker, had won a union literary prize in 1970, and thought this made him an ‘escritor consagrado’. He believed in his own newly-found status so much that when face-to-face with some well-known and established writers during a competition, he would not listen to their criticism and thought he could lecture them about literature instead (Riverón, 2001: 63). The existence of this story demonstrates how the validation given to *talleristas* for their work and contributions, whilst important within the context of individual *talleres* and the movement, nevertheless operated within a strict literary hierarchy, in which the authority of writers with an established status was considered to be more than that of the amateur *talleristas*. In other words, the cultural citizenship gained by *talleristas*, and the sense of empowerment within literary culture that it afforded them within a particular literary public sphere, was qualified when it was enacted within wider public spheres. Furthermore, the literary hierarchy also had a role in shaping the communication within individual *talleres*. With hindsight, Riverón suggests that his personal respect for this hierarchy led him to develop misguided ideas about literature. For example, he mentions his early literary influences as being Raúl Rivero and Osvaldo Navarro, two established rural poets whom he labels as dogmatic and emanating from the “anti-creative tendencies” of the 1971 Congress (Riverón, 2001: 62).

*Aida Bahr*³⁹

Aida Bahr (1958), a writer of narrative fiction, member of UNEAC and winner of many literary prizes including the prestigious Premio Alejo Carpentier in 2007, published her first collection of short stories in 1984. In Cuban literary histories, she has been categorised as part of a generation of narrative writers that started to publish around the same time, and who were also members of the *talleres literarios* in the late 1970s (Padura, 1993: 2).⁴⁰ From Oriente originally, Bahr remained a *tallerista* for five years, before starting to work as an *asesora literaria*, a post she would retain until the end of the 1980s. The duration of her involvement with the movement reflects her personal belief in its importance for guiding new writers, something she confirmed when she chaired a seminar on *talleres literarios* at the 2007 Feria del Libro. However, in terms of her own experience as a *tallerista*, she highlights the importance of the personal connections and confidence she gained from participating in the movement.

Bahr was still a secondary school student when she first joined a *taller* in 1975 because she wanted to know if what she had been writing on her own was any good. After a few months she passed from her *taller de base* to the Taller Literario Municipal de Holguín. The same year, Bahr obtained *mención* with one of her stories at the Encuentro-Debate Provincial and was therefore invited to attend the national event in Escambray, although she was not allowed to compete. According to her experience as a *tallerista*, which spanned several years, she affirms there were some *talleres* “castrantes” because the *asesores* tried to implement determined aesthetics, and therefore set strict boundaries for cultural citizenship. However, she suggests that this was not a uniform experience as in many cases they got very good results, despite being bureaucratic and not always of a high educational level. In fact, she feels she owes her existence as a successful writer to the *talleres*, because it provided her with links to, and a sense of belonging within the wider literary movement:

...aunque el taller como tal no me enseñó gran cosa, sí me puso en contacto con el movimiento literario de la provincia y del país, y esos otros escritores, esos eventos, la relación personal con Soler Puig y con escritores de Santiago cuando vine a estudiar a la Universidad, fue mi verdadera formación como escritora.

³⁹ Interview by email 18/04/07.

⁴⁰ Included within this group, credited with continuing a renewal of Cuban prose fiction into the 1980s are Abel Prieto (1950), Arturo Arango (1955), Francisco López Sacha (1950), and José Ramón Fajardo (1957) amongst others (Padura, 1993: 2), many of whom Aida met during the *talleres literarios* competitions.

Bahr remembers that during her time as an *asesora* in the 1980s, the new methodological guidelines produced by the cultural administration improved the *talleres* overall, as the greater level of selectivity demanded more from *talleristas*. “Fue la época de oro, entre 1982 y 1989, pues se disponía de recursos para hacer eventos, invitar a escritores nacionales etc.” During this time, she ran the Taller Literario Luis Díaz Oduardo in the city of Santiago and coordinated a *taller* that incorporated all the student *talleristas*, which was visited regularly by important writers. Although she left the movement to concentrate on writing and research during most of the 1990s, she returned to work with *talleres literarios* early in the 2000s as the *asesora* of a *taller literario de vanguardia* focussing on narrative fiction.

Marilyn Bobes⁴¹

Marilyn Bobes (1955) a poet, journalist and fiction writer, from Vedado in Havana, had an entirely different experience with the *talleres literarios* in the 1970s. Although considered part of a different literary group than Riverón, she also wrote poetry during the 1970s and 80s, and has since been included in literary histories as a leading member in a trend towards producing a more ‘individualised’ poetry that began in the latter 1970s (Alemany Bay, n.d.: 97). Since the late 1980s, she has been a member of UNEAC and acted as *jurado* in many literary competitions, including the *talleres literarios*. Unlike Bahr, Bobes’ involvement with the movement was only brief. From the start, her location in Havana and family contacts with literary figures helped to get her accepted into a specialised *taller*. However, in terms of her own formation as a writer, she felt rejected and undermined during her short time as a *tallerista*. Yet, despite this negative experience, she was able to form enough positive relationships within the *taller* to retain the motivation to continue writing and to remain connected to the literary world. In this sense, she was still afforded the opportunity to gain status as cultural citizen, even if, at the time, she faced difficulties in enacting her citizenship.

Revealing the value she gave to literature, Bobes recounts how she had started to write fairly young: “...entonces empecé a escribir poemas muy románticos, al estilo un poco ‘light’, unos poemas que

⁴¹ Interview conducted 27/04/07.

realmente eran para muchachitas de mi escuela.” Nevertheless, when an older Chilean friend introduced her to the poetry of César Vallejo, she started to write more ambitiously. Showing some later poems to her mother, who had always believed in her abilities, she was told to take them to Robert Brandly, a poet who was the neighbour of a friend. Thinking she had potential, he introduced her in 1973 to the *taller* for young writers run by the Brigada Hermanos Saíz in the UNEAC building near to her house. From the beginning, Bobes found the atmosphere of the *taller* difficult:

Al principio no comprendía nada y un buen día me invitaron a que yo leyera mis cosas, y aquello fue terrible...mis poemas eran un poco sobre la virginidad, sobre la mujer, los derechos de mujer y, entonces casi todos eran hombres...

When it was Bobes’ turn to read her poems, she received very strong criticism from some *talleristas* who included Norberto Codina, Alex Fleites, Arturo Arango and the *asesor* Sigifredo Álvarez Conesa, then president of the Brigada Hermanos Saíz. According to her experience, it is again clear that some *talleres literarios* of the 1970s did not function as very plural literary public spheres. She left the *taller* feeling totally disillusioned, although not before having made some friends from amongst the *talleristas* who judged her less harshly, such as Pedro de la Hoz and Andrés Reynaldo. Through these friendships, Bobes exchanged books and texts and was able to ask them for advice as she continued to write and started to send work to competitions. In other words, her cultural citizenship within the literary world, although facilitated by the *taller*, was gained on a personal level. However, it was only when she obtained a *mención* in Havana University’s *13 de Marzo* prize, and received a personal comment from the critic Mirta Aguirre, that she felt truly motivated to pursue writing. In this way, Bobes’ literary aspirations were always focussed above the main *talleres literarios* movement, and after she had gained recognition within the wider public sphere, returning to a municipal *taller* would have been going down a level.

Yet, having gained some cultural capital, Bobes found new spaces within which to enact her cultural citizenship and to challenge the previous restrictions on plurality. Later in the decade, having won more literary prizes, Bobes met Reina María Rodríguez, the new head of the BHS by chance and was invited to join: “entonces entré en la Brigada y ahí sí tuve muy buenas experiencias porque ya había cambiado un poco la gente, había personas más afines conmigo: Osvaldo Sánchez, Víctor Rodríguez, Alex Fleites” She now found the possibility to engage in dialogue in a group with more shared interests:

“pensábamos que había que ampliar el diapasón de la poesía que se estaba escribiendo en Cuba, ir más a los temas íntimos, sin abandonar los sociales.”⁴² She was also able to use her more empowered status as a cultural citizen to influence the communication in further literary public spheres. Gaining positions of responsibility within the BHS, Bobes was responsible for organising community-oriented literary activities, including readings in workplaces. During this period, although outside of the official *talleres literarios*, Bobes continued to value interactive literary meetings with other writers; some of the most productive of these for her were held in the unofficial setting of Reina María Rodríguez’ house.⁴³

*Ernesto Pérez Castillo*⁴⁴

Yet another experience of the *talleres* during the 1970s is recounted by Ernesto Pérez Castillo (1968), from Havana, who encountered them as a young boy. Pérez Castillo is an established writer of narrative fiction who has won several prestigious literary prizes since the 1980s, although he remains on the margins of the more well-known literary groups of the time. Professing a mistrust of official organisations, he chose not to continue in the *talleres literarios* movement, and has turned down the offer to be a member of UNEAC. However, showing his continued cultural citizenship, during the 1980s, he was briefly associated with the group of young writers and artists known as *El Establo*, which described itself as a ‘taller abierto pero underground’.⁴⁵ Although his time within a *taller literario* was brief, Pérez Castillo’s experience is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, despite maintaining that he does not like the *talleres* movement, being a young *tallerista* was fundamental for his own initial formation as a cultural citizen and for his motivation as a writer. Secondly, his experience shows that guidelines about ideal *talleristas* were not necessarily strictly enforced in the 1970s.

⁴² Bobes asserts that that particular group from the BHS got promoted to UNEAC around 1986-7. It also helped Bobes that there were many established women poets in Cuba by that time, such as Carilda Oliver (1922), Fina García Marruz (1923), Nancy Morejón (1944). This greater female presence was also reflected within the BHS where Bobes was joined by Cira Andrés (1954), Soleida Ríos (1950), and Reina María Rodríguez (1952).

⁴³ This space would be re-created in later decades.

⁴⁴ Interview conducted 08/03/07.

⁴⁵ It was a group formed around youth subculture, particularly Rock music. Other key literary members were Sergio Cevedo (1956), José Miguel Sánchez and Raúl Aguiar (1962).

Pérez Castillo participated in a *taller* while he was at a school in Havana Province. It was a school in which students were made to do agricultural work in the afternoons as well as their normal classes. By attending the weekly *taller*, he was able to avoid one afternoon of agricultural labour, the principal reason that he gives for joining it. Nevertheless, he did have a real interest in literature, avidly reading many of the translations of Soviet novels that were widely available at the time. Pérez Castillo used his time in the *taller* to work out if he was any good at writing or not, and learn more about himself, saying it helped him “conocer al otro” (Pérez Castillo, 08/03/07). Yet, according to him, the main thing he learnt from the *taller* was that he wrote like a Soviet writer. It was the informal discussions that he had with the *asesor* outside of the *taller* that contributed most to his development. The *asesor* pointed him in the direction of new Cuban and Latin American literature. The learning process offered by the *taller* was important to him even though after leaving school, he decided to pursue writing more independently. Furthermore, despite choosing to avoid the main bureaucratic system, nearly twenty years later he volunteered to participate in the new national *taller*, the Centro Onelio, where he is currently also employed as an editor.

Raúl Hernández Ortega⁴⁶

In contrast, Raúl Hernández Ortega (1960), based in his hometown of San Antonio de los Baños in Havana Province is another writer with experience of *talleres literarios* during the 1970s who remains a vocal supporter of the movement. Although like Pérez Castillo, he is a figure somewhat marginalised from critical surveys of literature, Hernández Ortega is nevertheless an established writer with several publications and prizes and is a member of UNEAC. Winning the Hermanos Loynaz prize for children’s literature in 2008, he retains close ties to the *talleres literarios* in his capacity as the Director of the Casa del Escritor Centro de Promoción Literaria Félix Pita Rodríguez en San Antonio, and is convinced that they have been responsible for maintaining literary creativity in Cuba, especially through facilitating direct dialogue between *talleristas* and more established writers. In his own personal experience, it was the learning process within a *taller* that stimulated him to write, although he cites personal contacts with other literary figures as another important motivating factor.

⁴⁶ Interview conducted 06/05/07.

He started to write at the age of nine, but in the 1970s, there were not yet *talleres literarios* specifically for children. As he got older he continued to write but he did not show his work to anyone because: “hubo un tiempo en que pensaba que no tenía valor”. However, his Spanish teacher sent some of his work to a literary competition and he won a prize that led to his decision to study literature at the University of Havana. There he met Leonardo Padura, Edel Morales, and Alberto Garrandés, who would later also become established writers, and was taught by Salvador Redonet, Salvador Bueno and Daniel Chavarría, all important critics of Cuban literature. Yet the course did not provide him with practical guidance for his own creative writing nor, therefore, with the space in which to develop as a cultural citizen. It was back in his hometown where, after meeting some *talleristas* at a literary *peña* in the Casa del Escritor, he first joined a *taller* himself. The *taller*, given the name ‘Trilce’ after César Vallejo’s poem, was run by an older *asesor* who Hernández Ortega remembers as knowing absolutely nothing about literature: “era auxiliar de la economía en la dirección de cultura que no tenía novena grado.”

As a result, the *talleristas* themselves ran the *taller* providing an example of the flexibility of the system during the 1970s. Yet although he sometimes enjoyed the *taller*, he was also frustrated by the lack of experienced and intelligent criticism. This led him to also join the Taller Literario Roque Dalton at the University. In this environment he learnt a great deal; however, he was less happy in this literary public sphere which consisted of literature and humanities students: “los universitarios tenían sus aires”. Despite being a *tallerista* for the duration of his studies, he never participated in a competition and later abandoned literature until later in life to concentrate on other cultural activities. Nevertheless, he maintains his early experiences as a *tallerista*, such as receiving face-to-face criticism of his work from Eduardo Heras León, left a lasting impression on him, and increased his confidence as a writer and cultural citizen. In general, Hernández Ortega is of the opinion that more institutional opportunities should exist for aspiring writers:

En la misma manera que hay academias de danza, de artes dramáticas, de pintura...debían existir escuelas y instituciones para que los escritores estudien cómo se escribe...no todos los que estudian van a ser escritores en el futuro...ser artista es una actitud ante la vida.

In general, as these experiences demonstrate, the experience of the *talleres literarios* during the 1970s was varied. Participation in a *taller* facilitated *talleristas*’ formation as cultural citizens in terms of

offering them a sense of belonging to, and an active role within, a literary world. For some, this included a direct sense of belonging to the movement and to a wider notion of literary tradition, whilst for all, even those who only participated for a brief period of time, it meant shared experience with other people and the forging of personal connections. However, whilst some found that the *talleres literarios* empowered them with the tools to enact their cultural citizenship, not all considered them to be the most conducive spaces in which to do so. According to these writers, the communication in several *talleres literarios* during this period was somewhat limited, although official regulation of the spaces was not consistent nor did it entirely prevent *talleristas* from expressing themselves.

Thus, while each individual writer pursued their own trajectory, their personal experience within the *talleres literarios* had provided the conditions, and laid the initial foundations, for their later literary contributions. The *talleres literarios* did not form them as writers as such but helped to set off an individual process of learning and self-improvement. Yet the individual process also had a collective dimension. Relationships formed within the *talleres*, in the case of Bobes or Bahr for example, facilitated a dialogue between aspiring writers, that whilst not always taking place within the *talleres*, helped to sow the seeds for the challenging literary trends which would break into the wider public sphere years afterwards, especially in the 1980s. Moreover, this process of the *talleres literarios* providing the opportunity for shared dialogue between yet to emerge literary groups is even more evident in the case studies of the writers who were *talleristas* in Havana during the 1980s.

The 1980s: Alberto Guerra, Tomasito Fernández Robaina, Ismael González Castañer, Víctor Fowler

Following the pattern of the 1970s, the *talleres literarios* of the 1980s continued to be spaces for literary self-expression and participation in critical debate, where aspiring or amateur writers went to learn, make connections and find validation for their work. However, developments in the wider cultural context, partially driven from 'below' by the emergence of new literary currents, but also by changes in attitude within the leadership, contributed to an increasing openness to new ideas and experimentation, and this was reflected in the communication within the *talleres literarios* as literary public spheres. These developments coincided with a more dynamic *talleres literarios* movement, which benefited from many more exchanges, visits and talks by established writers, especially at the

municipal level. It is possible to see how this added a further dimension to the collective experience of *talleristas*, as participation led not only to long-lasting relationships being forged within the movement, but also to a sense that they were agents within a wider process of transformation.

*Alberto Guerra*⁴⁷

A *tallerista* during the 1980s, Alberto Guerra (1963) is an established writer of narrative fiction and a member of UNEAC. He first achieved literary success in the early 1990s when he won the *Gaceta de Cuba* prize during successive years with short stories. Subsequent literary histories include him within the group of narrative writers known as the *novísimos* (Redonet, 1993). Credited with formal experimentation, and using their work to comment on many formerly taboo subjects, the talents of the *novísimos* were ‘discovered’ and nurtured by the figures Salvador Redonet and Heras León whilst they were still participating within the *talleres literarios*. Furthermore, the *novísimos* have been given significant critical attention both in Cuba and abroad. They had reached maturity at a political moment that encouraged them towards a degree of social criticism in their work (Rosales Rosa, 2002). In addition, many of their first publications coincided with the crisis of the *período especial* and tended to reflect the major social changes it had brought about.

Guerra began to get interested in literature and writing when he was a young student of history and social sciences. At first he wrote a few stories just for himself and his friends, but then, after seeing the Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios featured on a cultural television programme, he decided to take his stories to his local *taller* in the Casa de Cultura of Marianao in Havana. Like others, his motivations were to see if his literature had value. However, his first experience of reading his stories was entirely negative; he was told by the *asesor* that he should continue to train to be a teacher as he was not a writer. Feeling depressed and disheartened, Guerra left the *taller*. Outside, waiting at the bus-stop, he was accosted by three girls, who had also been participants in the *taller*. They had sensed his disappointment and told him not to give up writing. They were against the judgement of the *asesor*, whom they described as a grumpy man having a particularly bad day: “y ellas me salvaron ese

⁴⁷ Interview conducted 23/03/07.

día. Ese día el asesor habló primero...me crucificaron pero ese día me salvaron también. Por eso escribo.” He was encouraged by their support to think of continuing his literary efforts.

Sometime later, whilst working in Morón, Ciego de Avila, Guerra found another, more sympathetic *taller literario*, and began a learning process within it that would continue when he returned to a Marianao *taller*, under a different *asesor*. Now a cultural citizen, having felt empowered enough to express himself in several public spheres, in that *taller* Guerra started to gain recognition through winning prizes in the Encuentro-Debates, and started to form friendships through visiting other *talleres literarios* around the city:

Casi toda mi generación pasó por los talleres literarios, se conocieron en ellos, porque a lo mejor el asesor de Playa habló con el asesor de Plaza y entonces nos reunimos en la casa de cultura de Plaza, y de allí intercambiábamos.

However, despite the fact that visits and competitions provided many further opportunities for dialogue between contemporaries, Guerra suggests that winning prizes within the movement or printing work in municipal *boletines* did not constitute great merit, if the *tallerista* aspired to be a writer. It was more important to him to gain personal recognition from established writers and those with more literary knowledge: “La validación te llega por un premio literario...pero te llega también que conozca tu obra un escritor consagrado que te dice <¡muy bien eh!> y que el asesor confía en ti.”

Nevertheless, it was through the Encuentro-Debate Nacional that Guerra met Redonet and Heras León, the two figures that convinced him that he and his fellow competitors of similar ages were participating in a renewal of literature: “Redonet despertó la conciencia...después de haber recorrido la isla de arriba a abajo orientando y alentando a los jóvenes, inculcándoles la necesidad de cambiar la literatura.” Validated in this way, Guerra wrote more and soon, as the most prolific member of his *taller*, was made into its president. When the Asociación Hermanos Saíz was formed in 1986, this position earned him a recommendation for membership. However, preferring the space for debate provided by his *taller*, he remained a passive member until a couple of years later when he took an administrative post in the organization. In the AHS, he worked to expand the membership, including inviting the participation of the other *talleristas* with whom he had forged relationships.

By this point, his experience in the *talleres* had convinced him that he had developed so much that his work was worthy of publication, yet there was a lack of opportunities for young writers to publish within the wider public sphere. Therefore, alongside other writers of his age, he helped to organise a forum within the expanded AHS, which acting as a higher level public sphere, was a critical space for discussing their work and debating the difficulties facing his literary generation.⁴⁸ Gradually, as he personally began to win prizes and get his work published, he distanced himself from the *talleres literarios* as a participant. However, he returned several years later to coordinate the movement nationally as Director of Literature of the Centro Nacional de Cultura Comunitaria in 1996-8. Since, he has been a member of the *jurado* in the competitions of the *talleres literarios* and is convinced of the benefits that spoken communication and dialogue can have for less experienced writers. He also runs his own *taller de vanguardia* for local young people.

Tomasito Fernández Robaina⁴⁹

The experience of Tomás Fernández Robaina (1942), in the *talleres literarios* in Havana at the same time, provides a different perspective. He is an established writer who gained a reputation within literary criticism and *testimonio* rather than prose fiction or poetry and was older than writers like Alberto Guerra when he decided to join the movement. Unlike that younger generation, his primary motive for becoming a *tallerista* was not about learning or receiving criticism for his work. His reasons were much more personal and were related more to his desire for social recognition than his potential as a writer. Although he had always written, immediately prior to starting in a *taller literario*, he had been studying for a degree at the University of Havana, whilst also working as a researcher at the Biblioteca Nacional. However, soon after the exodus of *Mariel* in 1980, there was a purge of homosexuals at the University. When his superiors at the library refused to write him a letter of support, Fernández Robaina, openly gay, was forced to abandon his studies. Suffering from considerable stress, it was at this moment that a friend advised him to join the *talleres literarios* as a way of compensating for such public rejection. “Me meto en los talleres literarios como una forma de buscarme un asilo para poder seguir trabajando, luchando, viviendo...” In a sense, for him gaining

⁴⁸ He helped to organise the event: “el coloquio sobre nosotros mismos” in 1991 during which members of the AHS lamented the lack of literary criticism for young writers who could not get published at that time.

⁴⁹ Interview conducted 11/05/07.

cultural citizenship was a way to feel valued as an individual: “para ver si yo tenía valores, y las condiciones morales y éticas para merecer un reconocimiento social público.”

Joining the Taller Literario Arecelio Iglesias in Habana vieja in 1981, Fernández Robaina soon dedicated himself to writing literary criticism and *testimonio*. For, although he wrote short stories as well, he believed the competition within this genre to be too high. Yet although his contributions were recognised and praised within his individual *taller*, Fernández Robaina’s aspiration was to win prizes within the national movement. During his time participating in the literary public sphere of his own *taller literario*, Fernández Robaina’s writing generated debates about prostitutes, and *santeros* amongst other themes. However, it was not so easy to succeed in the wider competition system with texts about such controversial topics. He had to work hard to defend his *testimonios* from criticism. He claims that *jurados* for the genre of *testimonio* in particular, were used to giving prizes to works which “ayudaron a crecer la conciencia del hombre del socialismo.” Nevertheless, despite the difficulties he faced, he managed to win *mención* or the first prize on several occasions during the 1980s.

The sense of validation he received from the *talleres literarios* made him, like Guerra, Bahr, Riverón, Hernández Ortega and others before him, proud of his involvement in the movement. As well as gaining skills from the process of participating “mi aparato crítico se amplió muchísimo a partir de todos los debates”, he also learnt about his country through travelling to events and gained a sense of belonging to a movement that offered fun activities and close personal relationships. “El evento nacional fue como un festival de la literatura, fue muy divertido.” Although, with retrospect, he recognises that there were some criticisms of the quality of the literature in the *talleres literarios*’ competitions, he believes that, at the level of the *municipio*, they represented an “empujante movimiento literario” and spaces for critical debate and reflection about a number of important issues. Fernández Robaina competed for the last time in the Encuentro-Debate Nacional in 1988 at Playa Girón. At that event he won first prize in literary criticism but then had to retire from the movement as he had begun to publish books in the wider public sphere: “ya era conocido, había que dar la oportunidad a otros aficionados.” In 1989, as a member of UNEAC, he returned as a member of the *jurado*.

Ismael González Castañer (1961) is an established poet with several prizes, and a member of UNEAC, who describes himself as forming part of a generation of poets of the 1980s that included Rolando Sanchez Mejías, Jorge Aguiár, and José Antonio Ponte and that had close links to Víctor Calzada Fowler, Omar Pérez, Reina María Rodríguez, Sigfredo Ariel and Juan Carlos Flores amongst others, all of whom had experiences in different *talleres literarios* in Havana. He has also been associated with the group that produced the *Diáspora* magazine 1997-2000 and the black poets known as Palenque. Whilst working as a teacher in a secondary school, González Castañer, who had been writing poetry and attending a *círculo de interés literario*, answered a *convocatoria* for a *taller literario* being set up in the newly-established Casa del Escritor in Marianao. Once in the Taller Literario Rabrinderath Tagore, he learnt he had talent as a poet, something that was confirmed when he began to win municipal prizes which were judged by the famous critics Rogelio Coronel and Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera amongst others.

González Castañer believes that the debates and criticism within the *taller literario* helped him to improve as an individual poet. However, he cites the main impact of the *talleres literarios* on his formation as being the collective dimension. As the Casa del Escritor in Marianao was new, many events were held there, including meetings with *talleristas*. He participated in many exchanges with other *talleres literarios*, where he not only met other young poets that would later form his generation, but also where a consensus started to develop amongst them about the direction in which they wished to take their poetry. He describes how the lasting friendships he made there led them to define themselves as a group. They exchanged texts and worked to achieve maturity together. However, unlike Fernández Robaina, recognition within the *talleres literarios* movement itself was not enough for the aspirations of González Castañer. He was intent on publication, like the other poets he had met, with national publishing houses.

Therefore he sought to join the Asociación Hermanos Saíz, as he believed it would bring him further recognition. He saw it as the next stage *en route* to becoming a writer and was able to become a

⁵⁰ Interview conducted 17/04/07.

member, soon after it formed, in 1986. At last achieving publication in 1989, he and other former *talleristas*, as members of the AHS were also invited to continue to participate in literary discussions and debates, although informally, at the homes of leading poets such as Víctor Calzada Fowler and Reina María Rodríguez. By this time, González Castañer had moved on from the literary public spheres of the *talleres* movement. However, later in the 2000s, having won several important poetry prizes, he became an *asesor* of a *taller literario de vanguardia* and helped to train *asesores* for the main movement. Yet, it was his own experience in the *talleres literarios* that had initiated him into cultural citizenship and into feeling part of the literary movement: “te sientes parte de un hecho histórico, y eso es una transcendencia, relaciones personales forman parte de eso. Es la vida de un artista estar dentro de una familia de artistas.”

Víctor Calzada Fowler⁵¹

Víctor Calzada Fowler, an established poet, mentioned by González Castañer as one of the leaders of the ‘generación de los 80’, gives his own reflections on the impact of the *talleres literarios*, in an article he has written about the literary magazine *Naranja Dulce*. This literary supplement of *Caimán Barbudo* grew out of the cultural citizenship of several former *talleristas* who had become members of the AHS. Produced at the end of the 1980s under the editorial direction of the poet Omar Pérez, the magazine published the work of young AHS writers, as well as translations and commentary on contemporary international literature and art. Yet it only lasted for four editions before being shut down in 1990.⁵² Its brief history, however, marked a final flowering of the activities of the ‘generación de los 80’ that Calzada Fowler asserts was initially educated within the *talleres literarios*. Having become a *tallerista* slightly earlier than González Castañer, Calzada Fowler also credits the *talleres literarios* movement in Havana during the early 1980s with giving him opportunities to meet the other young poets and writers who would form part of his generation. Furthermore, he suggests that the collective discussion and debate within the *talleres* fostered the formation of new literary groups and perspectives

⁵¹ All citations taken from Calzada Fowler (2006).

⁵² It had contained many of the members of the literary group known as PADIEIA, intellectuals who created a space within the Centro Cultural Alejo Carpentier to discuss new theories. This had also been shut down in 1989, leading to a protest against censorship signed by ten intellectuals that caused a period of tension within the Ministry of Culture and amongst other intellectuals. Many of the supporters of this group ended up leaving Cuba.

that would later define themselves against the previous generation both through their work and their energetic participation in both the BHS and later the AHS.

Nevertheless, he is clear that their aspirations as writers, and therefore as cultural citizens, lay beyond the movement:

Tengo que volver a la Brigada “Hermanos Saíz” y a los talleres literarios, pues a inicios de los ochenta cubanos el sueño de cualquier autor joven cubano (al menos, el de muchos y sin duda alguna el mío propio) era pertenecer a esa organización, escalón superior, salto hacia el prestigio como creador, nivel intermedio entre la vida amateur del tallerista y la categoría poco menos que profesional del respetado miembro de la UNEAC.

Although being a member of a *taller* offered a space for free and creative expression amongst his fellow *talleristas*, Calzada Fowler speaks of the difficulty they had in the mid-1980s of getting their new approaches accepted into the Brigada, which he suggests had stagnated:

La Brigada “Hermanos Saíz”... había entrado en una suerte de crisis. No sé si lo reconocerán quienes, por entonces, dirigían la organización, pero lo cierto es que los de mi edad así lo percibíamos; había una crisis de vejez y anquilosamiento, de acción, difusión de ideas y de referentes culturales. Existíamos en la misma ciudad, pero apenas teníamos lazos; no leíamos a los mismos autores, no reverenciábamos los mismos ídolos culturales, nos sentíamos otros.

When finally accepted into the BHS he soon became its vice-president and was able to incorporate many new members from amongst the ranks of *talleristas*. Yet Calzada Fowler believes it was not until the formation of the AHS that the organisation was able to provide a space for learning and dialogue about new cultural developments both in Cuba and abroad:

¿Cuántos recuerdan ahora lo que, para los de mi promoción, significó la creación de la AHS en el año 1986? Muchísimos de los autores de hoy, estén donde estén, se iniciaron allí o pudieron tener una mejor idea de la creación cultural del país y... de muchas otras partes del mundo.

According to these four writers, the experience of participation in the *talleres literarios* during the 1980s, was an important element in the shaping of new literary developments and ideas. As they did for those who had participated in the previous decade, the *talleres literarios* provided the conditions under which aspiring writers could develop their cultural citizenship and forge lasting personal relationships, making them feel part of a group, a movement and the continuation of literary tradition. However,

different to the 1970s, for these *talleristas* there were fewer restrictions on the content of communication within the individual literary public spheres. In fact, the *talleres literarios* offered them space to debate new ideas which were not yet accepted in the wider public sphere. Furthermore, this provision of space to enact cultural citizenship was important for these writers, who faced difficulties accessing the wider public sphere. Although cultural citizenship for these writers was a process of self-improvement that continued outside of the *talleres literarios* movement, the opportunity for dialogic communication within them laid the foundation for the literary group later known as the *novísimos*, and for those associated with the magazines *Diáspora* and *Naranja Dulce*.

Post-1990: Ana Lydia Vega, Abraham Ortiz

During the crisis of the early 1990s, the *talleres literarios* ceased to operate as a national movement. However, despite, and even due to, the changes in conditions in the wider literary world during this period, some young aspiring writers were able to find refuge and guidance within the individual *talleres literarios* that continued to function. Yet the experience of participation at this time was greatly limited, as it lacked the same opportunities for exchanges with other *talleristas* or the possibilities of receiving the same amount of direct criticism from established writers. Moreover, few of these opportunities that were prevalent in the 1980s were ever restored, even with the later revitalisation of the movement after mid-decade. At this time, when the movement did again begin to gather momentum, the advent of more specialised *talleres de vanguardia* in the early 2000s had a divisive impact for the experience of *talleristas*. They offered the opportunity for young aspiring writers in pursuit of literary connections and guidance, at least in Havana, to by-pass the municipal system altogether, leaving the latter to perform more community-focussed functions.

Ana Lydia Vega⁵³

Ana Lydia Vega (1968), is a member of UNEAC with numerous literary prizes and eleven published books, mainly of short stories. Her work has received considerable critical attention, with some critics labelling her as a *pos-novísimo* because of the themes she writes about. However, she herself does not

⁵³ Interview conducted 03/04/07.

feel part of a particular literary group. She joined a *taller literario* during the 1990s, and describes her experience as a *tallerista* as very important to her, because it both helped her to achieve a sense of belonging and to discover an identity for herself as a writer. Half-Russian and half-Cuban, Lydia Vega had never felt that she belonged properly to either nation. She had spent her childhood in Cuba but had moved to Russia during her adolescence and teenage years. It was there that she began writing as a personal means of overcoming the social and cultural isolation she felt, rather than with any idea of becoming a writer. In 1989, she travelled to Cuba to visit her father for a few months. However, whilst there, the Soviet Bloc collapsed and overnight all air travel had to be paid for in dollars. As she had no means of getting hold of such currency she was unable to return to Russia. She thus bowed to inevitability and decided to stay in Cuba. Unfortunately, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc had plunged Cuba into crisis, just when she needed to find some means of surviving.

At first she felt incredibly isolated in Cuba because her Spanish was not very good. However, she soon met a group of artists and writers during a weekly cultural activity at a gallery in Alamar and this helped her to feel more settled. Through this group, she came into contact with the poet Juan Carlos Flores who helped her to translate a story she had written in Russian, about travels she had made around the Soviet Union. Flores, who had been involved with the *talleres literarios* for some time, recommended that Lydia Vega send her story to the Encuentro-Debate Municipal in Habana del Este. She won the competition outright and the whole experience motivated her to join her local *taller literario*:

Leo el cuento y gano, entonces me mandan para el provincial en Ciudad de Habana, y gano también – para mí era casi mágico, en el nacional cogí mención, y cuando regresé, pensé ahora quiero aprender un poco y empecé a ir a los talleres literarios.

She describes the two years in the *taller* as a huge learning process that helped her not only to improve her writing but increased her ability to analyse texts critically: “Aprendí un montón sobre detalles técnicos – si no aprendí cosas nuevas aprendí por lo menos cómo se llaman esas cosas que ya utilizaba y eso me ayudó a analizar los textos.”

Furthermore, she has great respect for the other members of her *taller* in Alamar, some of whom have also continued to write: “era un grupo muy fuerte que estuvimos allí.” However, it was the established

poet Juan Carlos Flores who gave her most confidence in the *taller* and who helped her to believe that she could be a writer. In this way, she continued to develop as a cultural citizen. Yet after a while, she stopped feeling like she was gaining as a *tallerista* and that her work was actually beginning to suffer from participating in constant dialogue with the same group: “Llega un momento en que uno empieza a reciclar, porque además como todo el mundo lee las cosas, los escritos empiezan a parecerse.”

When she left the *taller*, she won UNEAC’s David prize with her first book, which: “había sido completamente formado en los talleres.” Then, with that prize, she was able to enter the AHS, which further helped her to develop a sense of belonging: “El AHS me ayudó a conocer a más escritores que movían en la misma onda con los mismos intereses y me hizo sentir menos aislada y rara.” Although she had felt part of the *taller literario* as well, she said that the fact that the *talleres* were open meant she did not always have things in common with all the other *talleristas*. Later in the decade, when Lydia Vega already had several publications, she was invited by Heras León, along with other published writers, to join the first year of the *taller* that would later become the Centro Onelio. Since then, she has participated often as a *jurado* and even became the *asesora* of a *taller literario* for young people in a library. However, she abandoned the role after eight months because she thought that the majority of her students were participating in order to miss classes.

Abraham Ortiz⁵⁴

Abraham Ortiz (1976) is a physics teacher and aspiring writer who is yet to be published in Cuba but who has won a literary prize convened in Spain, and completed the course of the Centro Onelio. He started attending a municipal *taller literario* in 2001 and despite having also attended more than one higher level *taller de vanguardia*, in 2007 he was still participating in three municipal *talleres* in Plaza, Centrohabana and Marianao. In terms of his self-improvement as a writer and cultural citizen, he feels that he has superseded the opportunity for further learning offered by these *talleres*. However, his motive for remaining a *tallerista* is related to his personal sense of well-being rather than to a desire to gain further education or recognition within the movement. Ortiz had begun writing as a young boy in order to combat depression, but it was not until he was working in his first school in the countryside

⁵⁴ Interview conducted 16/02/07.

that he sought out like-minded colleagues for collective poetry readings. Later, in Havana, a Spanish teacher heard him read a story and recommended he talk to some local *talleristas* who were visiting the school he was in. Following the meeting, he joined their *taller* in Marianao and after four months of individual and collective learning, he participated in and won a prize at the Encuentro-Debate Municipal. This gave him great motivation and he began to aspire to join a *taller de vanguardia*.

Nevertheless, whilst Ortiz attests that the *talleres de vanguardia* have provided him with more technical knowledge, he regularly attends municipal *talleres* because of the friendships he has established there and the forum for expression it offers. Reading his work in these *talleres* provides him with psychological comfort: “El taller del municipio es como terapia literaria en grupo.” There people can discuss their writing on a number of topics that are of personal importance to them and receive support and validation from the rest of the group. However, Ortiz believes that the literary standard of this type of debate is not always very high: “en el municipal puedes encontrar a alguien que te escribe un gran poema y otro que te escribe un poema cursi a un tío muerto.” Personally, although he finds the lack of theoretical discussion frustrating sometimes, he respects the *taller* as a creative and supportive space where people of all ages and backgrounds can go to escape from everyday life; a *taller* is: “una manera de escapar de la monotonía o la marginalidad” (Ortiz 16/03/07). Furthermore, echoing the sentiments of other writers, Ortiz maintains that much of the vitality of a particular *taller* depends on the *asesor* running it.

These brief accounts from *talleristas* from after 1990 offer a glimpse of the type of cultural citizenship that the *talleres literarios* of this period have encouraged. Both these *talleristas* were able to develop their initial cultural citizenship in *talleres*, through a process of learning and self-improvement, but ultimately felt that this process was limited in the municipal *talleres* because of the overall standard of the group. Nevertheless, both were able to benefit from the experience in other ways, particularly from the sense of belonging it afforded them. In a sense, their experience is no different from the writers who participated during earlier decades, who ultimately desired to enact their cultural citizenship beyond the *talleres literarios* movement. However, tellingly, unlike the latter, the experiences of the later *talleristas* do not mention that they were able to form literary groups within the *talleres literarios* or that they met other writers who they might consider to be of their generation. This indicates the

difference in social make-up in the contemporary municipal *talleres* of Havana compared to previous decades. They are more geared towards community work than fostering literary connections. The specific type of cultural citizenship developed by *talleres* with this focus will be developed further in the next section.

Cuban cultural citizenship in practice part II: The contemporary municipal talleres literarios

The role of contemporary asesores: Lizette Clavelo, Mercedes Melo

Two *asesoras literarias* from different *municipios* of Havana concur with Ortiz's belief that the contemporary municipal *talleres literarios* are important spaces for self-expression, especially for younger people. Lizette Clavelo⁵⁵ runs a *taller* for young people at her house in *municipio* Playa. A published poet herself, she describes the meetings she holds in her backyard as *descargas* rather than *talleres literarios*. A colloquial term usually used to describe an informal gathering where people sing, dance, or perform in other ways, a *descarga* at Clavelo's house, though following the basic format of a *taller*, can actually go on into the night, and often becomes more than just a discussion of poetry. She believes that the two genres most associated with the *talleres literarios*, poetry and the short story, offer an immediacy that makes them the ideal media for expressing an idea, feeling or experience. Following this idea, a large part of the cultural citizenship gained and enacted within the *talleres literarios* involves participants playing an active and creative role in the production of everyday meanings. Furthermore, Mercedes Melo,⁵⁶ an established writer with over twenty years' experience of working with *talleres literarios* in 10 de Octubre, believes that providing people with this kind of creative space performs a significant social function. However, they have to be run well as spaces.

Melo names three elements which are important for leading a successful *taller*. The first of these has been an ability to manage a variety of group dynamics by creating a supportive atmosphere in which everyone feels able to communicate. As an *asesora*, Melo has been responsible for facilitating communication between people from different generations and social backgrounds. For her, it has helped that she has lived the majority of her life in 10 de Octubre and knows the *municipio* and its

⁵⁵ Interview conducted 07/03/07.

⁵⁶ Interview conducted 17/03/07 and 01/04/07.

inhabitants well. However, as well as being engaged with her local community, she has had to conduct herself with tact and diplomacy as she acts as a mentor for *talleristas*. With the contemporary *talleres literarios* being divided into age groups, according to Melo, it has on rare occasions been necessary to break up the municipal *taller* if it is thought that the mixture in ages may end up in personal clashes. During one Encuentro-Debate Municipal, the competition was divided into two halves: one for pensioner *talleristas* and the other for the younger generation, because it was feared that the younger people would be too harshly critical of the older generation's work.

Melo's second feature of being a good *asesor/a* is the ability to guide individual *talleristas*. Although she maintains that an *asesor's* role should be minimal, and should be as facilitator rather than teacher, it is still important to have adequate and continuous training for the job. The guidelines for *talleres* issued by the CNCC since the early 1990s have contained less about their content and more about how to run them. *Asesores* are free to guide *talleristas* based on their own literary knowledge and background. This potentially broadens the range of communication within a *taller*. Yet Melo highlights that one drawback can be that some *asesores* establish a canon for individual *talleres* which can quickly become out-of-date. For her, one way of combating this is to keep abreast of literary developments and to attend the courses of *superación* run by the CNCC or other institutions. Although not yet widely available outside of Havana, Melo was able to complete one such course run by the Centro Onelio which was based on a condensed version of the course they run for young writers.

In terms of her own technique, having come from a literary family, and studied and written literature herself, Melo has been able to offer a consistently rich experience to her *talleristas*. In her *taller*, she has organised events and visits from established writers and literary figures that she knows personally, including Redonet and Alberto Guerra amongst many others. Finally, one last element for running a successful *taller*, according to Melo, is to know when to encourage a particular *tallerista* to leave a *taller* to pursue their writing/ formation outside of the system. She believes that it is often the case that *asesores* try to hold on to their best writers in order to create a better group dynamic, and to encourage them to enter and perhaps win the internal competitions. Although she suggests that it is good that some people with formed ideas come to *talleres* because it stimulates debate, it is very important that they leave when they reach a certain level, so that they do not become frustrated. In other words, in the

type of *taller* she runs, the collective process of cultural citizenship formation can only achieve so much; individual cultural citizens who aspire to enact their citizenship in the wider public sphere need to pursue their own path. The next section examines this initial collective process in detail.

An eyewitness account of three contemporary talleres literarios

During 2007, it was possible to observe three *talleres literarios* in operation in different municipalities of Havana, as well as one *taller de superación* and one national event: the Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles. This section examines what kind of literary public spheres these *talleres literarios* were, and analyses the process of cultural citizenship formation and enactment within them.

The talleres: Plaza de la Revolución, 10 de octubre, Marianao

The first *taller literario* was based in *municipio* Plaza de la Revolución, and held on a Wednesday afternoon in the Salón Rosado of UNEAC in Vedado. Its location within the buildings of the prestigious national institution, where the BHS had previously run its *talleres*, facilitated greater access to important literary figures who sometimes offered talks to participants, but it did not change the status of the *taller* as part of the municipal system. It was one of two *talleres literarios* of the *municipio*, the other was held in the Casa de Cultura, because of the high level of demand in that area which includes many other cultural centres and the university. Consisting of ten participants, the majority were university or pre-university students and the rest were non-working individuals who were either retired or described themselves as housewives. The gender-balanced group sat in a rough circle facing the *asesora* in the small meeting room of the building.

The second *taller literario* was held weekly on a Sunday morning in the Casa del Escritor in 10 de Octubre, a very large *municipio* which has traditionally been home to workers. Again the *talleristas* sat in a circle at one end of the large empty room on the ground floor. As the building was situated opposite a park and a church, numerous sounds from church processions, to children playing in the park to traffic passing on the roads flowed in through the broken windows. On this occasion, there were

only eight participants, although usually the *taller* averaged around twelve. There were: two *decimistas*, two teenage girls, two middle-aged women and two men. The third *taller* was also held in a Casa del Escritor in Marianao. A much smaller and darker building than its counterpart in 10 de Octubre, this Casa del Escritor hosted the municipal *taller literario* every Saturday morning for three hours. It was attended by seven participants, two retired women, a retired army officer, a teacher, an office worker, and two students as well as the *asesor*.

As literary public spheres, all the *talleres literarios* were clearly linked to a national literary movement. Within each of the three municipal *talleres* there was a physical reminder of local literary activity past and present, in the form of posters in Marianao, books by local authors in 10 de Octubre and the presence of UNEAC in Plaza. However, during each *taller* there was also a conscious attempt on the part of the *asesores* to remind *talleristas* about local literary tradition as well as its continuation or celebration in the form of current activities, and literary promotion directed towards writers and their work in addition to engaging more sections of the community with literature.

For example, in Plaza, proceedings began when the *asesora* talked about a number of local, upcoming, literary events such as an all-night poetry vigil to be held in a local park in Vedado, inaugurating the *Semana de poesía* in March 2007. There, *talleristas* from various *talleres* would go to read their poetry in public. This was one of several events organised to mark the week, which included a poetry recital in the *Sala Guillén* of the same UNEAC building. In Marianao, the *asesor* talked about visits to schools, presentation of books and poetry event in the Pabellón de Cuba. Meanwhile, in 10 de Octubre the *asesora* evoked both the literary and popular cultural traditions of the *municipio*. She mentioned famous writers who had come from the area, past activities of the Casa del Escritor as well as a forthcoming competition and the history of oral poetry in the locality.

It was this direction given by the *asesores* that linked the *talleres*, albeit in a local way, to a central cultural policy and administration. While they were functioning, the informal atmosphere of each *taller* seemed far away from a bureaucratic administration. However, each was reminded of their designated role as a focus for literary culture in the community. Furthermore, it was made clear during the briefing for the *taller de superación* held in the Dirección Provincial de Cultura in Havana that this was an

important part of the role of the *asesor*. Each *asesor* was responsible for researching about local literary tradition and for divulging this information, as well as promoting literary activity and running the *talleres*. Part of the research included keeping records or *fichas* about all *talleristas*, recording their personal information and details about their literary work so that these could be sent to the national office of the CNCC and reports written about the movement. In attendance were the majority of *asesores* from all the *municipios* of Havana Province as well as representatives of Literatura from the CNCC.

Although the CNCC was the central institution that oversaw the work of the *asesores*, they were also involved with other lines of administrative control, particularly that emanating from the Instituto Cubano del Libro. *Asesores* participated in municipal publishing committees and were involved with the promotion of individual writers and books, tasks that were part of the remit of the ICL. One example of the amount of administrative work that goes into supporting the *talleres literarios* movement could be witnessed during the Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles held in the Hotel Camagüey in Camagüey Province. A large event taking place over three days, it involved children from all provinces of the country, the local *asesores literarios* responsible for their welfare, numerous *jurados* consisting of published writers, educational experts and publishers, as well as a number of cultural workers from the CNCC and its provincial branches responsible for all the organisation. Nevertheless, in all cases, whilst considerable administrative effort was put into creating the conditions within which the *talleres literarios* both had meaning and could take place, the majority of both their input and output came from the *talleristas* themselves.

Spaces for the construction of everyday meanings

During the three *talleres*, *talleristas* read their work out loud. There was then a discussion between the author and the others present in the group. The literature presented was predominantly poetry or short stories but also included were some children's literature, *décima* and a section of a novel. Topics varied considerably as the following examples show: a widow recited her poem about her dead husband; a teacher recounted a short story about an encounter on a bus; a *decimista* recited several short *décimas* he had memorised; a teenage girl read a fantasy story about meeting Che Guevara in person; a retired

army general read a section of a humorous novel about mothers-in-law. Collectively, as well as having literary aspirations, individuals were taking advantage of the space of the *taller* in order to express their worries, concerns, fears, ideas and feelings, in an environment where they were recognised, respected and felt safe in doing so. In this way, *talleristas* were participating in the construction of everyday meanings, which were both related to their lives as individuals and could be identified with by the rest of the group.

This idea of constructing everyday meanings was reinforced by the fact that participants talked about how their literature arose because of their *inquietudes*. For some, these *inquietudes* related to what they perceived to be happening in the wider society around them, but for others they were altogether more personal. A number of *talleristas* described their *inquietudes* as being related to “temas sociales” and marginalised people (Marianao). Ingrid, a 19-year-old *tallerista*, described how her walks around the city of Havana, especially through “barrios marginados”, informed the writing that she takes into read in the *talleres* (Plaza). In contrast, another woman said her *inquietudes* were about stimulating the imagination of children, and teaching them values. She dedicated her time in the *taller* to producing and reading children’s literature about talking animals. However, despite the work being based on individual preoccupations, the collective experience of the *taller* meant that these concerns were not only shared but discussed within the group.

Although there were not always photocopies available so that the other *talleristas* could follow the text being read, each contribution encouraged responses. Comments were made asking for the clarification of the meaning of a specific line of poetry, about the direction taken by a story or about the portrayal of character. Discussion ensued, in which *talleristas* debated the content of work by referring to their literary knowledge or to their personal experience. On occasion, the *asesor* interjected to clarify a point of grammar, to give some literary background, like the history of a particular genre, or to recommend further reading. However, mostly they just facilitated the group discussion and moved it onto the next topic when it was seen to have come to a natural end. At this point, the *tallerista* whose work was being debated often thanked the fellow participants and some indicated that they would incorporate the suggestions into a newer version of the work, although this was to be done in their own time. At the end of each discussion, some form of consensus was reached, only if this was based on an

understanding that different perspectives exist. The need for each *tallerista* to attempt to understand the work of others was evident during the conversations. Yet it is not clear how far this affected how 'accessible' *talleristas* made their texts, although one mentioned that he would never take an experimental piece to the *taller* (Marianao).

Several *talleristas* had also had the opportunity to present literature they had worked on to a larger public, and therefore had been empowered to enact their cultural citizenship outside the space of the *taller*. Although printed *boletines* were not favoured by these *talleres*, more than one *tallerista* had been invited to read their work in schools or at other activities, and several had achieved publications in provincial or organisational publishing houses, thereby gaining access to the wider public sphere. Consequently, their status as cultural citizens allowed them to be active agents in the literary process. A woman with a book of children's poetry recently published by Extramuros, and a man with a historical novel recently published by the printing press of the FAR, both from Marianao, were also given the chance to present their books during the Feria del Libro, where they were offered recognition alongside many established writers doing the same thing. *Asesores* actively encouraged *talleristas* who had been participating for a while to prepare books to send to literary prizes or publishing houses, edited their texts for them and were able to recommend the work of certain *talleristas* to the other members of the municipal publishing committee.

The learning process

The learning process within the *talleres literarios* was central to the formation of cultural citizens. Most of the potential for collective learning within the *talleres* came during the course of the discussions about the individual texts. This included guidance from both the *asesor* and other members of the group; and, due to the sense of equality amongst *talleristas*, all comments were valued. Whilst some of this learning was knowledge based, a lot was skills based. As well as writing skills, other skills practised were public speaking, comprehension, listening, debating and criticism. Several *talleristas* confirmed that participating in a *taller* had helped them to improve in these areas, although most emphasised an improvement in their ability to understand and criticise texts (Vedado, Plaza, Marianao). There was also a sense of progression amongst *talleristas* based on self-improvement as

much as collective learning. During the *taller* in Plaza the *asesora* commented on how one student's poetry had been improving with each *taller*, particularly after he had read Eliseo Diego. The individual self-improvement was taking place outside of the *taller*, with personal study and writing, but was only fully realised once back in the group. As one participant said, participation in the *talleres* involves a process of study and finding an individual voice, which gains momentum during the regular meetings (Plaza). This was corroborated by other *talleristas* who affirmed that the balance between individual work and the group discussion motivated them to read and write more.

Nevertheless, the *talleres* were not without specifically taught elements. During the 10 de octubre *taller*, the *asesora* played a more active role as she gave a younger member some literary exercises in order to stimulate creation. Although the content of the taught elements depended on the individual *asesor*, all *asesores* had had the opportunity to learn about teaching techniques as part of their training. However, their training, despite being provided by the CNCC, was not uniform and was designed by writers as opposed to other members of the cultural administration. At the *taller de superación*, *asesores* learnt ways of teaching about the writing process by discussing the writing process themselves. The *taller* was part of a course designed and run by the established poet, Ismael González Castañer. During each session, the *asesores* debated the conception, reading, criticism, and execution of literary texts. The format included a brief lecture and practical exercises as well as discussion. Concentrating on practicalities and techniques, as well as some theoretical concepts, the training *taller* followed a structure first popularised by Jorge Aguiar, a writer who ran a *taller de vanguardia* in Havana. In the course, *talleres* have different names: *Pensamiento*, *Taller*, *Clínica*, *Laboratorio*, *Farmacia*, *Fábrica*; the medical metaphor mimics the stages of the creative process, which moves from initial idea to constructing the text and is both individual and collective (González Castañer, 2007).

Social functions: the benefits of cultural citizenship

As well as providing the space and tools for cultural citizenship, the three municipal *talleres literarios* offered a cultural citizenship that promoted social integration. In each *taller* there was a mixture of people of different ages and backgrounds who may not have had cause for interaction outside of that group. Yet, within the supportive and communicative environment of the *taller*, these people not only

interacted, but also learnt a lot about each other. Several *talleristas* said they had established good friendships within the *taller*, but notable was the fact that more than one *tallerista* in both Plaza and Marianao described their relationship with the whole group as being like a family. This warmth was exacerbated by the shared love of literature within the group; *talleristas* mentioned meeting like-minded, different and interesting individuals as one of the major advantages of having joined the *taller* (Plaza). The opportunity to meet people also extended beyond the primary group through *talleristas*' work in the community or their participation in competitions, and also included occasional dialogue with established writers. However, the same factor that brought these different people together in the *talleres* may also have prevented the group from being representative of a cross-section of Cuban society, or even of the local communities from which they came. Their love of literature usually indicated that they had achieved a certain level of education, although this was not always the case.

Nevertheless, both *asesores* and *talleristas* stressed the benefit for individuals of being part of a 'family' of fellow participants. The validation gained by *talleristas* during discussions of their creative projects was also felt on a personal level. Echoing the contemporary discourse about the *talleres* and personal development, the *asesores* maintained that the self-esteem of *talleristas* visibly improved through regular participation, because of the group recognition and acceptance, the acquisition of skills and also from the sense of being involved in something creative and productive. In agreement, several *talleristas* spoke of their pride at being a member of a *taller*, and being involved with Cuban literature. For example, students in Plaza listed their favourite writers and talked about what it felt like to be inside the prestigious UNEAC building, whilst the *decimistas* in 10 de octubre were proud that their local traditions were being recognised and produced in a book.

In some cases, the sense of empowerment gained within the *taller* had translated into the aspiration to achieve literary recognition outside of the movement, and to ascend the literary hierarchy. A couple of *talleristas* in Marianao had already completed the Centro Onelio course, considered to be the next stage up, and were sending work to external prizes, with the ultimate aim of publication. However, several *talleristas* were happy with the cultural citizenship offered by the movement, especially as there was also the possibility to be published whilst within it (Marianao). While some *talleristas* remained in the *taller* to compete in the competitions or because they wanted to keep learning, others stayed in the

taller because they liked the group despite having already got some literary achievements outside. In general, they appreciated the regular opportunity both to read out and listen to literary work even if it was at an amateur level.

An example of an empowered cultural citizen who had benefited from the movement, yet who did not aspire to be a writer outside of it, is Milfa. A *tallerista* from Marianao in her sixties, Milfa first went to a *taller* in the 1970s after being encouraged by a friend who saw a poem she had written displayed on the wall of the bus terminal where she worked. She rejoined the movement more permanently in 1990, after the death of her baby inspired her to write poetry for children. She found comfort in regularly attending the *taller*, and the validation and guidance she received, helped her to develop confidence both as a person and as a writer. In 2006, following a recommendation from her *asesor*, she submitted a book of poems to a provincial publishing house, Extramuros, and a year later was published with a limited print-run. She is immensely proud of her publication and of being recognised as a writer. Already well-known as a *tallerista* in her *municipio* where she gains a lot of happiness from the poetry readings she does in local schools, she was also interviewed about her literature by a visiting Chilean academic. Furthermore, although she clearly does not feature in a high position in the writing hierarchy, she calls herself both a *poeta* and a *tallerista*, showing the possibility of claiming both titles (Marianao).

A general notion of Cuban cultural citizenship and the talleres literarios

Cumulatively, the value of this collection of testimonies and the eye-witness account has been to illustrate the variety of personal experiences that have been engendered by the national movement of *talleres literarios*. It demonstrates, overwhelmingly, how people ‘from below’, have used the *talleres literarios* in pursuit of their own individual creative paths and meanings but also how the collective experience of the *talleres literarios* has had a considerable impact on those paths, through offering people a formation in cultural citizenship and a space in which to enact it. Taken together, the accounts of participation in the *talleres literarios* offer a glimpse of the impact of the movement on both the literary process and individuals throughout the course of its history. In particular, the experience of the writers has shown definitively that the *talleres literarios* did not train them as standardised writers nor

was it successful in imposing a certain literary aesthetics on them. Instead, their participation in the movement represented only an early stage in their journey towards becoming established, which in reality was a much longer process involving both individual and collective activity.

However, at the same time, the fact that they experienced this initial stage of their formation in the collective environment of an official system shows the important consequences that their participation has had, both for their individual careers and literary developments over the long-term. In addition, the experience of the contemporary municipal *talleres literarios* reveals the more short-term impact that participation in specific literary public spheres has on citizens. The contrast in experience during the different time periods, as well as showing how participation meant different things for different people, reflects how the characteristics of the cultural citizenship offered by the *talleres literarios* have changed over time. Nevertheless, despite the variety of experience, it is still possible to draw out some common themes in this cultural citizenship that span the revolutionary period. These are the themes of belonging, empowerment and the construction of meanings.

Belonging

One clear theme that runs through all of the experiences, even across the decades, is the theme of belonging. Both the contemporary *talleristas* and the writers describe how their experience in a *taller literario* has made them feel part of the literary world. Their time in a *taller* initiated them into a cultural citizenship that involved not only belonging to a literary world but that empowered them, although in different ways, to take an active role within it. At the most abstract level, this sense of belonging is to an imagined notion of national literary tradition and culture and most participants already expressed an interest in literature and writing before joining a *taller literario*. However, their experience in the *talleres literarios* converted that abstract sense of belonging into something more tangible, practical, and personal in several different ways. One way was through access. The *talleres literarios* offered participants access to books, literary advice from *asesores* and even, on occasions, access to established writers. Yet more than access, for most *talleristas*, the tangible sense of belonging came from the personal relationships they formed and the status they gained as a *tallerista*. Depending on their level of involvement, *talleristas* have developed a sense of belonging to their particular *taller*,

to the wider movement, to local literary life or even to a community of literary friends that also existed outside of the *talleres*.

Furthermore, many *talleristas* past and present expressed a sense of pride at having belonged to the *talleres* movement and for some participants, that feeling of belonging was even central to their sense of self-worth. Yet despite being proud of their time as *talleristas*, for the majority of the writers, the ultimate aim was to transfer their belonging to other organisations higher up the writing hierarchy such as the BHS or AHS. However, importantly, they only gained this aspiration once they had participated in a *taller* and realised their potential through interaction with other *talleristas*. Therefore, the shared experience of this initial entry into a literary world was both a levelling experience, as all participants were offered the same opportunities, and facilitated the construction of a hierarchy, as some aspired to gain further recognition. Moreover, the writers' experiences of the *talleres literarios* movement show how some gained the sensation that they formed part of a new, emerging national generation, as they met others with shared interests through their *taller* or through the competitions and visits between them and some even formed literary groups within particular *talleres*.

However, this experience, evident in some of the accounts from the 1980s and to a lesser extent the 1970s, is particular to the specific writers interviewed and cannot necessarily be generalised to the municipal *talleres literarios* overall. Indeed, the experience of the contemporary *talleres literarios* revealed fewer *talleristas* who aspired to form part of a new, literary generation outside of the movement. Nevertheless, the writers' experience is still valid, considering successive groups of writers later categorised into so-called generations or *promociones* can be traced back to their time participating together in the *talleres*. In this way, the *talleres* can be seen as fundamental to the evolution of the literary process in Cuba even though often the groups and generations that the writers felt part of took many years to reach maturity and to break into the wider public sphere. At this point, it is also important to remember that there are also established writers who have never participated in a *taller literario*, although they form the minority. One such young writer, Susana Haug, suggests that their lack of involvement in the movement is due to a lack of need for the benefits that the *talleres literarios* provide.

According to her, she, and other similar writers, did not need to join a *taller literario* as they already had access to books, literature and other writers because of their background and family connections (Haug, 03/03/07). Therefore, following her argument, the *talleres literarios* appear to have fulfilled one of the aims of cultural policy by offering the opportunity to enter a literary world to many people who might not otherwise have had access to literary resources and connections. At the same time, the *talleres literarios* have socialised this stage in the formation of both amateur and aspiring writers making it into an experience shared by both kinds of writer and potentially a broad range of people. It is the egalitarian nature of this initial experience in literature offered by the *talleres literarios*, and its role in encouraging social integration that has been challenged by the advent of the higher level *talleres* and the two-tier system. For, although the contemporary municipal *talleres literarios* appear to encourage social integration at the community level this is not necessarily the case for the more one-off, selective *talleres de vanguardia* or the Centro Onelio.

Empowerment

With the exception of two of the writers, participation in the *talleres literarios* has empowered *talleristas* as cultural citizens through the acquisition of both tools and validation in the form of recognition for their work and participation. In terms of tools, participants in the *talleres literarios* have learnt about different types of literature, about the writing process, and perhaps more importantly, have learnt the skills of listening, debating and critical judgement as well as writing. The nature of *talleres* as spaces for dialogic communication especially helped *talleristas* to develop these skills. However, to a large extent, the knowledge component of the learning process depended on the individual *asesores* leading the group, and the level of their training. According to the accounts of participants, there was considerable disparity between the training and background of *asesores* and therefore the range of learning also varied amongst participants. This variation continued to affect the contemporary *asesores*, although the *taller de superación* revealed one aspect of their collective training: an attempt to inform them of a tried and tested approach to the writing process. During the *talleres* themselves, the *asesores'* input was minimal, they preferred instead to act as facilitators and add only occasional comments. In this way, the overall learning process within the *taller* depended as much on the other *talleristas* as it did on the *asesor*.

Therefore, whilst there was evidence of unhelpful *asesores* in some *talleres*, in the main, *talleristas* felt that the experience and knowledge they gained during the period of their participation was helpful. However, several of the writers also acknowledged the limitations of the learning process within the *talleres*. Many arrived at a point at which they felt they no longer were learning within the *talleres* and wished to continue their formation outside of them. Nevertheless, these limitations were not experienced in the same way by everybody, and most *talleristas* were able to appreciate the validation that their time in the *talleres* had given them. For those participating in the contemporary *talleres* that validation could be witnessed during the process of the *taller*. The participants were all treated with equal respect within the group and their creative efforts and comments were all recognised as valid. This validation led to some *talleristas* being empowered to take their work out into the community, reading it at schools or participating in other literary events. Other *talleristas* and writers were able to gain further recognition by competing within the internal competitions or getting their work printed or published with the help of the *asesores*.

Ultimately, many of the writers wanted to achieve greater empowerment by gaining further institutional recognition and a voice in the wider public sphere. However, this contrasts with the experience of many of the contemporary *talleristas* who had participated in the movement for longer periods of time, and who did not necessarily aspire to be more than amateur writers, but who got a sense of empowerment from their participation within the *taller*, their status as *talleristas* within the local community or wider movement. Therefore, the actual empowerment of cultural citizens within the *talleres literarios* clearly exists within a hierarchy defined by the cultural capital to be gained from different levels of social recognition both inside and outside of the movement. Yet in the same way that the *talleres literarios* offered all participants a sense of belonging to a literary world, they offered all the empowering sense that they were playing an active role in that world. Thus, by initiating *talleristas* into cultural citizenship, and providing them with a space in order to enact it, the *talleres literarios*, during their operation, give all cultural citizens an equal sense of empowerment.

The construction of meanings

As we have seen, both the sense of belonging and empowerment offered by participation in the *talleres literarios* have generated various meanings for individual cultural citizens in terms of their position within, and feeling part of, a literary world. Moreover, although not much is known about the other aspects of these individual participants' lives, the fact that their experience in the *talleres literarios* has generated such a variety of meanings suggests that they could not all be the ideal citizen promoted by the wider context and by the official discourse about the movement. At the same time, their commitment to national literature, as well as their participation in an institutional framework established by the revolutionary process, suggests that their status as cultural citizens has ultimately fallen somewhere within the boundaries set by the leadership. However, it is through the enactment of their cultural citizenship that participants have been able to generate their own everyday meanings, far away from those disseminated through official structures. In the main, the *talleres literarios* have allowed participants to develop their own shared meanings, and these at times, have laid the foundations for later challenges to the official boundaries

As empowered cultural citizens, participants' communication within the *talleres literarios* has allowed them a creative role in the construction of meanings which lie way beyond their personal narratives. Through the reading and debating of their literary work, all the participants in the *talleres literarios* have participated in dialogic communication about many diverse topics. In this way, the individual spaces of the municipal *talleres literarios*, open to a wide range of people, offer the opportunity for democratic engagement in the ongoing construction and negotiation of culture. Nevertheless, not all the communication within the *talleres literarios* has the same level of impact. Within the space of a *taller literario*, the communication is based on conversation; therefore it is fleeting and its impact is restricted to the members of that group. Yet some participants have been empowered to continue their dialogue in competitions or outside of the *talleres literarios* in the locality and others have made an impact through the publication of their texts in the wider public sphere.

The majority of the established writers only made an impact in the wider public sphere some time after participating in the *talleres literarios*. However, for some of them, the *talleres literarios* provided the

space for the debate of new ideas that would later be expressed in their published work. The experiences from the 1980s especially reveal how the literary public spheres of the *talleres literarios* even provided the space for the discussion of ideas that were not yet present in the wider public sphere, and that would later challenge established norms. Furthermore, several of the writers described how this initial communication of ideas led them to discover shared interests and perspectives amongst a particular group of aspiring writers, whether within their own *taller* or within the wider movement. A similar process of consensus building could also be witnessed in the experience of the contemporary *talleres*. Although these *talleristas* may not have considered themselves part of a literary group, the experience of collectively debating their individual self-expressions clearly facilitated the production of shared meanings.

However, the accounts also reveal that, even within the space of the *talleres literarios*, the communication between *talleristas* was sometimes limited. It was limited either through institutional constraints in the form of a particular *asesor*, or through the limitations of the particular group of *talleristas*. For example, several writers refer to the restrictions on communication within the *talleres literarios* during the 1970s, although this experience does not always appear to be uniform. Moreover, whilst in subsequent decades those restrictions are mentioned less, there are still occasional references to certain *asesores* or *jurados* who hindered self-expression. Yet perhaps more significant are the limits to communication within the *talleres literarios* set by the level of education and background of the individual members of each group. Several of the writers, who aspired when in the *talleres* to improve as writers, ultimately found the mixed nature of groups restrictive, as they desired more specialised knowledge and criticism for their work. This led them to aspire to interact with other people further up the writing hierarchy, with more established writers or in the BHS and AHS organisations. In this way, they could gain further cultural capital on their path to entering the wider public sphere.

The community-focussed contemporary *talleres* reinforced this idea of a degree of limitation in specialised literary knowledge, because participants come from a variety of different backgrounds. However, yet again the experience is not uniform. Whilst some of the *talleristas* in 10 de Octubre did not have a high level of education, they had access to an *asesora* with highly specialised literary knowledge and experience. Conversely, the *talleristas* in Plaza de la Revolución were, in the main,

university students, although the *asesora* was not a writer herself. Participants also mentioned the need to make their work ‘accessible’ to all the members of the group. Nevertheless, in a general sense, despite the varying degrees of literary expertise, the *talleres literarios* still provide a space for the communication of ideas. Furthermore, as each individual has their self-expression validated within the collective, the communication within the *talleres literarios* is not only able to empower cultural citizens but also to create shared meanings between often socially diverse groups.

Overall therefore, the experiences of participants show how through the shared sense of belonging, empowerment and the construction of meanings the municipal *talleres literarios* have represented a powerful force for social integration on an everyday basis. The municipal *talleres literarios* may only have offered an ultimately limited level of cultural citizenship, as they existed within a wider hierarchy of writing maintained by different institutions. However, importantly, as an open system, they allowed a great variety of people to share the experience of gaining that initial cultural citizenship together. In this sense, they offer democratic spaces at the local level. It remains to be seen, therefore, how this democratising thrust of the main *talleres literarios* movement has been affected by the emergence of the higher level *talleres* and specifically the Centro Onelio.

Chapter Six

Cultural Citizens at the Next Level or the Formation of Future Writers?

A Case Study of the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso

“En sus cursos no solo se forman mejores narradores, sino también mejores seres humanos que sin dudas contribuirán al crecimiento espiritual de la nación”
(‘CFLOJC’, n.d.a).

El Centro Onelio “respondió al auge de la literatura nacional que desde los fines de los 80 ha develado una nueva geografía de la literatura cubana” (Heras León, 2001: 5).

“[hay] una cuestión que subyace la idea de “formación literaria”: ¿Qué significa ser escritor? Preguntaría además, ¿por qué se desea serlo?” (Díaz Mantilla, 2006: 2).

Since its establishment in 1998, more than 500 young, aspiring writers of narrative in Cuba have passed through the Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso (Centro Onelio) (CFLOJC, n.d.b). Run by its Directors, Eduardo Heras León and wife Ivonne Galeano initially from their own home, with support from co-founder Francisco López Sacha, the Centro Onelio has been transformed from its humble beginnings as a specialised *taller literario* for young writers into a permanent institution.⁵⁷ In 2002 the Centro Onelio, aided by a 50,000 Euro grant from Dutch NGO Hivos and the Ministry of Culture, moved into its own newly-renovated premises in Havana. Each year, it offers a taught course in *técnicas narrativas* to 30 aspiring writers between the ages of 16 and 35 from Havana, as well as a more condensed version of the same course to an equal number of young writers from the provinces. During the ten years that it has existed, it has witnessed a significant number of its graduates (*egresados*) go on to win prestigious prizes and critical acclaim. Moreover, in 2008, the Centro Onelio played host to the Primer Festival Internacional de Narradores Jóvenes, an event attended by young writers from over 15 nations (‘Participantes’ n.d.).

Reflecting on the growth and success of the Centro, Heras León describes it as the final realisation of his dream to create an institution in Cuba modelled on the Centro de Escritores Mexicanos (Heras León, 29/03/07). Although he first had that dream in the 1960s, it took thirty years for the right conditions to exist under which it could be founded. Meanwhile, the movement of *talleres literarios*, in which Heras León has been an important figure, popularised and spread the generic format of a *taller*

⁵⁷ Early versions of the course were run in the Casa de Cultura in the Plaza de la Revolución *municipio* of Havana.

literario that lay at the core of Arreola's original Mexican institution. Similarly, the Centro Onelio is also based on the principal activity of reading and debating individual narrative projects. Therefore, it also constitutes a literary public sphere where Cuban cultural citizens are formed. However, as part of a stand-alone institution, the *taller literario* of the Centro Onelio is also different from the municipal system in several ways and even from the *talleres literarios de vanguardia* run by individual writers. As a literary public sphere it not only operates under different institutional constraints, but also forms a different kind of cultural citizen.

It is the aim of this chapter to investigate the specific role of the Centro Onelio as a unique literary public sphere. Bearing in mind that the institution, although still relatively young, has clearly had an impact on the literary process in Cuba, it examines both the institutional framework within which it operates as a literary public sphere and the kind of cultural citizenship it has offered participants based on the experiences of ten of its graduates (*egresados*). Thus following on from the general notion of Cuban cultural citizenship based on the experience of the main municipal system, this chapter analyses the ways in which the cultural citizenship attained by participation in the Centro Onelio is both similar to and different from the former, and what consequences this has for a notion of Cuban cultural citizenship and the *talleres literarios* overall. However, first it is necessary to understand how the Centro Onelio is different from the main municipal system.

The prestigious taller

One of the most notable differences between the main *talleres* and the Centro Onelio is that more resources were available to the latter. In contrast to the individual *asesores* who work in the main movement, the Centro Onelio employs its own team of full-time staff who, as well as teaching classes, have developed a small publishing facility, producing a tri-annual magazine, *El Cuentero*, and a website, as well as convening literary prizes and grants (CFLOJC, n.d.a). Located in a former mansion in the smart Miramar district of the city, the Centro Onelio can boast purpose-designed classrooms, audiovisual equipment, its own library, the Biblioteca Salvador Redonet and an internet-connected computer room. It was the scale of the Centro Onelio's operations that elevated its official status in

2002 from its origins as a *taller literario* to the position of being an '*institución adscripta*', meaning it is affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, whilst also enjoying relative autonomy (MINCULT, n.d.a).

Yet the difference between the Centro Onelio and the main movement of *talleres literarios* does not end with resources and official status. Another special feature of the Centro is its highly selective nature. Annually, through a *convocatoria*, the Centro Onelio invites applications from prospective participants in the form of three of their own, unpublished, short stories. The Directors then select half the candidates from Havana and half from the provinces, based on an assessment of their talent and potential to benefit from the Centro's classes. Far from the community focus of the contemporary municipal *talleres*, the Centro Onelio clearly operates at a national level and offers young, aspiring writers from all over the country the chance to interact. Participants are invited to attend the course free of charge and, according to Heras León, the number of applications for the limited number of places has increased each year, testament to the high visibility of the institution (Heras León, 29/03/07).

Such a high demand for places may also be related to the content of the course that the Centro Onelio provides. Unlike the more varied, and less academic municipal *talleres*, this course offers cultural citizens a different set of tools and invites a more explicitly intellectual level of dialogue between participants. It consists of a series of theoretical classes on *técnicas narrativas* and different aspects of the writing process, as well as the more basic and interactive *taller* format. The taught component uses a collection of texts about writing, which has been compiled by Heras León into a large published textbook: *Los desafíos de la ficción (técnicas narrativas)* (2001), and is given free to each *tallerista*. Both the classes and the *taller* are led by experienced writers employed by the Centro, and by the Director himself, who has a strong reputation for his pedagogical skills (González, 05/05/07; Rojas, 03/03/07). Furthermore, the course is complemented each year by lectures from invited speakers, all of whom are well-respected and established figures from the Cuban literary world. In terms of its educational level and format, the Centro Onelio resembles the postgraduate courses in creative writing common in the United States and Europe, yet the course remains the only one of its kind in Cuba. It is a fixed-length course, running three Saturdays a month for a year for Havana participants, whilst the provincial *talleristas* experience it full-time over one week every three months; however, both groups get the opportunity to meet each other, work and socialise (Luis, n.d.b).

The Centro Onelio's status as an institution of national importance endows it with considerable literary prestige. Indeed, from the outset, it has benefited from greater prestige than that enjoyed by the contemporary *talleres literarios* (although perhaps similar to the prestige they had in the 1980s). In addition to the direct support it has received from Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, the Centro Onelio *taller* is prestigious because of the educational level of its course, and its permanent association with established Cuban writers and intellectuals. This status has been further increased by the Centro's visible achievements such as *El Cuentero* and the literary successes of its *egresados*, several of whom have gone on to win prizes such as the *Gaceta de Cuba* prize for short stories, considered one of the top narrative competitions in the country (Pérez Castillo, n.d). It is interesting to note, however, that the Centro Onelio has also been involved in the running and sponsoring of the prize since 2000. Finally, the Centro Onelio's reputation has been even further enhanced by its international connections. As well as hosting an international event for young writers of narrative fiction in 2008, the Centro Onelio runs an international literary prize, *El Dinosaurio*, in the genre of *minicuento* and has been visited or praised by several foreign intellectuals. For example, writers as diverse as Eduardo Galeano (uncle of Ivonne), Abelardo Castillo, Mempo Giardinelli, Augusto Monterroso, Luisa Valenzuela and Mario Benedetti are all ardent supporters of the institution and are members of the editorial board of *El Cuentero*. ('Mensajes de los intelectuales...', 2002).

One result of the Centro Onelio's prestige and achievements is that it has, for many, attained its official objective of becoming "un punto de referencia indispensable" for those seeking out "los mejores escritores jóvenes del país" (González, 05/05/07; Melo 17/03/07; MINCULT, n.d.b). Accordingly, the institution has maintained a consistently high profile, featuring in numerous articles in the on-line literary magazines *la jiribilla*, *Esquife* and *cubaliteraria*, as well as gaining exposure during the Feria del Libro and the well-publicised launch events for its magazine and website (Salazar Navarro, 2008). Yet perhaps as a consequence of the level of attention and prestige which it attracts, the Centro Onelio has also been at the receiving end of criticism expressed in the wider public sphere. Although for every detractor of the Centro Onelio, there are many more supporters of it (see below), this criticism has evoked the same issues about the formation of writers raised by the main *talleres literarios* movement.

Moreover, it is a reminder that despite all its prestige and resources, the Centro Onelio is still fundamentally a *taller literario*, albeit an exclusive one which operates in its own institutional space.

The institutional framework: A literary public sphere incorporating a literary tradition of youth

As an *institución adscripta*, the Centro Onelio has its own mission statement, which confirms its position as an autonomous institution, albeit within the overall programme of the Ministry of Culture. The official objectives, as outlined by this statement, reflect the specific nature of its role, distinguishing it from the work done by the contemporary *talleres literarios* movement. Overall, the Centro Onelio's aim is to contribute "al desarrollo de la política cultural en la esfera de la literatura mediante la creación, organización y ejecución de cursos de continuidad de alto nivel teórico-práctico..." (MINCULT, n.d.b). In contrast to the main *talleres literarios*, the courses of the Centro Onelio are highly specialised and target a smaller audience. Instead of being aimed at *aficionados* of literature, or at *participación popular*, it is an institution that is directed at those serious about writing as a career. Its objective is to "Brindar formación especializada en técnicas narrativas, apreciación literaria, poesía y dramaturgia, para el perfeccionamiento del oficio de escritor" (MINCULT, n.d.b).

However, underlining all the elements that make the Centro Onelio unique, the major defining feature of the institution is its designation as a space for young people. Unlike the main movement, which targets young people but is open to the general population, the Centro Onelio is aimed exclusively at young writers, and, as such, has both been shaped by, and helped to define, an idea of a literary tradition of youth in Cuba. Heras León affirms that the Centro Onelio fits into a tradition of youthful writing that emerged during the 1980s: "El Centro Onelio respondió al auge de la literatura nacional que desde los fines de los 80 ha develado una nueva geografía de la literatura cubana" (Heras León, 2001: 5). Similarly, in its official objectives, the Centro Onelio has been charged with the task of continuing this tradition and providing the institutional space through which it can be incorporated into the wider literary process. Accordingly, these state that a purpose of the Centro Onelio is to "Realizar una labor de rescate y estímulo de los talentos jóvenes de todo el país, darlos a conocer, e insertarlos de manera creadora en la cultura nacional" (MINCULT, n.d.b). Furthermore, following the re-evaluation of the work of women narrative writers in Cuba since the 1980s (Berg, 2003: 3), the Centro Onelio is specifically to "Promover una mayor participación de jóvenes escritoras" (MINCULT, n.d.b).

That these objectives state the need to ‘rescue’ young talent suggests a perception of young writers as somewhat marginalised from a central literary process, an image that was first projected by young writers themselves during the 1980s and early 1990s. Writers who formed groups such as *Seis del Ochenta* and *El Establo*, and those known as the *novísimos*, often self-identified as marginal characters, such as *roqueros*, *friquis*, drug users or other *delincuentes*, or wrote about them in their literature (Rosales, 2002; Fonet, 2006: 5). By asserting the need to ‘insert’ young writers into national culture and to continue a youthful literary tradition, the Centro Onelio has, as a central objective, the institutionalisation of formerly marginalised or sub-cultural literary practice.⁵⁸ This definition of the Centro Onelio as a site for the promotion of relatively new youthful tradition is also reinforced by more practical factors. The members of staff of the Centro Onelio (Sergio Cevedo, Raúl Aguiar, Ernesto Pérez Castillo and even Heras León) are all recognised for the writing which they produced in their own youth. In particular, the first two are credited with being central figures in one of the strands of youthful writing that emerged in the 1980s.

In addition, the library of the Centro Onelio is named after Salvador Redonet, the literary critic, who, before dying in 1999, had worked with many young writers, encouraging them to renew Cuban literature (Guerra, 23/03/7; Melo, 17/03/07). Many more references to youthful writing, past and present, can also be found in the Centro’s publication, *El Cuentero* (‘Punto 4’, 2007). Consequently, the Centro Onelio is linked to both writers and writing that, in a relatively recent past, have posed a challenge to conventional literary and cultural orthodoxies. Moreover, by defining itself as the national focal point for young writers, the Centro Onelio has not only promoted the continuing development of such a tradition, but also maintained a potential monopoly over that role as the only institution of its kind.

There are two further elements that define the Centro Onelio as a literary public sphere. The first is its international dimension. In contrast to the municipal *talleres literarios* that have been rooted in their local literary traditions first, and national tradition second, the Centro Onelio encourages Cuba’s young

⁵⁸ In her thesis on youth in 1960s Cuba, Anne Luke outlines the difficulty of defining a youth culture in Cuba, because of the strength of official discourse which appropriated youth into mainstream policy. However, she concludes that the different circumstances of the 1980s provide a fruitful area for future research (Luke, 2007).

writing talent to have connections with their counterparts in other countries. The official objectives state that the Centro Onelio should “Promover el intercambio de experiencias con otros Centros y Talleres similares de América y Europa [y] con escritores extranjeros que visiten el país” (MINCULT, n.d.b). Secondly, although the Centro stands alone as a separate institution, it still has a role to play within the broader, democratising, thrust of cultural policy. For example, as well as its own course, it offers

...seminarios, talleres y otros cursos, a través de los medios masivos, dentro del Programa Universidad para Todos, para contribuir al desarrollo de una cultura general e integral del pueblo. (MINCULT, n.d.b)

Furthermore, the Centro Onelio is to maintain contacts with other *talleres literarios*, using them as a potential recruiting ground. Official objectives state that the Centro Onelio is to:

Establecer estrechos vínculos de colaboración con las Casas de Cultura y Talleres Literarios de todo el país, fuente indispensable de las futuras promociones del Centro. (MINCULT, n.d.b)

The Centro Onelio and cultural citizenship

The following section is based on several visits to the Centro Onelio as well as interviews conducted with ten *egresados*, with its Director, Heras León, and members of staff. Consisting of five women and five men, the *egresados* are all based in Havana and have participated in the Centro Onelio during different years. Unlike their counterparts in the more mixed municipal *talleres*, they appear to be a more socially homogenous group. Not only are they all young, but they all also have had, or are about to embark upon, a university education. The group contained university graduates, professionals and students. Whilst the *egresados* had specialised in a range of different fields, it is interesting to note that, for some, the experience of passing the Centro Onelio course has precipitated a significant change in life direction, with a general move towards trying to work in the cultural field, although not always as a writer.

Motivations for attending the Centro Onelio: Writing as more than an afición

A common theme amongst *egresados* was that, when they first applied to the Centro Onelio, they were all serious about their writing and about their potential to become career writers. The focus on the writing profession separates their experience from that of most of the municipal *talleristas* whose initial motivation to join a taller is not necessarily to become writers. As a consequence, although the *egresados* have had the same opportunity to join a municipal *taller literario* as the rest of the population, several have by-passed this more open amateur system, or have only spent short periods of time in it, before opting to try to enter the more selective *talleres literarios de vanguardia* and ultimately the Centro Onelio itself. Whilst the additional availability of such *talleres* in Havana may well have been a decisive factor in this pattern, in all cases there was acknowledgement of a considerable divide separating the educational level and content of the selective *talleres* from the main municipal movement. However, as with the accounts in the previous chapter, the experiences of the *egresados* reveal their investment in the notion of literary culture and its institutional framework.

Viana Barceló (Viana),⁵⁹ a vet by profession, started writing in university whilst she was studying for her *tesis de grado*. Having always been an avid reader, she wrote mainly erotic stories that she only showed to her closest friends. However, after receiving some positive feedback, she started to attend a *taller literario* in her university:

Asistí a una especie de taller en la universidad pero no me gustó mucho porque no era muy serio...luego me enviaron un correo con la convocatoria para el Centro Onelio y decidí mandar tres cuentos. Me aceptaron.

Johan Moya (Johan),⁶⁰ another *egresado*, who met and married Viana during the 2005 Centro Onelio course, is a trained engineer who used to work in construction. A personal spiritual crisis in 2000 first prompted him to write stories. The themes of his early writing were based on social observations, and he wrote many *testimonios* that were based on his life and those of his friends. After a while, he felt that he wanted to improve as a writer and so joined a *taller literario de vanguardia* run by Ismael González Castañer in Habana vieja. He said he learnt a lot, but most importantly he listened to the

⁵⁹ Interview conducted 13/03/07.

⁶⁰ Interview conducted 13/03/07.

experience of the writer, who he found to be very charismatic, and was introduced to many works of literature. Later, he moved to a *taller de vanguardia* run by Sergio Cevedo, another writer who, like González Castañer, had come to the fore in the 1980s.

Cevedo became Johan's principal mentor and, although Johan suffered from insecurity about his writing, he learnt how to take very harsh criticism from his new teacher. Furthermore, in this *taller*, Johan met other *talleristas* he considered to be talented, many of whom would later take the Centro Onelio course where Cevedo was also a teacher. During this time, as Johan improved, he started to self-identify more as a writer and so, for him, applying for the Centro Onelio became the logical next progression. It is clearly the benefits he perceives can be attained from proximity to established writers that he values most: "Solo quería ir a talleres impartidos por escritores, los asesores literarios no tienen la preparación ni la experiencia para ayudar a los escritores noveles."

This sentiment was echoed by many of the *egresados*, who suggested that only through contact with talented contemporaries and established writers could they seriously pursue writing (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Mesa, 27/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). Maysel Bello (Maysel),⁶¹ a young film student at the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana, attended the Centro Onelio course when he was just 17. Previously, from a very early age, he had attended municipal *talleres* in his home town of San Antonio de los Baños, and had won several prizes, helping him to believe that he had talent. Although he studied science at the Escuela Lenin, he maintained his connection with the arts through acting in a theatre group. It was only after coming to Havana to study cinema that he decided to write again and applied to the Centro Onelio as, by 2003, it already had the reputation for being the best place to learn to write and had had prestigious national figures giving lectures and talks there. He mentioned Roberto Fernández Retamar, who gave talks one year, and Heras León as being people who particularly attracted him.

Yannis Lobaina Gonzalez (Yannis),⁶² an aspiring writer who had trained as a pharmacist, applied directly to the Centro Onelio in 2004 because she also thought it was the best place to go to improve her writing. Whilst she has always written stories, she had never considered joining a *taller* until she

⁶¹ Interview conducted 15/03/07.

⁶² Interview conducted 07/03/07.

decided to dedicate her life to literature by getting a job working for the Instituto Cubano del Libro and taking the Centro Onelio course: “El Centro Onelio es el mejor por ahí pasaron escritores que ya tenían publicaciones.” Lien Carranza Lau (Lien),⁶³ is another young *egresada*, who having passed the Centro Onelio course in 2001, agreed that it was the best place for learning about writing techniques. A graduate in Art, Lien had also been writing from a young age. She came to the Centro Onelio through first attending the *taller de vanguardia* of Jorge Alberto Aguiar, a former teacher at the Centro Onelio, otherwise known as JAAD.⁶⁴ She concluded that the Centro Onelio, more than being a good course, was “un paso necesario” on the way to becoming a writer. The other *egresados* had similar stories and again, they all agreed that one of their motivations for attending the Centro Onelio was to improve their professional prospects. It was the personal contact with writers that the Centro Onelio offered, coupled with its prestige, that made it into not only the leading *taller literario* for these *egresados*, but also into a potential launching pad for their careers (Mesa, 27/03/07; Moya, 13/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). Following this high level of expectation, it is important to see what kind of cultural citizenship the Centro Onelio actually offered participants.

The formation of cultural citizens

According to its Director, Heras León, the Centro Onelio is not about training writers *per se*, but about giving young aspiring writers a knowledge of literary theory and techniques, in order to help them better understand literature and to approach both their own and others’ more critically (Heras León, 27/03/07). Maintaining that out of any course, perhaps only one or two writers will emerge, whilst the rest will become critical readers, he described the course as a process of acceleration in which young

⁶³ Interview conducted 08/03/07.

⁶⁴ Also focussed exclusively on young people, several of the *egresados* had either passed through the *taller* of JAAD before going to the Centro Onelio, went to both *talleres* concurrently or joined afterwards. JAAD, a somewhat enigmatic figure, lives for most of the year in Spain but comes regularly to Havana in order to run his *taller*. He has connections with several ‘underground’ artistic movements, such as a group of performance poets from the municipality Alamar, as well as with the poets and intellectuals of the magazine *Diáspora* which was closed down by the authorities in 2000. JAAD’s *taller* operates on various levels. In some he imparts narrative techniques along similar lines to the Centro Onelio, whilst in others, *talleristas* study more philosophical texts, in particular the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari. JAAD’s *talleres* have nearly always taken place in an official institutional space yet the impression that all the participants give is that they are somehow ‘underground’ and non-official (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Moya, 13/03/07). Reinforcing this ‘non-official’ element to the JAAD’s *taller* is the fact that he also uses an internet blog to publish the work of some *talleristas* and to form groups of young writers, for example he has one called: @izomas (‘Talleres de Escritura’).

talleristas learn things that it usually takes a writer, working on their own, years to discover (Heras León, 27/03/07). Responding to these comments, all of the *egresados* agreed that the knowledge component was the major benefit they gained from the Centro Onelio. However, in line with their wider motivations for attending the course, their experience within the Centro Onelio also had other results.

The tools: Narrative techniques

As well as the *taller literario*, the course of the Centro Onelio consists of a series of taught classes on *técnicas narrativas*. The textbook used in class, *Los desafíos de la ficción*, contains seventeen chapters on different aspects of literary writing. Topics covered range from guidance on punctuation and grammar through to theoretical reflections on various literary genres such as detective stories and science fiction. It includes contributions from major authors from Cuba, Latin America and beyond, as well as sections taken from creative writing textbooks. Authors include: Mario Vargas Llosa, Horacio Quiroga, Abelardo Castillo, Onelio Jorge Cardoso, Clarice Lispector, Ernest Hemingway, Raymond Chandler, and Umberto Eco (Heras León, 2001). In practice, during the course, the material in the book is discussed and further complemented by exercises and guidance offered by the institution's teachers and visiting speakers. Whilst Heras León does not pretend that the course is exhaustive, overall its structure and content promote the idea that writing is a craft, the tools for which can be learnt by a variety of people. However, this emphasis on the teaching of *técnicas narrativas* has also sparked controversy. Bringing up to date the debates generated about the wider *talleres literarios* system, the existence of the Centro Onelio has also raised questions about the feasibility of teaching writing, and about whether an institution offering a single course might produce formulaic writing.

One such debate is recorded in *El Cuentero*. On the occasion of the visit to the Centro by the Nobel Prize-winning author, José Saramago, he confessed to feeling uneasy in an environment about which he knew nothing. In front of a packed audience of current *talleristas* he asked: “¿Shakespeare ha participado en un taller de creación literaria? No. ¿Cervantes ha participado en un taller de creación literaria? No” (‘Saramago en el Centro Onelio’, 2005: 24). To this, a current member of the Centro Onelio promptly replied: “si entonces hubieran existido posiblemente hoy tendríamos más Cervantes y

más Shakespeares” (‘Saramago en el Centro Onelio’, 2005: 25). Another argument against the premise of the Centro Onelio was launched by Ernesto Pérez Chang, an established writer who had started the course himself but later dropped out. He made a scathing attack on the Centro Onelio in an article published in the on-line literary magazine *cubaliteraria* (Pérez Chang, n.d.). Within a general critique of critical reflections on Cuban literary history, and the classification of new literary generations, Pérez Chang accused Heras León and his Centro Onelio of deliberately moulding the latest generations of Cuban writers: “He leído cuentos, centenares (por exagerar y no por penitencia), salidos de ese molde de yeso que alguien se ha dado en llamar “Taller de técnicas narrativas” (Pérez Chang, n.d.).

He went on to suggest that many of these stories, some of which have won prestigious national literary prizes, are formulaic and that it is possible to identify their influences from Quiroga to Hemingway, authors studied on the Centro Onelio course (Pérez Chang, n.d.). Interestingly, however, Pérez Chang did not extend his critique by denouncing the concept of a *taller literario*. On the contrary, he praised the main *talleres literarios* movement, crediting it with having helped thousands of Cubans engage with literature. His venom was reserved for the Centro Onelio precisely because of the extra attention and prestige it is awarded above the rest of the system and the fact that, according to his perspective, literary critics have hailed the institution and its Director as the saviours of Cuban literature of youth:

[Para] nuestros críticos más perezosos,...en un grato análisis, en principio habría una crisis (oportuna crisis), la de siempre, donde no existe la narrativa joven cubana o, si existía, lo hacía de un modo precario con tendencia a la extinción; y, para el final feliz se reserva la llegada de un Mesías, Eduardo Heras León, quien colocaría en nuestras manos las herramientas y la táctica para el gran salto, con el cual, dentro de unos 15 años (cálculo conservador) podremos aspirar a un Nobel, aunque nos conformáramos con otro Cervantes, aunque fuera así de pequeño. (Pérez Chang, n.d)

He lamented a mechanical approach to the production of literature and to the vocation of writer he perceives is promoted by the Centro Onelio. Instead, he values a genuine interest in the world of letters, which he feels is encouraged by other *talleres*:

Otros espacios similares, pero no tan famosos, a pesar de carencias económicas, esplendores o crisis, se han mantenido, a la sombra de una modesta casa de cultura de un municipio modesto, orientando lecturas, despertando el interés por la literatura (sí, por la LITERATURA, y no por el mero oficio de redactor de relatos). (Literatura es pensar el mundo, no hacer pasarelas como Naomi Campbell). (Pérez Chang, n.d)

However, soon after Pérez Chang's article appeared, four responses to his argument were published on the same site by writers who were either employed by the Centro Onelio or *egresados* of the course. In each they undermine Pérez Chang's position on the basis that it was a personal attack on Heras León, or by highlighting the proven track record of the Centro Onelio in producing writers of quality (Pérez Castillo, n.d.; Ramón Delgado, n.d.; Santiesteban, n.d.).

In an article in *La Letra Que Escriba*, Daniel Díaz Mantilla cleverly summarises and comments on all the different perspectives. He concludes by suggesting that the arguments fail to engage with the main issues behind the debate, namely the different ambitions and interests that lie behind both literary criticism and production in the island. For him, these interests, combined with the multiplicity of prizes and institutions that legitimate literary practice in Cuba, actually make judging the merit of contemporary literature difficult. He ends his piece by asking the questions that he thinks really arise when contemplating the concept of *técnicas narrativas*:

Una pregunta que no encuentro en los textos de Pérez Chang *et al.*, una cuestión que subyace a la idea de “formación literaria”: ¿Qué significa ser escritor? Preguntaría además, ¿por qué se desea serlo? (Díaz Mantilla, 2006: 2)

These fundamental questions contextualise the arguments about the Centro Onelio within a broader discussion about the complex factors at play within the Cuban literary process, and the way it has developed during the Revolution. Not only do they bring the debate about the role of the revolutionary writer into the 21st Century, but also they invite an examination of the various mechanisms that currently shape that role. The questions also highlight the different response to the various levels of cultural citizenship. If cultural citizenship attained in the municipal *talleres literarios* is widely perceived to have social benefits, this potentially changes when the focus is switched to individual success rather than collective empowerment. However, from the variety of reactions *egresados* had to the course of *técnicas narrativas*, it is possible to gauge that the impact of such a course still has an important collective dimension and does not necessarily guarantee individual success. Moreover, although all were grateful for the knowledge they gained at the Centro Onelio, they did not always approach the course in the same way, nor did they always adopt its content wholesale or uncritically into their own literary approach and perspectives.

Lien said that she learnt a lot at the Centro Onelio, but that she was only twenty years old at the time of taking the course, and therefore believes in retrospect that she was not mature enough to be able to assimilate all the information. In particular, her active social life often prevented her from paying full attention during the Saturday morning classes. Moreover, after completing the course, although she maintained contact with the Centro Onelio, she gave up writing for six years. In 2006-7, she began to write again, and suggests that the time-gap between taking the course and starting to work on new projects allowed the knowledge of *técnicas narrativas* to be helpful to her, without the experience of the course influencing her writing too much (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). Clearly focussed on becoming a career writer, Lien, since starting to write again, has won several literary prizes and has her first book in the process of publication. However, since this interview Lien has moved to Spain where she writes a literary blog. Viana, who won the Centro Onelio's own prize during her year, also said she learnt a lot, but was not always in agreement with the material they used. Whilst she liked some of the content, she hated Quiroga, an author often cited by the teachers (Barceló, 13/03/07). Since leaving the course, she continues to write privately whilst working as a vet.

In contrast, Maysel was somewhat critical of the entire course. He said that the constant focus on *técnicas narrativas* actually led to a creative block for some people. However, along with the other *egresados*, he confirmed that the process of learning techniques has not led to them to produce literature that followed a similar aesthetic style. On the contrary, he affirmed that each *tallerista*, both during and after the course, pursued the genre that most interested them (Bello, 15/03/07). For him, it was the visiting speakers who were a bigger draw than the course content, as he highly valued the opportunity to learn from established writers and intellectuals, although he also expressed disappointment that during his year not so many big names were invited (Bello, 15/03/07). However, despite some criticisms in general *egresados* have a high amount of respect for a course that one *egresado*, Arturo Mesa (Arturo),⁶⁵ considered to be "very well structured." Another *egresado*, Ahmel Echevarría (Ahmel),⁶⁶ summed up the usefulness of the Centro Onelio's course content by suggesting that the information gained only facilitated what was actually an individual process of training and learning:

⁶⁵ Interview conducted 27/03/07.

⁶⁶ Interview conducted 20/03/07.

...lo bueno que tiene es que no es una academia en actividad. Ellos te proponen un paquete de técnicas narrativas, supuestamente con estas herramientas el proceso de escritura va a ser un poquitico, solamente un poquitico más sencillo.

One factor that all *egresados* did mention was the way that the Centro Onelio had motivated them to pursue their literature. Even Viena García (Viena),⁶⁷ the only *egresada* who had given up writing entirely since leaving the course, said her experience on the course meant she would never shut the door completely on the possibility of writing again in the future.

The enactment of cultural citizenship in the Centro Onelio

Even though the *egresados* affirmed that learning *técnicas narrativas* had not compromised their personal literary tastes and styles, the collective, *taller*, element of the course had an impact on them as individuals and aspiring writers. Echoing the phrases seen in official discourse, Heras León describes participation in the Centro Onelio as a process of transformation:

El Taller se convirtió en un espacio privilegiado para la creación individual y la reflexión colectiva: la práctica del oficio más solitario del mundo enriquecido por la teoría y la discusión crítica, abierta y fraterna en las sesiones, propició una atmósfera casi mágica de donde los jóvenes surgieron mejores escritores, mejores críticos de la obra propia y la ajena, mejores lectores pero esencialmente, mejores seres humanos. (Heras León, 2001: 5)

Different *egresados* had a variety of individual experiences. However, as the Centro Onelio operates as a literary public sphere it also performs many of the functions mentioned in the previous chapter. For example, the practice of *talleristas* reading out aloud literary works-in-progress and then receiving and debating comments from the rest of the group includes reader response within the creative process, adding a collective element to the production of literary work and allowing for the construction of shared meanings. It facilitates dialogic communication about a range of topics, but unlike the municipal *talleres* where all kinds of literary self-expression are given a level of validation, in the selective and more educationally challenging Centro Onelio the emphasis is very much on developing critical faculties.

⁶⁷ Interview conducted 16/03/07.

As a consequence, one *egresado* Abraham Ortiz (Abraham),⁶⁸ with experience in the municipal system, confirmed that the Centro Onelio *taller* does not perform the same ‘therapeutic’ role as *talleres literarios* within the wider movement. In fact, although several of the *egresados* described the atmosphere of respect, patience and solidarity that predominated during readings in the Centro Onelio (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Mesa, 27/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07),⁶⁹ more than one *egresado* mentioned that the criticism they received during the *taller* was often harsh and the debate heated. Ahmel reveals the mood as stories were read: “... era muy intenso. Desde mi punto de vista la gente era muy sincera, se dialogaba bastante...de manera diplomática se valoraba...el cuento” (Echevarría, 20/03/07). Moreover, in contrast to the municipal *talleres* where every person’s opinion was valued equally, in the Centro Onelio, there was a more obvious internal hierarchy within the group because at the end of the discussion, the writer-teacher has the final word from a position of considerable authority: “al final los profesores dan su criterio” (Echevarría, 20/03/07).

In the Centro’s *taller*, the teachers delineated the terms of the debate, recognising not only the natural authority held by anyone in a teaching or facilitating role, but also a clear distinction between their status as established writers, and that of the younger aspiring writers. On occasions, the opinions of the teachers on literary quality were thought to be based on different criteria to those used in the amateur system. During Maysel’s experience of the Centro Onelio *taller*, he read out a story that had won a prize in his municipal *taller*. The teacher criticised it on many levels and, after a debate, it was suggested that he re-write the piece entirely, which he did. However, when he then decided to resubmit the new version to the *talleres* competition, incorporating the teacher’s comments, the judges in the municipal system did not like it at all and criticised it harshly (Bello, 15/03/07).

Having to work with the criteria of certain teachers, *egresados* said that they did not let this knowledge affect their writing, nor were they writing with their initial readers, their fellow *talleristas*, in mind. Ahmel related this to the idea that a writer does not write whilst thinking about a particular audience. Yet in his vision of literature the reader’s reaction is definitely important:

⁶⁸ Interview conducted 16/03/07.

...mi interés más que nada es que el lector logre establecer conexiones con mi libro, logre llegar a los diferentes estados de ánimo, interaccione con los personajes. (Echevarría, 20/03/07)

He maintained that literature is not about transmitting a particular message. Instead, he argued that literature exists so that people can identify with it at some level, although he also recognised that the potential for identification depends to a certain extent on who the readers are, on their education and their world-view. Ahmel illustrated his point by recounting the reaction he received in the Centro Onelio *taller* after reading a story that he had written about the phenomenon of emigration.

Although from Havana himself, his reading had happened to coincide with the annual course for the *talleristas* from the provinces. On finishing the story, the comments from the audience were that, as writers from the provinces, they could not relate to a narrative that took place only in the city of Havana. They even accused him of writing a kind of *Habanidad*. He responded that the emotions expressed in the story could be considered universal and that he hoped that anyone could identify themselves with the plot despite its geographical limitations (Echevarría, 20/03/07).⁷⁰ Ahmel's anecdote reflects how in the Centro Onelio, as in other *talleres*, the objective of the debates about stories were to reach group consensus and mutual understanding, thereby giving the individual work of creation the potential for shared experience and meanings. Moreover, Ahmel's story about emigration demonstrates that the Centro Onelio is also a literary public sphere where topical issues can be debated. Despite the fact that *egresados* wrote about a broad range of themes, on occasions, they read out stories on themes that would later cause controversy in the wider public sphere. This was the case with the collection of stories *Boring Home* by the *egresado* Orlando Luis Pardo which was deemed too critical to be presented at the Feria in 2009 (Cabrera Reves, 2009)

A further consequence of participating in this collective process of group discussion and finding common ground was that individual *talleristas* were able to develop their own identities as individuals and aspiring writers. Unlike the experience of the contemporary municipal *talleristas* described in the previous chapter, this process went beyond just the initial phase of discovering whether they had talent in comparison to their fellow participants. Instead, they spoke more of a process of self-discovery about

⁷⁰ The story he read was *Inventario* later to be published in the book of the same name which won the UNEAC prize for young fiction El Premio David 2004.

the direction they wanted to take as writers, a process that continued long after the course finished (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). For example, Lien said the Centro Onelio had been an enriching exchange that helped her form a sense of her own identity but, long after the experience, she was still developing an individual style on her own (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). Maysel was able to develop as a person as he learned to cope with criticism and “aprender a escuchar al otro” (Bello, 15/03/07). Arturo used the *taller* to gain in confidence and to test out his humorous writing on an audience, whilst Yannis started to expand into different styles of literature, discovering those she did and did not like (Lobaina González, 07/03/07).

Following this, in addition to developing as individuals, *egresados* also said the Centro Onelio *taller* had helped them to identify shared interests and experiences with their peers. The fact the Centro Onelio participants were all of similar age, in comparison to the multi-generational municipal *talleres*, facilitated this process. As well as making friends and setting up collaborative, group projects, a couple of *egresados* described how two literary cliques emerged during one of the years, representing two opposing literary genres and philosophies (see below) (Bello, 15/03/07; García, 16/03/07). Some *egresados* also identified with some teachers more than others, yet were quick to add that teachers never imposed their own aesthetics on the class (Echevarría, 20/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). There was genuine affection for the Centro and its teachers amongst *egresados*, especially for the figure of Heras León: “Pasé el taller y las clases eran una miel, sobre todo las clases de Heras León, todavía me emocionan...” (Ortiz, 16/03/07). In fact, it was this contact with established writers that all *egresados* agreed was the highlight of the experience.

Whilst all valued the contact with, and criticism from, established writers during the classes and *taller*, this value increased whenever lasting personal relationships had been formed. However, not all viewed these relationships in the same way. Yannis and Lien mentioned the importance of making contacts in terms of their future careers (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07), while others appreciated having literary mentors to whom they could go seeking advice (Echevarría, 20/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). Yet others mentioned how friendships with writers had helped them to shape a better idea of what a writer was (Mesa, 27/03/07). Arturo and Ingrid Hernández ⁷¹ both mentioned how the

⁷¹ Interview conducted 28/2/07.

contact with teachers at the Centro Onelio taught them about the practicalities of what it means to be a writer, something they continued to aspire to be after having graduated (Hernández, 28/02/07; Mesa, 27/03/07). In this way, as with the municipal *talleres*, the personal relationships forged within the *taller* had a significant impact on *egresados*. However, also important was the sense of empowerment that each individual *egresado* gained from participating in and passing the course, a feature of their experience that often extended beyond the confines of the institution.

Outcomes of the course

Empowered cultural citizens with high cultural capital

The main *talleres literarios* system provides its participants with important levels of social recognition for their creative work, whether this be within a particular *taller* or beyond in the competitions, work in the wider local community or ultimately through publication. Participating in the Centro Onelio also facilitates the *talleristas*' ability to achieve recognition, only on a larger scale. For example, merely being accepted onto the course at the prestigious Centro Onelio validates each participant as a member of a select group of young, gifted aspiring writers. Subsequently, actually completing the course gives *egresados* the opportunity to claim a level of recognition that is not available to *talleristas* from the municipal system. Although no formal qualification is given for successful completion, its educational content is held in high esteem across the country, especially within the cultural administration. One result of this is that some *egresados* receive press attention in cultural journals, merely for having attended the Centro Onelio. For example, a woman from Artemisa was profiled in *cubaliteraria* after passing the course (Carmona Ymes, 2006).

Other results can be seen in the world of work and literature. Several *egresados* used the phrase “me ha abierto puertas” when talking about what passing the Centro Onelio has meant for their careers (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). As Ahmel mentioned, the recognition afforded by having passed the Centro Onelio is of particular importance for people from the provinces, where no such institution exists:

...vienes a La Habana, interactúas, apruebas los cursos y cuando regresas a provincia tienes la capacidad, una cantidad de conocimiento tremendo. O sea sí puedes ser editor o director de una editorial, en una emisora de radio, los funcionarios apuestan por ti. (Echevarría, 20/03/07)

Co-Director Ivonne Galeano confirmed that several of the provincial *egresados* had returned to their home towns to be employed as *asesores literarios*, running their own *talleres* (Galeano, 28/02/07). Having passed the Centro Onelio had also offered several of the Havana-based *egresados* new opportunities. There was a visible pattern amongst them of choosing to take jobs or participate in activities within the cultural field, in line with Heras León's statement that the Centro encourages all *talleristas* to be promoters and directors of culture (Luis, n.d.b). As a direct result of their participation, some *egresados* were also able to attend other selective cultural courses (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07), to gain employment in a cultural institution (Echevarría, 20/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07), or to be accepted onto a literature course at university (Hernández, 28/02/07). However, not all *egresados* had chosen this path; there were also *egresados* who loved their non-cultural professions too much to change (Barceló, 13/03/07; García, 16/03/07).

Meanwhile, amongst those *egresados* who were pursuing writing as a career, a couple stated that having the Centro Onelio on their CV may have improved their chances of being considered for other literary prizes or even publication, although neither suggested that it was a direct guarantee and both believed literary merit to be the ultimate deciding factor (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Mesa, 27/03/07). Whether the Centro Onelio had played a role as an institutional rubber stamp or not, since leaving the course, several of the *egresados* had gained further recognition as writers through winning prizes at different levels. For example, Arturo had won the Luis Noguera prize, Lien won the provincial Isla de la Juventud prize, and Ahmel the Premio David in 2004. The Centro Onelio itself also offers opportunities for recognition through the two prizes it convenes, the César Gayán and the Caballo Troya. One of these provides a *beca* for an aspiring writer to complete a book project, although its impact is limited, as it is only awarded to one or two *egresados* a year. The Centro Onelio also creates potential for its *egresados* to be recognised in the wider public sphere through the provision of other spaces. Its publishing wing, *La cajachina*, the magazine and the newly launched website, all offer further chances for young writers to be recognised for their work.

However, there is one potentially divisive impact of the additional social recognition that *egresados* receive. By entering the literary hierarchy above the *talleristas* in the rest of the municipal system, they are viewed as separate from the more community-focussed literary activity. For example, after passing the Centro Onelio course, Johan and Viana were no longer made to feel welcome in their local municipal *taller literario* (Barceló, 13/03/07; Moya, 13/03/07). Yet this depended on each individual, as Abraham still regularly attended several municipal *talleres*, although he was aware of the difference in educational level between them and the Centro Onelio (Ortiz, 16/03/07). Reflecting on this division, Lien said that the Centro Onelio was an important means of differentiating between a large and competitive pool of writers (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). Nevertheless, despite being awarded a higher position in the literary hierarchy, and thus a higher level cultural citizenship, by virtue of having passed the course, the *egresados* acknowledged that this did not ensure that they were, or could be considered to be, writers: “...el hecho de haber pasado un taller literario no significa que eres escritor como tampoco implica ganar un premio, publicar un libro. Es todo un proceso largo de crecimiento” (Echevarría, 20/03/07).

In general, the level of recognition received by *egresados* appears to be in line with the Centro’s official objective to get young talent known. Yet this is also, as we have seen, the factor which has generated both criticism and praise for the institution. On the one hand, authors such as Pérez Chang believe that *egresados* should not be afforded any more recognition than other *talleristas*, and even goes as far to suggest that the Centro Onelio’s teachers increase this level of recognition by handing out prizes to *egresados* when they act as *jurados* for literary competitions (Pérez Chang, n.d.). On the other hand, the counter argument states that the Centro Onelio has provided a much-needed space for young writers who traditionally have had to compete for limited opportunities for recognition, especially during the crisis period (Santiestéban, n.d.). Referring to the debates, Ahmel recognised that they raise important questions: “toda polémica trae aparejada la reflexión y la discusión” (Echevarría, 20/03/07). However, he maintained that young writers gained recognition on their own merit, and that the influence of the Centro Onelio had been exaggerated: “¿Cómo puede legitimarte una institución que no es poderosa...que no te da un diploma?” (Echevarría, 20/03/07).

b) A young community of cultural citizens

Yet another perspective on the Centro Onelio argues that its principal function has been to offer a valued space for youth participation (Castro, 2007). One of the stated objectives of the Centro Onelio has been to insert young writers into national culture. Although it is unclear whether this refers to their work or to the young people themselves or to both, the testimonies of the *egresados* confirm that connection with the Centro Onelio has facilitated their participation in a cultural community that has operated both at a city-wide and at a national level. However, membership of the community has meant different things for different people; it has ranged from participating in an active, 'cultural' social life and maintaining close contact with contemporaries and other cultural producers through events and activities, to producing internet-based digital magazines, to participating in literary competitions and activities, to being involved more indirectly through the readership of particular literary magazines.

From observation, it was possible to see that one dimension of this community for the *egresados* was centred physically in the Centro Onelio itself. Although all the *egresados* had completed the Centro Onelio course, many still regularly visited the institution in Miramar and one had taken up a permanent post there. Several *egresados* went to the Centro in order to take advantage of its resources, such as the computer cluster and other teaching rooms, the internet and printers (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Hernández, 28/02/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). The room was an invaluable resource for these aspiring writers, who otherwise did not have easy access to such equipment or information. As *egresados* were encouraged to enter international literary competitions as well as national ones, having their own email account and the use of the internet was very important. Through the use of these resources, at least two of the *egresados* had won prizes in Spain, one of them receiving a published edition of his winning story as part of the prize (Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). Another *egresada* was using the premises of the Centro Onelio in order to run a *cine-club* which she herself organised and publicised (Lobaina González, 07/03/07). In this club, a group of young people, some but not all *egresados* of the Centro, watched and discussed films and documentaries using the audiovisual equipment available in the institution. The institutional backing for the club had helped to attract important directors as visiting speakers.

Many *egresados* also remained connected to the Centro Onelio because of the personal relationships they had forged there. As well as personal friendships, *egresados* also returned to the Centro Onelio to seek literary advice from their former teachers or to do collaborative work with fellow *egresados* (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Hernández,, 28/02/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07). Furthermore, the Directors of the Centro, particularly Ivonne Galeano, were keen to reinforce the idea of a community based around the institution. She introduced everyone that worked there as the *gran familia*, explaining that the majority of the *especialistas* employed there were also *egresados* (Galeano, 28/02/07). An *egresado* echoed Ivonne Galeano's notion when he said: "Creas amigos de escritores o familia de escritores – se acerca a la literatura mucho la gente, para mí eso es lo fundamental del Taller (Ortiz, 16/03/07). Often *egresados* were also called upon to help with the organisation of the institution's events, such as its presentations at the Feria del Libro or the Primer Festival Internacional de Jóvenes Narradores which was held at the Centro Onelio in 2008 (Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07).

As well as interacting with staff, some of the *egresados* had formed literary groups through their participation in the Centro Onelio. These consisted of circles of friends who shared interests in literary styles as well as other philosophical and cultural ideas and products. However, the *egresados* involved with these projects maintained they were not *grupitos literarios*, distancing themselves from the more pejorative notion of writers grouped around political issues. There was a group of people interested in writing Science Fiction that used the Centro in order to meet, because they had not found institutional space elsewhere. Furthermore, Lien and Ahmel were two *egresados* who used the Centro Onelio in order to produce their own digital magazines in collaboration with other *egresados* (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07). Lien produced her own digital magazine *La Caja China*, with the same name as the Centro Onelio's publishing house. In this magazine she collaborated with other female *egresadas* and included a variety of work such as interviews with authors and creative pieces (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). Ahmel's group circulated its own digital magazine called *Revolution Evening Post* via email. In it they published their own creations as well as articles about various social and political issues from a range of different countries (Echevarría, 20/03/07). Ahmel described the two groups whom he saw emerge from the Centro Onelio during his year as one which promoted a more

realist literature concerned with the national space (and that included himself, Orlando Luis Pardo and Jorge Enrique Lage), and another centred around the young writer Raúl Flores, who dealt with non-national genres and themes (Echevarría, 20/03/07). Many more *egresados* also wrote their own blogs from the institution's computers.

Through the meetings of groups and the production of email magazines and blogs, the official, institutional space of the Centro Onelio has provided the community with access to non-official, non-institutional spaces in which to express themselves. Lien considered this dimension to be important, because it allowed for greater freedom of expression than was allowed when writing for competitions or publication (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). Yet she also agreed that her projects, and the others of her generation, were different from the artistic groups of the 1980s which were directed against a clearly-defined establishment (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). In her time, she insisted, there were only individual writers who collectively formed groups based on certain shared ideas and artistic viewpoints. Her group, for example, did not engage in politics but instead promoted another vision, based on getting out of the local context and being open to the world (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07). However, the existence of a variety of individuals and literary groups often with very different perspectives, did not impede the sense of community felt by the *egresados*.

Egresados mentioned how, despite their differences, they were united as a group, not only by their shared experience of the Centro Onelio, but also more fundamentally by their sense of belonging to a literary and cultural world:

...en el grupo hay gente que estudia teatro, filología, pero a pesar de la variedad en cuanto a estética e intereses, lo que nos une paradójicamente es esa diferencia. Compartimos literatura, seriales, música, pintura. (Echevarría, 20/03/07)

This deeper sense of belonging, although greatly facilitated in terms of personal relations by repeated direct contact with the Centro Onelio and therefore more accessible to Havana-based *egresados*, was not confined to the boundaries of its institutional space. As well as through the virtual spaces already mentioned, many *egresados* felt connected to a cultural community that extended beyond literature and that convened in spaces in Havana, but also around the rest of the country. In particular, many of the *egresados* had links to other cultural forms. Not only were *egresados* graduates or students of film or

the arts, or worked in the wider cultural administration, but also they participated in a number of other cultural activities, which provided further spaces in which they could interact (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07).

One such space is the *taller de guión*, run by the Centro Onelio. Although these short courses took place within the Centro Onelio, they attracted participants who were involved in film not just literature. Furthermore, the *taller* ran a competition whereby prize-winners were offered the opportunity to study in the world-famous *talleres de guión*, run by Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez in the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in San Antonio de los Baños. A couple of *egresados* who had won the prize described how it allowed them to forge relations, and to work creatively, with the more international community that participated in these exclusive courses (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Lobaina González 07/03/07). Other spaces in Havana included the different *talleres de vanguardia* around the city. For example, several *egresados* knew each other, or felt connected to other young aspiring writers through *talleres* other than the Centro Onelio. These included *talleres* in other genres such as poetry, or the more unusual, theme-based *taller* run by JAAD (Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07).

Outside the *talleres*, *egresados* also felt linked to a young cultural community through their social life, which often involved other types of cultural participation. Many saw each other through going to the same cinemas, music concerts, theatres, galleries or other cultural events around Havana, all of which provided further public spheres for the enactment of cultural citizenship (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07). Although people participated in this social life at different levels depending on their personal commitments, there was a clear sense that they shared certain spaces in the city and that it was important to be in contact with this cultural, social life: “me parece muy importante estar en contacto con creadores de su tiempo: músicos, artistas plásticos, escritores, gente del medio audiovisual” (Echevarría, 20/03/07). Ahmel considered it especially necessary for young writers to learn from creative activity across all the arts: “El lobo marca un terreno, pero al mismo tiempo necesita vivir en comunidad, alimentarse, defenderse...El creador tiene que ser como un lobo, ser capaz de comer carroña y al mismo tiempo ir a la manada” (Echevarría, 20/03/07).

Following this, several *egresados* were also members of the Asociación Hermanos Saíz. Although some believed that the AHS was not necessarily very helpful for those wishing to pursue a literary career in terms of access to publication or space, it was agreed that it was good for organising and supporting cultural events which they attended, and where they could meet young cultural producers from the provinces (Barceló, 13/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Moya, 13/03/07). Reflecting on their involvement with the young cultural community, *egresados* supported the idea that being engaged with culture was, as well as being a creative and productive pursuit, a way of living a better, more enriched, existence. However, one *egresada* remarked that this social, cultural life was very related to the Cuban context. She believed that Cuba's cultural life is still rather innocent and has not yet been contaminated by lots of outside commercial influences (Lobaina González, 07/03/07). It was for this reason that many *egresados* had changed profession to work in the cultural field, were studying culture, or remained connected to it in some other way (Bello, 15/03/07; Carranza Lau, 08/03/07; Echevarría, 20/03/07; Hernández, 28/02/07; Lobaina González, 07/03/07; Moya, 13/03/07; Ortiz, 16/03/07). For these *egresados*, working in culture, and being part of the young, cultural community had real practical benefits, even if the material rewards were sparse.

Summary: a higher level cultural citizenship

From the experiences of the *egresados* described in this chapter, it is clear that the Centro Onelio has not trained them as writers but that it has developed them as cultural citizens with a higher level of cultural capital than those formed by the main municipal movement. This Centro Onelio cultural citizenship is similarly characterised by belonging, empowerment and the use of a public voice. However, instead of the belonging being focussed primarily on the movement, on local literary traditions and communities, it is experienced directly as membership of a national tradition and of a young cultural community that operates within Havana, as well as nationally and even internationally. Furthermore, whilst both kinds of *talleres literarios* have encouraged a learning process, the technical knowledge offered by the Centro Onelio has both helped to raise the aspirations of its *egresados* and is widely recognised for its intellectual content. Thus, *egresados* are more empowered in the cultural field than ordinary *talleristas*, they are able to participate in all of the activities that a *tallerista* can do but

are also qualified to run their own *talleres*, work as specialists in the cultural field and generally have a voice that is listened to and respected. Finally, within the Centro Onelio, cultural citizens use their voice in order to construct shared meanings, sometimes leading to the formation of literary groups and the later production of material in both official and non-official spaces.

All in all, the higher level cultural citizenship, offered by the selective Centro Onelio, appears at first sight to diminish some of the democratising and socially integrating effects of the main *talleres literarios* system. However, despite the fact that the Centro Onelio is clearly an elite institution, it is not cut off entirely from the wider movement. Centro Onelio cultural citizens are still socialised into the same values and literary institutions and some even use their citizenship to try and increase the cultural capital of *talleristas* in the main movement. They also mix with other cultural citizens from around the country. As a course which recruits on merit only, the Centro Onelio is theoretically open to any *tallerista* from the main system who is good enough, and so is equally open to all social backgrounds. As we saw from the previous chapter, in theory, the cultural citizenship offered by the main *talleres literarios*, whilst being democratic within the space of the *taller*, actually operated within a strict hierarchy. Therefore, the Centro Onelio represents a separate literary public sphere for cultural citizens higher up that hierarchy. Its participants may have left the main movement behind but they are not, as yet, fully-fledged voices within the wider public sphere. Its existence and prestige confirms the separation with the wider movement that, having been constantly subjected to increasing demands from a progressively more educated grassroots, is no longer able to cater for the aspirations of some young writers.

So, whilst the main movement focuses on participation amongst local communities, and the wellbeing and cultural needs of the wider citizenry, the Centro Onelio focuses on the participation of one particular social sector: well educated youth. It thus gives official space to a social sector previously responsible for challenging certain aspects of the revolutionary process, through the promotion of, and participation in a literary tradition of youth that, in the Cuban case, has been closely linked since the 1980s to various sub-cultural practices. The Centro Onelio has clearly succeeded in its objective of capturing the imagination of these young people. In contrast to the experience of the main movement, where the primary motivation for joining was to receive initial guidance with writing, the *egresados*

were drawn to the Centro Onelio because of the opportunity to have first-hand contact with established writers and intellectuals, because of its prestige, and because of its connection to wider opportunities, as well as to improve on their writing. In this sense, some participants of the Centro Onelio seem more directly focussed on attaining the validation offered by completing the course than the municipal *talleristas*, whose validation is more of a consistent process. Nevertheless, they also clearly use the Centro Onelio as a space for developing their own ideas and ‘world-views’ and for getting them heard in public.

In many ways, it is too early to judge the overall impact on the literary process of an institution which, in its current form, has only been operational for seven years. The length of time it takes for writers to reach maturity and to gain an established reputation, as well as for works to be published, prevents this. However, even within this short period of time, the Centro Onelio has transformed the literary scene for young people, and helped to bring attention to a number of promising young writers (Céspedes, 2008). Its focus on the shorter genres of narrative fiction, such as the short story and the *minicuento*, a genre it credits itself with having revived in Cuba (‘Punto Dos’, 2006: 1), means that the time-lag usually attributed to the appearance of longer literary works does not necessarily apply. Commenting on the success of the 2008 Primer Festival Internacional de Jóvenes Narradores, Heras León suggested the Centro Onelio currently has the potential to fulfil the role that Casa de las Américas had during the 1960s, being a space for dialogue and interaction on a Continental scale (Luis, n.d.a). Meanwhile, on a national scale, this provision of a public sphere for young people has added a significant literary space. It offers more than the organisation AHS which also works to support young writers, giving young people an opportunity to get their voices heard.

Conclusion

The *talleres literarios* 1960s-2000s

A Literary Culture in Common

“Pero la historia de la literatura actual de nuestro país no podría escribirse sin mencionar (o mejor, analizar) el papel desempeñado por los talleres literarios, esos entes imperfectos, criticados y socorridos, que han sabido transitar y sobrevivir, evolucionar y reafirmarse. Y sin embargo, su propia historia aún está por investigarse, aún está por escribirse: el testimonio de sus fundadores, las diferentes etapas que han transitado, la memoria colectiva e individual de especialistas y “talleristas”, todo aguarda por el rescate definitivo” (Lidia Pérez, 2009).

“... while the arts may help to generate new spaces for debate and dialogue, these spaces also constitute an important means by which the Cuban state re-draws the parameters of its hegemonic project” (Fernandes, 2006: 9).

“El pueblo mismo es un poeta, un artista, un pensador que está incesantemente creándose y pensándose a sí mismo” (UNEAC, 2000:18).

Fidel Castro’s 1998 statement that only ‘saving culture’ would guarantee the survival of the Cuban Revolution was a recognition of the crucial role played by culture in the ongoing transmission of values and creation of a strong national identity. It was also a tacit admission that culture was essential to revolutionary hegemony. Winning the *Batalla de Ideas* would keep people committed to a system based on an alternative model to that advocated by U.S.-style neoliberalism. Amongst many other initiatives, one result of this statement was that Cuba, a decade later, had more state-sponsored *talleres literarios*, or amateur literary writing groups, than ever before, as well as an established institution, the Centro Onelio, for supporting young writers of narrative fiction. By 2008 there were more than 47,000 *talleristas* all over the island. In terms of literary culture, this is an impressive figure considering the size of Cuba’s population, its status as a developing country, and the fact that on the eve of the Revolution literature had been restricted to the activity of an elite group, with widespread illiteracy and no mass readership. Historically, as well as providing guidance to new writers, and producing more critical readers, the *talleres literarios* have also been one of the many ways in which broad sectors of Cuban society have been able to participate, and to gain and enact cultural citizenship.

This thesis set out to investigate the significance of Cuba’s high level of cultural participation through a case study of *talleres literarios*. As the *talleres literarios* had never been the focus of a major study before, it started with an analysis of the separate bodies of work on literature, cultural policy and participation, which covered the historical and cultural context out of which they emerged. The

conclusions drawn from these separate analyses were then combined to form a notion of Cuban cultural citizenship, using concepts derived from recent theoretical work on culture and citizenship and adapting them to fit the Cuban case. Subsequently, by employing these concepts, the study has found that the *talleres literarios* have acted as literary public spheres that have sustained core revolutionary values, and provided a space for ordinary Cuban citizens to participate in the construction and communication of meanings. Moreover, the cultural citizenship gained in the *talleres literarios* has offered participants a sense of belonging to a literary world and also empowered them to take an active role within it. The specific characteristics of this cultural citizenship have changed over time as the movement has grown and the context has evolved. Yet overall, the *talleres literarios* have helped to create a literary culture in common that has been largely directed by impetus from the grassroots, even though shaped by the institutions and agents of power.

Fundamental to the idea of a communicative cultural citizenship, according to its leading theorists, is the premise that culture and politics are inseparable in any given polity. Therefore, the notion of a Cuban cultural citizenship builds on the recent studies of culture in the Cuban Revolution that have re-conceptualised the way in which the state and society, and power and ideology, have operated. These studies have shown that, contrary to the conventional liberal assumption that the cultural sphere should be separate from politics, in Cuba the two have been historically entwined and cultural contestation during the revolutionary period has taken place within the state instead of against it (Fernandes, 2006; Hernández, 1999, 2003; Kapcia, 2005, 2008; Miller, 2008). Consequently, whilst the institutions of the Cuban state have been an important factor in setting the parameters for cultural production, they should not be seen as monolithic or as entirely separate from, or opposed to, society. Instead, they should be seen as having produced cultural citizens, giving them the space in which to act, discuss, debate and even challenge dominant ideas while also re-assimilating these citizens' ideas into the revolutionary project.

If this more diffuse notion of power is added to a recent explanation of how ideology functions in Cuba, it is possible to assess a broader impact of Cuban cultural citizenship. It has been argued that revolutionary ideology has not been imposed top-down by the leadership but has existed in a dialectical relationship between an intellectual-theoretical 'world-view' and a popular 'worldview' shaped by

experience (Kapcia, 2000). The latter, although hard to measure, has been essential for the former to take root and forge a consensus. At times, such as during the 1990s crisis, much lived experience became separate from the intellectual-theoretical level of ideology, leading some to suggest that coercion rather than consensus has kept the ideology hegemonic (Aguirre, 2002; Bunck, 1994). However, as Fernandes has argued, many ordinary Cubans, even during this period, have still been invested in certain officially-sanctioned shared frames of reference, leading her to define hegemony in Cuba, not as consent to a whole ideology, but as the combination of the dissemination of values through the social order and the construction of everyday meanings through material practices (Fernandes, 2006).

Following this notion, the nature of the Cuban cultural citizenship described in this study reveals one way in which ordinary Cubans have invested in core revolutionary values and their institutional framework, as well as a means by which they have been able to articulate their 'world-view' and help make sense of their lives. Cuban cultural citizenship has important social and political implications, which make the *talleres literarios*, and the literary culture in common which they helped to create, particularly useful sites for the ongoing negotiation of revolutionary hegemony. This conclusion addresses these implications, though first it is necessary to establish how a study of the *talleres literarios* contributes to the existing work on literature and participation.

The talleres literarios and the transformation of revolutionary culture

A new perspective on literature and cultural policy

Recent studies of literature in the Cuban Revolution have attempted to move beyond the traditional focus on literary trends, texts and established authors by viewing literary developments within the wider process of socio-cultural change during the Revolution. A study of the *talleres literarios* contributes to this new emphasis by offering a fresh perspective on Cuban cultural policy and on how it relates to literature. Traditionally, despite the recognition that the revolutionary process offered new opportunities and spaces for Cuban writers, cultural policy, and the institutions that have enforced it, has been viewed as primarily regulatory, and indicative of state or ideological control. Following this,

the Cuban debates over the function of art and the role of the revolutionary artist have been well documented, as has the way in which the different ideological positions, on becoming hegemonic, have, at times, placed restrictions on writers and their work. However, much less attention has been paid to what has been the main, and arguably the more important, strand of revolutionary cultural policy: the drive to democratise culture and provide culture for all, which shows it acting as an enabling force that produces cultural citizens.

The *talleres literarios*, as a practical manifestation of this policy, demonstrate not only how it enabled cultural citizenship and a broad and active literary culture overall, but also how the specific discourses about revolutionary writers and the function of literature had practical implications. Although they emerged organically and were based on a concept originally imported from Mexico, the *talleres literarios*' format promoted two ideas found consistently within Cuban cultural policy discourse: that writers should actively participate in society and that literature involved a process of dialogic communication. For this reason, they were soon incorporated into the official policy drive that from the beginning of the Revolution encouraged the creation of new public and participatory forms of cultural production and consumption. With the backing of the cultural administration, and contingent on the many other initiatives designed to promote the reading of literature, the number of *talleres literarios* grew rapidly, as a genuine interest in writing developed alongside the official encouragement to participate. From the early 1970s onwards, the *talleres literarios* formed an ever-expanding national movement that, whilst located beneath more professional organisations, both deliberately extended literary culture into every corner of the island, and responded to an increasing demand to learn more about literature from the grassroots.

Since the late 1970s, when the *talleres literarios* were included in the law establishing cultural facilities in all *municipios*, they have been focal points for literary activity in every locality, encouraging literary engagement amongst broad sectors of the population, providing participants with guidance from *asesores literarios*, motivating them with its competition system, and generating a second circuit of literary production, mostly in the form of printed material, but also sometimes in the form of formal publications. Although the work of *talleristas* has largely remained separate from the primary circuit of institutions and spaces reserved for established writers, there have also been points of overlap. As well

as the annual competition-winners' anthology published by the prestigious Letras Cubanas publishing house (1978-89), during the early 1970s (when the *talleres literarios* were briefly prioritised in literary policy and individual talent was regarded as less important), *talleristas* were also privileged in the wider public sphere in magazines such as *Revolución y Cultura*. Later, after the decentralisation of the publishing system in the 1990s, opportunities were reserved for *talleristas* in provincial publishing houses, alongside those given to more established writers.

However, not all *talleristas* have been able to see their work in print or even aspire to do so. As the point of entry into the voluntary movement has always been at the most local level, the majority of *talleres literarios* have been found in schools, factories, workplaces and other organisations. At this level of the movement, apart from a brief period early on when it was assumed that anyone could become a writer, the emphasis has largely been on literary education and participation as much as it has been on the end results, thus forming cultural citizens but not writers. In contrast, the municipal level *talleres*, until the 1990s, constituted more of a prestigious and dynamic literary movement. Although these *talleres literarios* were also open to any new and amateur writers in a given area, they were a step ahead from the other *talleres* and continued to evolve in line with wider literary and educational developments. Several established writers were also involved with the movement at this level, running their own *talleres*, acting as judges in competitions or visiting as speakers. Moreover, it was the municipal system that provided initial cultural citizenship to many Cuban writers, who would later leave the movement and become established themselves. During their time in the *talleres*, these writers not only learnt about literature, but also established relationships and shared ideas with other *talleristas*, sowing the seeds of future literary generations and trends.

After the post-crisis revitalisation of the *talleres literarios*, the more community-focussed municipal system, although believed to be less of a source of future writers, has still functioned as a lively national movement and has even become more important as a site for participation and the formation of cultural citizens. Meanwhile, the attention of new or amateur writers who aspire to achieve more and receive specialised knowledge and training, has transferred to the more selective *talleres de vanguardia* and the Centro Onelio. These *talleres*, which offer writing courses with more significant teaching components, are also supported by the state, but are organised and run directly by established writers.

This two-tier system reflects the uneven spread of cultural capital throughout the movement, which, although founded on an egalitarian principle, has always operated through a hierarchy based on educational and institutional achievements. Although there is greater emphasis on individual talent promoted by the Centro Onelio, as an institution, it still emphasises participation and has as a key objective the incorporation of young, talented writers into the revolutionary process and, as such, it can be seen as forming higher-level cultural citizens.

Thus, returning to the productive dimension of cultural policy, a study of the *talleres literarios* and the Centro Onelio reveals that, over time, the strand of cultural policy discourse that demanded that intellectuals and writers become closer to the *pueblo*, and be actively engaged in society, has had practical results. By offering the *pueblo* access to cultural citizenship, the *talleres literarios* have provided a public, collective context within which many established Cuban writers have not only worked, but also from which many new writers have been able to emerge and may come in the future. When the *talleres literarios* were first formalised into a movement during the period of greatest restrictions for certain writers and intellectuals, known as the *quinquenio gris*, this collective dimension was stressed in the discourse about them. They were to be the sites in which new, engaged revolutionary writers would be produced out of the *pueblo*, regardless of individual talent. This raised some significant suspicion about the ideological and aesthetic implications of the movement, especially amongst intellectuals already active during the 1960s, such as Ambrosio Fornet and Reynaldo González.

However, the writers interviewed in this study affirmed that their experience of the *talleres literarios* did not make them directly into writers, or prevent them from pursuing an individual, as well as collective, literary education. Their participation may have facilitated their development of cultural citizenship and strong personal bonds, but their experience was only an initial stage in their trajectories towards becoming established as writers. Nevertheless, this does not deny the fact that the *talleres literarios* significantly broadened the social base out of which new writers have arisen. As a grassroots movement, it has extended access to literary resources and figures that previously were only available to a privileged few, blurring the distinction between high and popular art and challenging the position of any self-defined elite. The impetus of such an extensive grassroots literary movement even

constituted a challenge to the very notion of a writer. For, although a hierarchy amongst writers was always maintained, through membership of organisations, literary prizes and the distinction between a *creador* and *aficionado*, thousands of *talleristas*, as cultural citizens, could also claim to be writers and even achieved publications.

Furthermore, the *talleres literarios* have also provided the means by which established writers could continue to participate and interact with a wide social group and have even acted as a source of fixed income for the significant number of writers who have been employed as *asesores literarios*. This increased, especially in the later 1990s, as writers were hired to run the *talleres de vanguardia* and the Centro Onelio. However, more than just promoting active engagement, the *talleres literarios* have also reinforced the official definition of literature as a process of dialogic communication. The format of the *talleres literarios*, and the competitions between them, constantly emphasised that the producers of individual works should engage in face-to-face communication and critical debate about their texts with others, in groups. As such, they have been one example of the many grassroots literary activities that have not only encouraged established writers to engage in dialogue with their potential readership, but also facilitated the enactment of cultural citizenship in the form of literary discussion and debate amongst groups of ordinary citizens. These have included a plethora of literary events and presentations, reading groups, and literary appreciation circles.

In the creative *talleres literarios*, the impetus for, and content of, communication has come largely from the participants themselves, as they debated each others' personal creations. This has generated dialogue about a wide range of issues, principally between the members of a particular *taller* but also sometimes between *talleristas* and established writers, between *talleristas* and members of their local community and, especially during competitions, between *talleristas* from different parts of the country. In this way, whilst writing remains an individual practice, during debates readers have an opportunity to feed back into the creative process and groups can work towards consensus on a variety of topics. At times, this enactment of cultural citizenship has led to the development of shared interests amongst groups and even stimulated the discussion of ideas considered to be taboo in the wider public sphere. As the emphasis has been on spoken dialogue, communication in the mini-public spheres of the *talleres literarios* has not been as mediated as the finished literary products in the wider public sphere that had

to pass through the publishing process. Nonetheless, that is not to say that communication within them has been without limits and constraints.

Each *taller* has been run by an *asesor literario* who is employed, and often trained, by the cultural administration. *Asesores literarios* have been responsible for facilitating debate, for offering literary guidance and for implementing any centrally-produced guidelines on the content and function of the *taller*. During the more restrictive period mentioned above, these official guidelines established the literary genres in which *talleres literarios* would work and set rigid parameters on content. Yet their effectiveness as a mechanism of control depended on the individual *asesor* and on how they chose to direct the group. There is some evidence that writers found these ideological factors limiting during the initial phase of the movement, and that they lasted even longer in some of the national competition events attended by important cultural officials. Yet the experiences of interviewees also show that control was not consistent across all *talleres*, and that *asesores* were by no means dogmatic. From the 1980s onwards, official discourse about the *talleres* placed much less stress on the content of communication. In line with this change, participants have suggested that the main limitation on content after this period was not ideology but the educational level of the *asesores* and other *talleristas*, which, in a movement open to mass participation, has not been always equal.

Cultural citizenship and the talleres literarios: A case study of participation

As well as their role in literary culture, the notion in this study that the *talleres literarios* are linked to a concept of citizenship, and that they have therefore produced Cuban cultural citizens, grew out of an analysis of them as official sites for participation, within the context of the wider ethos and evolution of participation in revolutionary Cuba. Over the decades, one of the main features of the leadership's ethos of participation has been the idea that participating in official structures would socialise Cuban citizens into a revolutionary 'way of being' by facilitating their identification with revolutionary values and behaviours. From the outset, harnessing and encouraging participation was an integral part of the leadership's drive to transform culture, based on values which, although they have been expressed differently over the decades, were first codified in Guevara's 1965 discourse about the ideal citizen. As a result, throughout its history, the Cuban Revolution has been characterised by a high level of

participation in many different types of activities and structures, and this has been considered central to its development and survival. Official participation has been extended to include most areas of Cuban social life and necessarily has had two dimensions of impact: it has both affected those participating and impacted on the revolutionary process overall.

However, the many different ways of participating have had different kinds of impact. Most studies are agreed that participation has not automatically produced ideal citizens. Nevertheless, depending on their particular approach and object of study, they have found that participation has empowered many citizens into having active roles and that it has led to greater social integration and also to local 'subcultures of democracy' (Bengelsdorf, 1994: 84). At times citizen participation has had an input into decision-making processes, and at others, it has directly affected what the state could achieve. Yet despite the fact that culture was an integral element of Guevara's original concept of a Cuban citizenship, an analysis of the impact of cultural participation in a movement such as the *talleres literarios* has largely been overlooked by scholars, or subsumed into general conclusions about socialisation based on the out-dated assumption that all Cuban state educational and cultural programmes involve nothing more than ideological indoctrination and control. This study, therefore, not only adds a new case study to the diverse body of works dealing with the issue of participation in Cuba, but also adds a notion of cultural citizenship to the more general discussion about Cuban citizenship and political culture.

By foregrounding the actual experience of participants in the *talleres literarios*, this study has built on Richard Fagen's original insight that socialisation into the revolutionary process through participation in certain programmes and structures was deemed to stem as much from the shared experience of participating as it was from the internalisation of coherent messages. In other words, any individual or collective subjective transformation would occur through action rather than through the passive acceptance of a belief-system. This emphasis on action has been consistent throughout the revolutionary period. Cuban cultural citizenship should be seen as an active process involving ordinary Cubans rather than just as a specific status that is awarded by institutions of power. Moreover, it is the process of both gaining and enacting cultural citizenship that has social and political implications. However, at the same time, it is also important to remember that the revolutionary leadership has set all

the parameters for participation, including cultural participation, so that official channels of communication within the state have been maintained and have been able to shape the boundaries of citizenship. For the *talleres literarios*, this began in the 1960s, when they were brought under the aegis of the Consejo Nacional de Cultura and made into official sites for participation.

Although the *talleres literarios* initially emerged organically, the existence of revolutionary cultural policy, and its other visible achievements based on local organising, imbued them with a national significance that extended way beyond their local membership. They were linked from the beginning to the revolutionary effort to rescue and promote a national literary tradition, to develop literary culture as a source of pride and identity, as well as to the humanist drive to extend the perceived benefits of engaging with literature to the entire population. In this way, the establishment of the early *talleres literarios* represented a visible, local level fusing together of the values of literature and *nación*, although the broader meanings of both were in the process of being shaped by wider revolutionary change. It was by gaining an awareness of this significance that the leadership believed helped citizens to develop the attitudes and behaviours or *conciencia* necessary to want to continue to participate in the revolutionary process. In particular, experience in the *talleres literarios* was a way in which citizens would be able to realise their creative potential as well as be socialised into the value of literature-*nación*, and the other values of participation, collective work, solidarity and self-improvement which formed the basis of their activity.

Thus, the specific meanings associated with the early *talleres literarios* were very different from the meanings ascribed to participation in other structures. Furthermore, importantly, participation in the *talleres literarios* was considered to be of direct personal benefit to individuals as well as attached to a wider cause. However, in general, the evolution and organisation of the *talleres literarios* movement followed a similar pattern to that of other participatory structures. From the 1970s onwards, as the cultural administration expanded, many more *talleres literarios* were founded deliberately by cultural workers in a more formalised structure, as part of a policy advocating the *masificación* of participation, which was implemented within culture but also across other fields such as work. Although the *talleres literarios* never became a truly mass movement on the scale of some of the Revolution's other mass organisations, their expansion at the grassroots level significantly increased their potential as sites for

socialisation and made them more inclusive. During the early 1970s, the ideological function of the *talleres literarios* was made explicit. The first official guidelines on their function outlined the leadership's project of cultural transformation in instrumental terms: the *talleres literarios* were to form revolutionary writers who were individuals displaying the exemplary attitudes and behaviour of the ideal citizen.

Yet later as the movement continued to be expanded, official discourse modified the tone, adapting to reflect not only changing attitudes towards literature and writers but also the actual experience of an expanding movement with a history of visible results. Especially from the mid-1980s, when the *talleres literarios* were confirmed as an amateur movement, the role of the *talleres literarios* as sites for participation began to be emphasised over any other function. Official discourse consistently focussed on the transformative effect of engaging both with literature and the dynamic environment of the *talleres* on citizens, as well as asserting that the movement would lead to the self-realisation of people and the spiritual enrichment of the nation. This trend was continued during the 1990s when the *talleres literarios* were again expanded and developed into a two-tier system with the *talleres literarios de vanguardia* and the Centro Onelio. Whilst the ethos of the higher-level *talleres* concentrated on providing specialised educational content, all other *talleres* emphasised community participation and the development of a *cultura general e integral*, or a fully-rounded cultural education for citizens. At this time, the *talleres literarios*, and cultural participation in general, were heavily promoted by the leadership. So, if a process of subjective transformation was their main official function, it is also important to understand what their actual impact has been on people.

The social and political significance of the talleres literarios

Based on the experiences of the people interviewed in this study, the impact of the *talleres literarios* over time has been to form cultural citizens who feel a sense of belonging to a literary world, have been empowered in various ways to take an active role within it, and have been given space in the form of literary public spheres within which to enact their cultural citizenship. According to theories of cultural citizenship, generating a sense of belonging in citizens is a way of making societies more inclusive. This has also been an aim of the Cuban leadership's ethos of participation, especially after the 1990s

when the focus moved to incorporating elements of an increasingly fragmented society back into the revolutionary process. As sites for cultural participation, the *talleres literarios* have been effective at generating a sense of belonging on two levels. At the most abstract level, the sense of belonging has been to an imagined notion of national literary tradition and most participants interviewed already had an interest in literature and writing before they joined a *taller literario*. Their accounts reveal a complicity in the official naturalisation of literature-*nación*, they clearly value literature and are invested in the meanings generated by literary institutions and spaces.

However, more than just an abstract belief, the experience in the *talleres literarios* converted the sense of belonging for participants into something more tangible, practical, and personal in several different ways. As well as access to books, literary advice from *asesores* and even established writers, for most *talleristas* or *egresados*, the sense of belonging came from the personal relationships which they formed whilst participating, and the status which they gained as participants. Depending on their level of involvement, *talleristas* have developed a sense of belonging to their particular *taller*, to the wider movement, to local literary life or even to a community of literary friends or other cultural producers that also existed outside of the *talleres*. Although the ultimate aim of the participants who aspired to be writers was to leave the movement and to achieve literary success through publication or membership of more professional organisations, their time in the *talleres literarios* left them with a lasting legacy of investment in the literary process, friendships, and connections to people that they would later consider to be members of their literary group or generation.

In general, for the people within the movement who, after all, joined as volunteers with an interest in literature and writing, the positive experience of belonging generated by the *talleres literarios* has also acted as a force for social integration. This can be seen in the way that many established writers have used the *talleres literarios* to continue to engage with the grassroots, but also especially in the contemporary municipal *talleres*, where people of all backgrounds mix, and during the large organised competitions when *talleristas* from all over the country come together. Whilst the *talleres literarios* are not a mass movement and therefore ultimately limited in their ability to promote social inclusion, they can be seen in conjunction with the many other participatory cultural activities. Moreover, viewed from a different perspective, the *talleres literarios* have responded to a need to belong and a demand to have

creative outlets, which have been, and continue to be, articulated by people at the grassroots. Once engaged with the *talleres literarios*, participants have generally been motivated to continue participating in literary institutions or other literary activities, if only as amateurs. Several *egresados* of the Centro Onelio course have taken this belonging a step further and are convinced that belonging to the cultural field is a desirable career option.

Yet also integral to the sense of belonging generated by the *talleres literarios* has been their most important function, the empowerment of cultural citizens. This has occurred through a learning process in which participants acquire literary tools and are recognised and validated for their creative efforts. Theories of cultural citizenship suggest that empowering cultural citizens, as well as making societies more inclusive, can contribute towards them becoming more democratic. As part of a revolutionary cultural policy that has striven to democratise culture, the *talleres literarios* have clearly had political consequences. One result of the empowerment of cultural citizens in the *talleres literarios* has been to give thousands of participants a social role as *talleristas*, which, depending on the individual, location and time-period, has included being in possession of a respected and recognised status and a public voice. Yet it is also possible to demonstrate that, in a way similar way to other forms of participation in Cuba, the democratising thrust of the *talleres literarios* has been countered by a strict adherence to a literary hierarchy. This has been defined by the different levels of cultural capital gained from social and institutional recognition both inside and outside of the movement. Nevertheless, whilst this hierarchy of value limits their democratic potential, the *talleres literarios* still represent a more inclusive terrain on which people can participate in power struggles over literary value.

In terms of the tools of cultural citizenship, although often uneven in quality throughout the movement, participants in the main *talleres literarios* have learnt about literature, about the writing process, and more importantly, have learnt the skills of listening, debating and critical judgement as well as writing. Further to this, participants in the Centro Onelio and the *talleres de vanguardia* have also had access to more specialised theoretical literary knowledge, to a more rigorous critical evaluation of their work and therefore to a higher-level cultural citizenship. The learning process initiated by participation in both the *talleres literarios* and the Centro Onelio has not been restricted to what is taught or practiced in the *taller*. It has also involved a continuation of individual self-development through study and writing

outside of the *taller*, which is then fully realised as progress once presenting work back in the group. In addition, once in the group, individuals also learn about themselves as people through the practice of listening to others. In this way, the cultural citizenship formed in the *talleres literarios* involves a process of identity formation where citizens both make themselves through their individual study and self-expression, and are shaped by external forces, by the recognition which they receive within the collective and institutional framework.

Recognition in the *talleres* is central to individual cultural citizens' sense and level of empowerment. During a session of a *taller*, participants are all treated with equal respect and their creative efforts and comments are all recognised as valid. In other words, they are all equally empowered. However, for some *talleristas*, greater levels of validation have led them to take their work out into the community, reading it at schools or participating in other literary events. Other *talleristas* and writers have been able to gain further recognition by competing within the internal competitions or getting their work printed or published with the help of the *asesores*. On the other hand, cultural citizens from the Centro Onelio receive validation on a wholly different scale, being able to use their successful completion of the course to speak with some literary authority as well as to gain employment and other opportunities. Yet ultimately, many of the writers and *egresados* want to achieve greater empowerment than that which is achievable in the *talleres literarios* or the Centro Onelio, by gaining further institutional recognition and a voice in the wider public sphere.

However, there has also been a greater number of ordinary *talleristas*, who have preferred to stay within the movement for longer periods of time, and who have felt satisfied lower down the writing hierarchy with their more locally-based empowerment. Several of these participants mention that being a *tallerista* is directly related to their self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and general levels of confidence. Moreover, according to cultural citizenship theory, even these individuals who are far removed from cultural hierarchies can still have an important impact, as any act of communication can be inscribed with, and simultaneously have an impact on, the power relations within a polity. This mention of communication then reveals that, whilst a sense of belonging and empowerment might be the characteristics of a Cuban cultural citizenship, it is only through the enactment of this cultural

citizenship that their real impact can be felt and their social and political significance can truly be realised.

The *talleres literarios* as mini public spheres provide multiple spaces where this enactment can take place, and where topics as diverse as philosophy and the realities of everyday existence can be discussed on a regular basis. In summary then, over time, the large number of *talleres literarios* have contributed to the creation of a literary culture in common, where the literary culture involves a 'way of being' of citizens as they interact in a literary world, as well as literary communication. Moreover, the size and strength of this literary culture in common in 2009 poses a challenge to the assumption that the Revolution's cultural project, having failed to produce the ideal citizen, ended completely with the 1990s crisis. It even shows how it has become more important. On the one hand, the *talleres literarios* have produced cultural citizens who are invested in core values and literary institutions, bringing the revolutionary process legitimacy and helping to maintain its hegemony. However, on the other hand, the literary culture in common, although shaped by official parameters, has been driven by the cultural citizens themselves as they have used it to formulate and articulate their concerns as well as to develop their world-views in an often rapidly changing context. In other words, the *talleres literarios* have helped to construct a literary culture in common that often appears separate from, but in reality is shaped by, and constitutive of, politics.

Interviews*

Name	Position	Date of interview
Aida Bahr	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesora literaria, taller de vanguardia.</i>	18/04/07 By email
Viana Barceló	<i>Egresada</i> Centro Onelio	13/03/07
Maysel Bello	<i>Egresado</i>	15/03/07
Marilyn Bobes	Writer (UNEAC)	27/04/07
Lien Carranza Lau	<i>Egresada</i> Centro Onelio	08/03/07
Sergio Chaple	Writer (UNEAC), former Director of Literature Ministry of Culture 1978-81	09/03/07
Lizette Clavelo	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesora literaria municipio Playa</i>	07/03/07
David Curbelo	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesor of taller literario de poesía (taller literario de vanguardia)</i>	03/05/07
Ahmel Echevarría	<i>Egresado</i> Centro Onelio	20/03/07
Ernesto Ernesto	Writer, <i>asesor literario</i> Havana Province	28/04/07
Ambrosio Fornet	Writer (UNEAC)	09/03/07
Tomasito Fernández Robaina	Writer (UNEAC), Researcher Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, former <i>asesor literario</i> Consejo Nacional de Cultura.	11/05/07
Ivonne Galeano	Co-Director of Centro Onelio	27/03/07
Viena García	<i>Egresada</i> Centro Onelio	16/03/07
Reynaldo González	Writer (UNEAC)	05/05/07
Ismael González Castañer	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesor literario</i> various <i>talleres</i>	17/04/07
Alberto Guerra	Writer (UNEAC), former head of Literaria at Consejo Nacional de Cultura Comunitaria (1996-8)	23/03/07
Susana Haug	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesora</i> of <i>taller de poesía</i>	03/05/07
Eduardo Heras León	Writer (UNEAC), Director of Centro Onelio, Editor of <i>Talleres Literarios</i> anthology 1980-89	29/03/07
Ingrid Hernández	<i>Egresada</i> Centro Onelio	27/02/07
Teresita Hernández	Writer (UNEAC), <i>especialista</i> at Real Academia de Cuba. Former <i>asesora literaria</i> in the Consejo Nacional de Cultura and Ministry of Culture.	16/04/07
Raúl Hernández Ortega	Writer (UNEAC), Director of the Centro de Promoción Literaria Feliz Pita Rodríguez, San Antonio de los Baños, Havana Province	06/05/07
Yannis Lobaina González	<i>Egresada</i> Centro Onelio, <i>especialista literaria</i> Ediciones Unión.	07/03/07
Ana Lydia Vega	Writer (UNEAC)	03/04/07
Angela de Mela	Writer (UNEAC), former <i>asesora literaria</i> Consejo Nacional de Cultura	26/02/07

Mercedes Melo	Writer (UNEAC), <i>asesora literaria</i> 10 de Octubre	17/03/07 01/04/07
Arturo Mesa	<i>Egresado</i> Centro Onelio	27/03/07
Yohan Moya	<i>Egresado</i> Centro Onelio	13/03/07
Abraham Ortiz	<i>Egresado</i> Centro Onelop, <i>tallerista</i> Marianao, Plaza, Playa	16/03/07
Ernesto Pérez Castillo	Writer (UNEAC), Editor, editorial la Caja China based at the Centro Onelio	08/03/07
Fernando Rojas	Vice Minister of Culture, former Director of the Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura and Asociación Hermanos Saíz.	03/03/07 06/03/07
Mercedes Santos Moray	Writer/ Journalist	24/03/07
Emmanuel Tornés	Writer (UNEAC), Researcher Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística.	02/03/07
Mirta Yáñez	Writer (UNEAC)	25/04/07

*all interviews were conducted in Havana or Havana Province. Interviewees provided their consent to be quoted in the thesis in line with Nottingham University's Code of Research Conduct.

Participant Observation

Taller Literario Municipal 10 de Octubre, Casa del Escritor, 10 de Octubre, Havana.
10/04/07

Taller Literario Municipal Marianao, Casa del Escritor, Marianao, Havana.
24/03/07

Taller Literario Municipal Plaza de la Revolución, Salón Rosado de la UNEAC, Havana.
07/03/07

Taller de superación, Dirección de Cultura Provincial, Havana
28/03/07

Encuentro-Debate Nacional de Talleres Literarios Infantiles, Hotel Camagüey, Camagüey.
04/04/07 – 08/04/07

Bibliography

- ‘5 años de Revolución Cultural’, (1963), *Pueblo y Cultura*, [17-18]:10.
- Acanda, J. L. (1996), ‘Sociedad civil y hegemonía’, in *Temas*, núm. 6, abril-junio: 12-22.
- Acevedo Pastrana, B. (n.d.), ‘La formación de valores en la Escuela de Instructores de Arte’, *Educación, Monografias.com*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos51/formacion-valores-instructores/formacion-valores-instructores.shtml> (04/03/09).
- Acosta, D. (2008), ‘CUBA: Cultural Policy Debate Keeps Growing’, *IPS*, Feb 14. [Online]. Available at: <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=41201> (09/05/08).
- Aguar, R. & Yoss, (2005), *Escritos con guitarra: Cuentos cubanos sobre el rock*, Ediciones Unión, Havana.
- Aguirre, B. E. (2002), ‘Social Control in Cuba’, in *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol.44 No.2 Summer: 67-98.
- AHS, (n.d.), ‘Sobre Nosotros’, *Asociación Hermanos Saíz*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ahs.cu/secciones-secundarias/sobre-nosotros/sobre-nosotros.html> (03/03/09).
- ‘Al pie de la letra: VI Reunión de ministros de cultura de los países socialistas’, (1974), in *Casa de las Américas*, Año XV [85] julio-agosto: 171-176.
- Aleman Bay, C. (n.d.), ‘Poesía cubana de finales del XX: 1980-2000’, *Biblioteca Cervantes* Available at: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/> (16/04/05).
- Alfonso Chomat, M. (2002), ‘La formación de usuarios y los hábitos de lectura para el desarrollo de una cultura general e integral’, *Ponencia dada en el Congreso Internacional de Información INFO*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.congreso-info.cu/UserFiles/File/Info/Info2002/Ponencias/103.pdf> 05/09/07 (10/11/06).
- Almond, G. A. & Verba, S. (1965), *The Civic Culture*, Little, Brown & Company, Boston MA.
- Álvarez, I. (1985), ‘Del Taller a los Libros’, *Revolución y Cultura* [3]: 20-26.
- Álvarez, I. (1987), ‘Once notas sobre el proceso editorial ideológico y artístico de la Revolución’, in *Letras Cubanas*, [6] octubre-diciembre: 151-165.
- Álvarez, J. B. (2002), *Contestatory Cuban Short Story of the Revolution*, University Press of America, Lanham MD.
- Amaya, H. (2008), ‘Cultural Freedoms, Cuba, and the Liberal Imaginary’, *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association*, Sheraton New York, New York City, [Online] http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p14675_index.html (10/10/07).
- ‘Amenazado por organizar talleres literarios’, (2006), *Cubanet.org*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y06/may06/31a5.htm>. (16/04/09).
- Amony, A. C. (2005), ‘Theoretical and Comparative Reflections on the Study of Civil Society in Cuba’, in Tulchin, J. S. et al. (eds) *Changes in Cuban Society Since the Nineties: Woodrow Wilson Center Report on the Americas #15*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC: 19-35.
- Anderson, B. (1991), *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London/New York.

- Antonio Vázquez, J. (1978), '¿Qué hacer con los talleres literarios?', *Caimán Barbudo*, [122]: 4-5.
- Araújo, N. (1999), 'El espacio otro de las (novísimas) narradoras cubanas', in *Temas*, no. 16-17 octubre-junio: 212-219.
- Armas, Z. (n.d.), 'Los talleres de Creación y Apreciación artística y literaria en las Casas de Cultura como motor del desarrollo cultural en la comunidad', *Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cncc.cult.cu>. (09/03/06).
- Azicri, M. (1988), *Cuba: Politics, Economics and Society*, Pinter Publishers, London, New York.
- Báez, L. (1986), *Armando Hart Dávalos: Cambiar las reglas del juego*. Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Barreras Cedeño, I. (n.d.), 'La formación de valores. Reflexión permanente', *Educación, Monografías.com*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos12/forva/forva.shtml?monosearch> (04/03/09).
- Basail Rodríguez, A. (2006), *Sociedad cubana hoy: Ensayos de sociología joven*, Ciencias sociales, Havana.
- Bejel, E. (1991), *Escribir en Cuba: Entrevistas con Escritores Cubanos 1979-1989*, University of Puerto Rico Press, San Juan.
- Benedetti, M. (1972), 'Present Status of Cuban Culture' in Bonachea, R. E. & Valdés, N. P. (eds) *Cuba in Revolution*, Anchor Books, New York: 500-526.
- Bengelsdorf, C. (1994), *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Benmayor, R. (eds) *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, Beacon Press, Boston MA: 27-38.
- Bennett, T. (1992), 'Putting Policy into Cultural Studies', in Grossberg, L., Nelson, C., & Treichler, P. (eds) *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London: 23-53.
- Bennett, T. (1998), 'Putting Policy into Cultural Studies', in During, S. (ed) (2007), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Routledge, Oxon: 106-119.
- Berg, M. (2003), *Open your eyes and soar: Cuban Women Writing Now*, White Pine Press, Buffalo NY.
- Bobes, V. C. (2005), 'Citizenship and Rights in Cuba: Evolution and Current Situation', in Tulchin, J. S. et al. (eds) *Changes in Cuban Society Since the Nineties: Woodrow Wilson Center Report on the Americas #15*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC: 61-81.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993), 'Field of Power, Literary Field, and Habitus', in During, S. (ed) (2007), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Routledge, Oxon: 88-99.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bourdieu, P. & Darbel, A. (1991), *The Love of Art*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Brenner, P. et al (eds) (2007), *Reinventing the Revolution: A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers inc., Maryland, Plymouth.
- Brenner, P. et al. (eds) (1989), *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, Grove Press, New York.

- Buchaca, E. (1961), *La teoría de la superestructura: la literatura y el arte*, Ediciones del Consejo Nacional de Cultura, Havana.
- Buckwalter-Arias, J. (2005), 'Reinscribing the Aesthetic: Cuban Narrative and Post-Soviet Cultural Politics', in *PMLA*, Vol. 120, Number 2, March: 362–374.
- Bunck, J. M. (1994), *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA.
- Butterworth, D. (1980), *People of Buena Ventura: relocation of slum dwellers in postrevolutionary Cuba*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Buzzi, D. (ed) (1979), *Sol de los Talleres*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Calzada Fowler, V. (n.d), *La lectura: ese poliedro*, [Online]. Available at: http://bdigital.bnjm.cu/secciones/publicaciones/libros/la_lectura/curso_intro.htm (03/03/09).
- Calzada Fowler, V. (2006), 'Limonos Partidos', *Cubista magazine*, verano, [Online]. Available at: <http://cubistamagazine.com/050108.html> (03/03/07).
- Campuzano, L. (1988), 'La mujer en la narrativa de la Revolución: ponencia sobre una carencia', in Campuzano, L. (ed), *Quirón o del ensayo y otros eventos*, Letras Cubanas, Havana: 66-104.
- Campuzano, L. (2001), 'La revolución Casa de las Américas, 1960-1995', in Fornet, A. & Campuzano, L. (eds) *La Revista Casa de las Américas: un Proyecto Continental*, Centro Cultural Juan Marinello, Havana: 30-70.
- Carbrera Reves, A. (2009), 'Tensión en Cuba ante el inminente desafío a la censura en la Feria del Libro de la Habana', *Bottup* 14 de febrero [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bottup.com/200902144311/denuncia/tension-en-cuba-ante-el-inminente-desafio-a-la-censura-en-la-feria-del-libro-de-la-habana.html> (15/02/09).
- Carmona Báez, A. (2004), *State Resistance to Globalisation in Cuba*, Pluto Press, London.
- Carmona Ymas, L. (2006), 'Artemiseña trasciende fronteras', *El Habanero: edición digital*, 24/11 [Online]. Available at: http://www.elhabanero.cu/2006/noviembre/nro1760_nov06/cult_06nov091.html (22/10/07).
- Carranza, J. et al. (1998), 'Cultura y Desarrollo', in *Temas*, no.15 julio-setiembre: 82-97.
- Casal, L. (1971), 'Literature and society', in Mesa-Lago, C. (ed), *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh: 447-469.
- Castilla Mas, B. (1974), 'El triunfo de nuestra Revolución socialista constituyó el hecho más importante de nuestra cultura contemporánea', *Verde Olivo*, 16 (21): 55-57.
- Castro Ruz, F. (1980), 'Palabras a los Intelectuales', in López Lemus, V. (ed) *Revolución, Letras, Arte.*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana: 7-30.
- Castro Ruz, F. (2004), 'Discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la República de Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruz, en la graduación del primer curso de las Escuelas de Instructores de Arte, en la Plaza Ernesto Che Guevara, Santa Clara, el 20 de octubre', *Discursos del gobierno de Cuba*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2004/esp/f201004e.html> (02/12/08).
- Castro, H. (2007), 'Una cultura de la política revolucionaria', *Tiempo de Cuba*, [Online]. Available at: www.tiempodecuba.34sp.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=1122 (06/11/07).
- Centro de Estudios sobre América (ed) (1992), *The Cuban Revolution into the 1990s*, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford.

- Céspedes, N. (2008), 'El Centro Onelio ha dinamizado la narrativa cubana', *Atenas: El Portal de la cultura Matancera*, 20/10 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.atenas.cult.cu/?q=node/5101> (02/02/09).
- CFLOJC, (n.d.a), 'Introducción' (n.d.), *El Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.centroonelio.cult.cu> (02/03/09).
- CFLOJC, (n.d.b) 'Quiénes somos', *El Centro de Formación Literaria Onelio Jorge Cardoso* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.centroonelio.cult.cu> (02/03/09).
- Chanan, M. (2001), 'Cuba and Civil Society, or Why Cuban Intellectuals Are Talking about Gramsci', in *Nepantla: Views from South*, Vol. 2, Issue 2: 387-406.
- Chilton, S. (1988), 'Defining Political Culture', in *Western Political Quarterly*, [41] 3, Sept: 419-445.
- Chilton, S. (2005), *Grounding Political Development*. 2nd WWW Edition, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.d.umn.edu/~schilton/Articles/GPD.html> (03/10/08).
- Chió, E. (1983), 'Aficionados presente y perspectivas', *Revolución y Cultura*, [128]: 54-57.
- Chomsky, A. et al. (eds) (2003), *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, Duke University Press, London, Durham North Carolina.
- 'Ciencia Ficción Cubana' (n.d), *Wikipedia.org*, [Online]. Available at: http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciencia_ficci%C3%B3n_cubana (03/03/09).
- Cinta, R. (1974), 'Granado al cinto', *Revolución y Cultura*, [21]: 23.
- Coloquio sobre Literatura Cubana: Ponencias 22-24 de noviembre 1981*, (1981), folleto, Havana [Unpublished].
- CNCC (Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura), (2003), 'Valoraciones en torno a los talleres literarios de nuevo tipo', *Informe del Equipo de Literatura Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*, Havana [Unpublished].
- CNCC (Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura), (2005a), 'Anexo I Talleres y Alcance Poblacional de Literatura', *Informe del Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*, Havana [Unpublished].
- CNCC (Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura), (2005b), 'Análisis de las estadísticas de literatura 2005', *Informe del Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*, Havana [Unpublished].
- CNCC (Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura), (2008), 'Talleres de creación', *Indicaciones Metodológicas del Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.cenit.cult.cu/sites/cpcc/index>. (10/03/09).
- CNC (Consejo Nacional de Cultura), (1973), *Folleto Metodológico: Talleres Literarios no. 1.*, Consejo Nacional de Cultura: Dirección General de Literatura y Publicaciones, Havana.
- CNC (Consejo Nacional de Cultura), (1974), *Talleres Literarios y Círculos de Lectura*, Consejo Nacional de Cultura: Dirección de Extensión Universitaria, Havana.
- CNC (Consejo Nacional de Cultura), (1975a), *Bases para los encuentro-debates de los Talleres Literarios*, Consejo Nacional de Cultura, Havana.
- CNC (Consejo Nacional de Cuba), (1975b), *Encuentro de Escritores Oriente*, Consejo Nacional de Cultura, Santiago de Cuba.
- CNC (Consejo Nacional de Cultura), (1975c), *Informe central a la plenaria*, Año del Primer Congreso, Consejo Nacional de Cultura, Havana.

- Cossío Woodward, M. (n.d.), *El escritor, el libro y el lector cubano de hoy*, Seminario de cultura, literatura y crítica literaria en Cuba contemporánea, Havana [Unpublished].
- Craven, D. (1990), 'The State of Cultural Democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua during the 1980s', in *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No. 3: 100-119.
- 'Cuál debe ser la ayuda a los talleres literarios?', (1982), *Trabajadores*, 21 de mayo: 6.
- Cuba in Transition*, (1991-4), Annual Proceedings of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Florida International University, Miami.
- 'Cultura en Regla', (1963), *Pueblo y Cultura*, [13]: 13.
- Cunningham, S. (2003), 'Cultural Studies from The Viewpoint of Cultural Policy', in Lewis, J. & Miller, T. (eds) *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford: 13-23.
- DACC (Dirección de Aficionados y Casas de Cultura), (1988), 'Literatura', *Centro Nacional Docente Metodológico*, Dirección de Aficionados y Casas de Cultura, Havana.
- Dalton, T. C. (1993), *"Everything within the Revolution": Cuban Strategies for Social Development since 1960*, Westview Press, Boulder/San Francisco/Oxford.
- Davies, C. (2000), 'Surviving (on) the Soup of Signs: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture', in *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 4: 103-21.
- Davis, R. P. (1987), 'The Odyssey of Identity: Culture and Politics in the Evolution of Latin American Nationalism', in *Platte Valley Review*, 15:1 Spring: 36-45.
- De Bertero, G. (1988), *El Taller Literario: Surgimiento en Argentina*, Edición municipalidad de Rafaela.
- De la Fuente, A. (2001), *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality and Politics in Twentieth Century Cuba*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, London.
- Delanty, G. (2003), 'Review essay: Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship: A Review of Recent Literature on Culture and Citizenship', in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, no.3, March: 60-66.
- Delanty, G. (2007), 'Citizenship as a Learning Process: Disciplinary Citizenship versus Cultural Citizenship', *Eurozine*, [Online]. Available at: <http://eurozine.com/pdf/2007-06-30-delanty-en.pdf> (23/06/08).
- Díaz Mantilla, D. (2006), 'De los alucinados de un mundo presente: reflexiones sobre el abuso de la crítica y las técnicas narrativas', *La Letra Del Escriba*, núm. 54 oct: 1-2.
- Dilla, H. (2000), 'Cuba: los entornos cambiantes de la participación', in *América Latina Hoy* abril Vol. 24: 19-26.
- DPC de Matanzas (Dirección Provincial de Cultura de Matanzas), (2008), 'Casa del Escritor', *Atenas: el portal de la cultura matancera*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.atenas.cult.cu/?q=node/1833> (03/03/09).
- Dobrenko, E. (2001), *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*, trans. Savage, J., Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Domínguez, J. I. (1978), *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.
- Domínguez, J. I. (1993), 'The Political Impact on Cuba of the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes', in Mesa-Lago, C. (ed) *Cuba After the Cold War*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh: 99-127.

- Dopico Black, G. (1989), 'The limits of expression: intellectual freedom in postrevolutionary Cuba', in *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 19: 107-144
- Du Gay, P. (ed) (1997), *Production of Culture/ Cultures of Production*, Sage, London.
- During, S. (ed) (2007), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, New York.
- Eagleton, T. (1984), *The Function of Criticism – From the Spectator to Post-structuralism*, Verso, London, New York.
- Eagleton, T. (1991), *Ideology*, Verso, London, New York.
- Eagleton, T. (2000), *The Idea of Culture*, Blackwell's Publishing, Oxford.
- Eckstein, S. (1994), *Back to the Future: Cuba under Castro*, Princeton University Press, Chichester.
- 'Ediciones Vigía' (2006), *Somos Jóvenes Digital: Revista de los jóvenes cubanos*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.somosjovenes.cu/index/semana11/edicionesvigia.htm> (03/03/09).
- 'El II Encuentro-Debate Nacional de los Talleres Literarios en Escambray', (1975), *La Gaceta de Cuba*, [141]: 12-13.
- 'El taller literario Rubén Martínez Villena', (1981), *Revolución y Cultura*. [102]: 78-79.
- 'En la fragua de los talleres', (1986), *Revolución y Cultura*, [2]: 75-76.
- 'En la literatura se adentran los trabajadores del Hotel Nacional', (1982), *Trabajadores*, 18 de mayo: 5.
- 'Encuentro de dirigentes de Uniones de Escritores de Países Socialistas', (1974), *La Gaceta de Cuba*, [122]: 28-29.
- Escalina, F. (1981), 'Joven literatura de Manzanillo', *Revolución y Cultura*, [104]: 68.
- 'Este arte joven: La Brigada Hermanos Saíz', (1976), *Bohemia*, [68] 32:10-13.
- Estudios sobre América (ed), *The Cuban Revolution into the 1990s*. Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: 31-47.
- Fagen, R. (1969), *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Feijóo, S. (1978), 'Conversación con los miembros de un taller literario', *Caimán Barbudo* [130]: 18-19.
- Fernandes, S. (2006), *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures*, Duke University Press, London.
- Fernández Fernández, I (2008), 'Heras León por la ascendente cultura de diálogo', *CMKX RadioBayamo*, 05/05 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.radiobayamo.icrt.cu/noticia.php?id=2157> (02/05/09).
- Fernández Retamar, R. (1967), *Ensayo de otro mundo*, Instituto del Libro, Havana.
- Fernández Retamar, R. (1967), 'Hacia una Intelectualidad Revolucionaria en Cuba', in *Casa de las Américas* año VII [40] enero-febrero: 6-8.
- Fernández Retamar, R. (1982), 'Al final del coloquio sobre literatura cubana, 1959-1981', *Casa de las Américas*, Año XXII [131] marzo-abril: 48-55.

- Fernández Retamar, R. & Beverley, J. (1996), 'The Enormity of Cuba', *boundary 2*, Vol. 23, No. 3: 165-190.
- Fernández, D. (1993), 'Civil Society in Transition', in *Transition in Cuba, New Challenges for U.S. Policy*, A Project of the Cuba Research Institute, Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Miami: 99-107.
- Fernández, D. (2000), *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Fernández, D. (2008), 'Society, Civil Society and the State: An Uneasy Three-Way Affair', in Brenner, P. et al (eds), *Reinventing the Revolution: A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc., Maryland, Plymouth: 92-101.
- Forgacs, D. (ed) (1999), *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, Lawrence & Wishart, London.
- Fornet, A. (1980), 'El intelectual en la Revolución', in López Lemus, V. (ed), *Revolución, Letras, Arte*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana: 315-325.
- Fornet, A. (2006), 'El Quinquenio Gris: Revisitando el término', in *Ciclo: La política cultural del período revolucionario: Memoria y reflexión*, [Online] Available at: <http://www.criterios.es/cicloquinqueniogris.htm> (02/01/09).
- Fornet, J. (2006), 'Cuando Cuba comenzó a desaparecer', *El Cuentero*, [02] Año 00: 2-11.
- Franco, J. (1999), *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, Duke University Press, Durham N.C., London.
- Franco, J. (2002), *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, London.
- García Canelini, N. (1975), 'Para una teoría de la socialización del arte latinoamericano', in *Casa de las Américas*, Año XV [89] marzo-abril: 99-122.
- García González, F. (2007), 'Women of the Federation' in Berg, M.G et al. (eds), *Cuba on the Edge: Short Stories from the Island*, CCC Press, Nottingham: 124-138.
- Garnham, N. (1990), *Capitalism and Communication – Global Culture and the Economics of Information*, Sage, London, Newbury Park, New Delhi.
- Garrido, J. (1985), 'Talleres y libros: un debate inconcluso', *Trabajadores*, 7 de marzo: 6.
- Geddes Gonzales, H. Et al. (1998), 'Enfoque Diversidad', in *Temas*, no.14 abril-junio: 4-80.
- González Castañer, I. (2007), *Taller Guidelines*, [Unpublished].
- González Echevarría, R. (1985), 'Criticism and Literature in Revolutionary Cuba', in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. M. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984*, Praeger, Westport, New York/London: 154-175.
- González López, W. (1983), 'Como un camino al futuro', *Trabajadores*, 6 de oct: 6.
- González López, W. (1985), 'Poesía es el mundo que nos rodea', *Trabajadores*, 11 de jul: 6.
- Gramsci, A. (1986), 'The Intellectuals', in Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith, (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Lawrence & Wishart, London: 3-23.
- Guevera, E. (1967), *El socialismo y el hombre nuevo en Cuba*, Instituto del Libro, Havana.
- Habel, J. (1991), *Cuba: The Revolution in Peril*, Verso, London, New York.

- Habermas, J. (1991), *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, The MIT Press, Cambridge MA.
- Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. (eds) (1990), *Transformation and Struggle: Cuba Faces the 1990s*. Praeger, New York, Westport, Conn. & London.
- Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. M. (eds) (1985), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution, 1959-1984*. Praeger, New York, Westport, Conn. & London.
- Hall, S. (1985), *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, London, New York.
- Harnecker, M. (1975), *Cuba: ¿dictadura o democracia?*, Siglo XXI editores: Mexico.
- Hart Dávalos, A. (1986), 'Segunda Conferencia Mundial Sobre Políticas Culturales de UNESCO', in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Antología Vol 3*, Editorial Pueblo y Educación: 146-159.
- Hart Dávalos, A. (1988), *Adelante el Arte: Palabras pronunciadas en los I, II, III y IV Congresos de la UNEAC*, Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Hart Dávalos, A. (1989), *El ministerio de cultura ante el reto de un más amplio desarrollo de cultura*, Dirección de Información, Ministerio de Cultura, Havana.
- Hart Dávalos, A. (1990), *Cultura en Revolución*, Ediciones Nuevo Tiempo, Mexico.
- Heras León, E. (compilador) (2001), *Los desafíos de la ficción (técnicas narrativas)*, Casa Editorial Abril/ CFLOJC, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1980), *Talleres Literarios 1979*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1981), *Talleres Literarios 1980*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1982), *Talleres Literarios 1981*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1984), *Talleres Literarios 1983*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1986), *Talleres Literarios 1985*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1987), *Talleres Literarios 1986*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1988), *Talleres Literarios 1987*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Heras León, E. (ed) (1989), *Talleres Literarios 1988*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Hernández Alén, Y. (2007), 'Sobre la formación de valores en los talleres de apreciación literaria', *Consejo Nacional de Casas de Cultura*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.casasdecultura.cult.cu/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=20 (02/03/08).
- Hernández, R. (1999), *Mirar a Cuba: Ensayos sobre Cultura y Sociedad Civil*, Editorial Letras Cubanas: Havana.
- Hernández, R. (2008), 'Walking without crutches: culture, politics and critical thought', *The International Journal of Cuban Studies*, Issue 1 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubastudiesjournal.org/issue-1/articles/walking-without-crutches-culture-politics-and-critical-thought.cfm> (03/08/08).
- Hernández, R. & Dilla, H. (1991), 'Political Culture and Popular Participation', in *Latin American Perspectives*, 18 Spring: 38-55.

- Hernández, R. (2003), *Looking at Cuba: Essays on Culture and Civil Society*, Trans. Cluster, D. University of Florida Press, Gainesville.
- Hernández, R. et al. (2003), '¿Cómo se forma un ciudadano?' in *Temas* no.35 oct-nov: 61-82.
- Hernández-Reguant, A. (ed) (2009), *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1995), 'Nationalism and Nationality in Latin America', in *Pour une histoire économique et sociale internationale: mélanges offerts à Paul Bairoch*: 313-23.
- Huertas, B. (1993), *Ensayo de un cambio. La narrativa cubana de los '80*, Casa de las Américas, Havana.
- Hunter, I. (1988), *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education*, Macmillan, London.
- ICL (Instituto Cubano de Libro), (1986), *El programa de trabajo para el desarrollo de la literatura*, Dirección de Literatura, Instituto Cubano del Libro, Havana.
- 'Intercambio entre Cuba y México', (1963), *Pueblo y Cultura*, [15]: 30.
- Isabel, D. M. (1996), *La formación de valores en las nuevas generaciones*, Editorial Ciencias Sociales, Havana.
- Jiménez, T. (1995), 'Los Talleres Literarios en México' en *Anales de Literatura*, *Hispanoamericana*, num. 24: 251-258 [Online]. Available at: www.revistas.ucm.es/fil/02104547/articulos/ALHI9595110251A.PDF (03/06/07).
- Jorge Cardoso, O. (1963), 'Pinar del Rio y las Casas de Cultura', *Pueblo y Cultura*, [17-18]:15.
- Kapcia A. (1982), 'Revolution, the Intellectual and a Cuban Identity: The Long Tradition', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 1 No. 2 May : 63-78.
- Kapcia A. (2000), *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, Berg, Oxford, New York.
- Kapcia, A & Gray, A. I. (2008), *The Changing Dynamic of Cuban Civil Society*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Kapcia, A. (2005), *Havana: The Making of Cuban Culture*, Berg, Oxford/New York.
- Kapcia, A. (2008), 'Setting the Stage for a Discussion of Cuban Civil Society' in Kapcia, A & Gray, A. I. (eds), *The Changing Dynamic of Cuban Civil Society*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville: 20-40
- Karol, K. S. (1970), *Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution*, Pomerans, Arnold trans.: New York, Hill & Way.
- Kautsky, J. H. (1973), *Patterns of Modernising Revolutions in Mexico and the Soviet Union*, Sage, London.
- Kelly, O. (2003), 'Art', in Lewis J. & Miller, T. (eds), *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers: 188-191.
- Kimmel, M. (1990), *Revolution: a Sociological Interpretation*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Kumaraswami, P. (2003), *Reading women's self-writing from revolutionary Cuba*. PhD Wolverhampton.
- Kumaraswami, P. (2007), 'Cultural Policy, Literature, and Readership in Revolutionary Cuba: The View from the 21st Century', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 26, No. 1 Jan: 69-87.

- Kutzinkski, V. (1993), *Sugar's Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, London.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995), *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ILyL (Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba), (1984), *Diccionario de la literatura cubana*, Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Leal, E. (1987), *Talleres de Literatura: Educación formal y no formal (Teoría y Metodología)*, Rama de Oro, Bogotá.
- Leante, C. (1973), '¿Qué son los talleres literarios?', *Revolución y Cultura*, [14]: 2-6.
- LeoGrande, W. (1989), 'Mass Political Participation in Socialist Cuba', in Brenner, P. et al. (eds), *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, Grove Press, New York: 193-7.
- Lewis J. & Miller, T. (eds) (2003), *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Lewis, O. (1977), *Four Men: Living the Revolution: An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Lidia Pérez, O. (2009), 'Los Talleres Literarios', *Habana en línea*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.habanaenlinea.cu/noticias/enero09/01/03.html> (16/04/07).
- Linares, C. (1999), *Consumo y otras formas de participacion en la cultura: Encuentro Nacional de Directores de Cultura*. Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, Havana.
- López Lemus, V. (ed) (1980), *Revolución, Letras, Arte*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- López Sacha, F. (1998), 'Used Paper Writers', *Paper offered at KLYS World Conference on Culture Stockholm 31 march - 2 april*, [Online]. Available at: <http://artaustralia.homestead.com/files/Agenda21text.htm> (06/06/07).
- López, S. 'Culture on the Ground: Agency, Politics and Scholarship', in *Acontracorriente* Vol.. 4, No. 1, Fall 2006: 120-125.
- Lorenzo Fuentes, J., & Díaz Martínez, M. (1994), 'The Cuban writer', in *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 24: 143-153.
- Luis Espinosa, J. L. (2005), 'Cierran Centro Mexicano de Escritores', *El Universal*, 04/09 [Online]. Available at: http://www2.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia.html?id_noti=44485&tabla=cultura (02/10/07).
- Luis, L. (n.d.)a, 'Ernesto Pérez Castillo: Escribir no es una carrera', *El Caimán Barbudo: digital*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.caimanbarbudo.cu/html_total/simpresas/articulos/350/index_01.html (03/05/09).
- Luis, L. (n.d.)b, 'Para no descubrir el Mediterráneo', *El Caimán Barbudo: Digital*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.caimanbarbudo.cu/html_total/simpresas/articulos/345/index_articulo_01.htm (02/05/09).
- Luke, A. (2007), *Youth Culture and the Politics of Youth in 1960s Cuba*. PhD, University of Wolverhampton.
- Lumsden, I. (1996), *Machos, Maricones and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

- Lutjens, S. (2000), 'Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba: the Lesson of Forty Years of Reform', in Pérez, M., Riera, M. & Paz, J.V. (eds). *Cuba: Construyendo futuro*. Fundación de Investigaciones Marxistas, Barcelona: 5-14.
- Marín-Dogán, M. (2008), 'Civil Society: The Cuban Debate' in Gray, A. I. & Kapcia, A. (eds), *The Changing Dynamic of Cuban Civil Society*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville: 4- 65.
- Marshall, T. H. (1950), *Citizenship and social class and other essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Martín Sevillano, A. B. (2008), *Sociedad civil y arte en Cuba: Cuento y artes plásticas en el cambio de siglo (1980-2000)*, Editorial Verbum, Madrid.
- Martin-Barbero, J. (1993), *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, trans. Fox & White, Sage, London.
- McGuigan J. (1996), *Culture and the Public Sphere* Routledge, London.
- McGuigan, J. (1994), *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, Open University Press, Maidenhead.
- McGuigan, J. (2003), 'Cultural Policy Studies', in Lewis J. & Miller, T. (eds), *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford: 23-43.
- McLean, I. (1996), *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Medin, T. (1990), *Cuba: The Shaping of Revolutionary Consciousness*, Lynne Reiner, London.
- Melgoza, A. (1968), "El cuento" y el cuentista', *Bohemia*, 21/06: 34.
- 'Mensajes de Intelectuales al Taller' (2002), *La Jiribilla*, 18/10, [Online]. Available at: http://www.lajiribilla.co.cu/2002/n78_noviembre/1841_78.html (10/10/07).
- Menton, S. (1975), *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Menton, S. (1982), *Narrativa de la Revolución Cubana*, Plaza & Janes, S. A, Mexico.
- Menton, S. (1990), 'la novela de la Revolución Cubana fase cinco', in *Revista Ibéroamericana* [152-3] julio-diciembre: 913-31.
- Miller, N. (1999), *In the Shadow of the State. Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America*, Verso, London.
- Miller, N. (2008), 'A Revolutionary Modernity: The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution,' in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 40: 675-696.
- MINCULT, (1988), *Resumen del proyecto de reorganización de las direcciones provinciales y municipales de cultura y su sistema de instituciones*, Ministerio de Cultura, Havana.
- MINCULT (n.d.)a, 'Instituciones adscriptas', *Ministerio de Cultura de la República de Cuba*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.min.cult.cu/loader.php?sec=ministerio&cont=adscriptas> (01/05/08).
- MINCULT (n.d.)b, 'objetivos: Centro de Formación Literaria "Onelio Jorge Cardoso"', *Ministerio de Cultura de la República de Cuba*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.min.cult.cu/> (20/01/08).
- Miranda, J.E. (1971), *Nueva literatura cubana*, Taurus Ediciones, Madrid.
- Molyneux, M. (2000), 'State, Gender and Institutional Change: The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas' in Dore, E. & Molyneux, M: (eds), *Hidden histories of gender and the state in Latin America*, Duke University Press, Durham N.C: 291-322.

- Moreiras, A. (2001), *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies*, London, Duke University Press.
- Navarro, D. (2002), 'In Medias Res Publicas: On Intellectuals and Social Criticism in the Cuban Public Sphere', *Boundary 2* 29:3: 187 -203.
- Navarro, D. (ed) (2007), *La política cultura del período revolucionario: memoria y reflexion*, Centro-Teórico-Cultural: Criterios, Havana.
- Noriega, A. C. (2007) 'Asociacionismo y participación ciudadana: algunas reflexiones desde Cuba', *CLACSO-ASDI*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.cetri.be/IMG/pdf/Asociacionismo_y_participacion_ciudadana_algunas_reflexiones_desde_Cuba.pdf (06/10/07).
- Otero, G. & O'Bryan, J. (2002), 'Cuban in Transition? The Civil Sphere's Challenge to the Castro Regime' in *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 4 Winter: 29-57.
- Padula, A. & Smith, L. (1985), 'Women in Socialist Cuba, 1959-84,' in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984*, Praeger, Westport, London, New York: 79-93.
- Padura, L. (2007), *Havana Blue*, Bitter Lemon Press, London.
- Padura, L. (ed) (1993), *El submarino amarillo: el cuento cubano 1966-1991*, Ediciones Coyoacán, UNAM, Mexico.
- Padura, L. & Kirk, J. (2002), *La cultural y la revolución cubana*, Editorial Plaza Mayor, Madrid, San Juan.
- Parmalee, P. L. (1994), 'Workers and Intellectuals in the German Democratic Republic', *Socialist Register*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.socialistregister.com/socialistregister.com/files/SR_1994_Parmalee.pdf (04/09/08).
- 'Participantes', (n.d.), *Primer Festival Internacional de Jóvenes Narradores*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.fn.cult.cu/> (02/05/07).
- Pavón, L. (1974), 'Discurso pronunciado por el compañero Luis Pavón' *Caimán Barbudo* [75]: 8-10.
- Pawley, L. (2008), 'Cultural Citizenship', in *Sociology Compass*, 2/2: 594-608.
- Pérez Castillo, E. (n.d.) 'Llegando tarde y mal', *Cubaliteraria*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubaliteraria.com/delacuba/ficha.php?Id=2738> (02/05/09).
- Pérez Chang, E. (n.d.), '¿A la escuela hay que llegar puntual?', *Cubaliteraria*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.cubaliteraria.com/delacuba/ficha.php?s_Seccion=12&Id=2670 (04/10/07).
- Pérez Malo, A. & Carcasses Legia, A. L. (2000), *¿Qué piensan y hacen los directores municipales de cultura con respeto a la participación en sus territorios? Encuesta Nacional*, Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, Havana.
- Pérez Montalvo, L. (n.d.), 'Comunidad, cultura y participación', *Estudio Social, Monografias.com*, [Online] Available at: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos61/comunidad-cultura-participacion/comunidad-cultura-participacion.shtml> (04/03/09).
- Pérez-Stable, M. (1985), 'Class, Organization, and *Conciencia*: The Cuban Working Class After 1970', in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. M. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984*, Praeger, Westport, New York, London: 291-307.
- Pérez-Stable, M. (1993), *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Portuondo, J.A. (1980), 'Itinerario estético de la Revolución' in López Lemus, V. (ed) (1980), *Revolución, Letras, Arte*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Prieto, A. (1994), 'El destino de la cultura cubana', in *Entrevistas al Presidente de la UNEAC concedidas a Contrapunto de Miami y Bohemia de la Habana*, Editora Política, Havana: 1-34.
- 'Punto 4', (2007), *El Cuentero*, [04] Año 2: 1.
- Quinn, K. (2007), 'Cuban Historiography in the 1960s: Revisionists, Revolutionaries and the Nationalist Past', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 26 Number 3: 378-398.
- Rabkin, R. R. (1985), 'Cuban political structure: vanguard party and the masses', in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. M. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984*, Praeger, Westport, New York, London: 251-270.
- Rabkin, R. R. (1991), *Cuban Politics: The Revolutionary Experiment*, Praeger: Westport: Connecticut, New York, London.
- Rama, A. (1996), *The Lettered City: (Post-Contemporary Interventions)*, Duke University Press, Durham N.C.
- Ramón Delgado, M. (n.d.), 'Sangre nueva', *Cubaliteraria*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubaliteraria.com/delacuba/ficha.php?Id=2734> (23/09/09).
- Randall, M. (1978), 'Página cultural en la Demajagua', *Revolución y Cultura*, [71]: 83.
- Recio, M. et al. (1999), 'Sociedad civil en los 90: el debate cubano', in *Temas*, no.16-17, octubre-junio:155-177.
- Redonet, S. (ed) (1993), *Los últimos serán los primeros: antología de los novísimos cuentistas cubanos*, Letras Cubanas, Havana.
- Reed, R. (1991), *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba*. Latin America Round Table, Geneva.
- Rego, O.F. (1973), 'La Brigada cultural "Raúl Gómez García"', *Bohemia*, [65] 28: 90-93.
- Ritter, A. R. M. (1985), 'The Organs of People's Power and the Communist Party', in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. M. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution 1959 to 1984*, Praeger, Westport, New York, London: 270-290.
- Rivero Baxter, Y. (2006), 'Cuba: ¿diferencia cultural o desigualdad social?' in Basail, A. (ed) *Sociedad Cubana Hoy: Ensayos de sociología joven*, Ciencias Sociales, Havana.
- Rivero, A. (1976), 'Un taller de creación', *Revolución y Cultura*, [50]: 26-31.
- Riverón, R. (2001), *Pasando sobre mis huellas*, Ediciones Unión, Havana.
- Rodríguez Alemán, M. (1983), 'Primer forum de la literatura cubana', *Trabajadores*, 6 de oct: 2.
- Rodríguez Núñez, V. (1986), 'Salutación fraternal al taller literario', *Caimán Barbudo* 20 [225]: 26-27.
- Rojas, F. et al. (1996), 'Encuentro de jóvenes intelectuales de la Asociación Hermanos Saíz con el Ministro de Cultura, Armando Hart Dávalos. Centro de Estudios Martianos, enero de 1996', in *Contracorriente*, Año 2 No. 4: 113-127.
- Roman, P. (2003), *People's Power: Cuba's Experience with Representative Government*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc., Lanham MD, Oxford.

Rosaldo, R. (1997), 'Cultural Citizenship, Inequality and Multiculturalism', in Flores, W. & Benamayar, R. (eds), *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, Beacon Press, Boston: 27-38.

Rosales Rosa, M. (2002), 'Los novísimos', *Revista Proceso México*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.amirvalle.com/comentarios/articulos/proceso.htm> (03/03/09).

Rowe, W. & Schelling V. (eds) (1996), *Memory and Modernity, Popular Culture in Latin America*, Verso, London.

Salazar Navarro, S. (2008), 'El Centro Onelio estrena sitio web', *La Jiribilla*, Año VI enero/febrero [Online]. Available at: http://www.lajiribilla.co.cu/2008/n351_01/351_20.html (03/05/09).

Sánchez Mejías, R. (2006), 'Literatura y Violencia', *La Habana Elegante, segunda época*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.habanaelegante.com/SpringSummer2006/VerbosaDos.html> (16/04/09).

Santiesteban, A. (n.d.), 'Siempre puntual, con el peor de los ciegos', *Cubaliteraria*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubaliteraria.cu/delacuba/ficha.php?sub=2&Id=2759> (20/01/07).

'Saramago en el Centro Onelio', (2005), *El Cuentero*, [00] Año 00: 24-5.

Saruski, J. & Mosquera, G. (1979), *The Cultural Policy of Cuba*, UNESCO, Paris.

Seers, D et al: (1964), *Cuba: The Economic and Social Revolution*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Serpa Sánchez, S. (2007), 'Talleres literarios para estimular valores morales en adolescentes con limitaciones físicas y motoras', *Educación, Monografías.com*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos16/talleres-literarios/talleres-literarios.shtml> (10/03/09).

Serra, A. (2007), *The 'New Man' in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution*, University Press of Florida, Florida.

Smorkaloff, P. M. (1987), *Literatura y la Edición de Libros. Literatura y El Proceso Social en Cuba*, Letras Cubanas, Havana.

Smorkaloff, P. M. (1997), *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture 1830s-1990s*, Garland Publishers, New York.

Sommer, D. (1991), *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Sommer, D. (2006), *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, Duke University Press, London.

Stevenson, N. (2003), *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Questions*, Open University Press, Maidenhead.

Stevenson, N. (ed) (2001), *Culture & Citizenship*, Sage, London.

Stubbs, J. (1994), 'Revolutionising women, family and power' in Nelson, B. J. & Chowdury, N. (eds), *Women and politics worldwide*, Yale University Press, New Haven: 192-204.

Suardíaz, E. (2007), Notes on Luis Suardíaz's literary activities 1960s-1980s. [Unpublished].

Swartz, D. (1997), *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, University of Chicago Press, London.

'Taller Literario Carlos Manuel de Céspedes' (2006), *Sitio de Cultura en Palma Soriano*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cultstgo.cult.cu/palma/> (12/03/09).

- Taller Literario*, (1964-9), Universidad de Oriente no 3-20.
- Taller Literario*, (1967a), Universidad de Oriente. No. 12.
- Taller Literario*, (1967b), Universidad de Oriente. No. 13.
- Taller Literario*, (1971), Universidad de Oriente no 22.
- Taller*, (1973), Universidad de Oriente, no 27.
- Taller*, (1974), Universidad de Oriente, no 28.
- ‘Talleres de escritura’, *Blogspot*, [Online]. Available at: <http://talleresdeescritura.blogspot.com/10/12/08>.
- ‘Talleres Literarios’ (n.d.), *Diccionario de la literatura cubana*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01159629211030412970035/254t.htm> (02/02/09).
- Terry Valdespino, M. (n.d.), ‘Centro de Formación Onelio Jorge Cardoso: Un sueño que vuela alto’, *Cubaliteraria*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cubaliteraria.com/delacuba/ficha.php?Id=2242> (02/10/07).
- Thomas, H. (1971), *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London.
- Tulchin, J. S. et al. (2005), *Changes in Cuban Society Since the 1990s, Woodrow Wilson Center Report on the Americas #15*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C.
- Turner, B. (2001), ‘Outline of a General Theory of Cultural Citizenship’, in Stevenson, N. (ed) *Culture & Citizenship*, Sage, London, Thousands Oaks, New Delhi: 11-33.
- UNEAC, (1961), *Memoria del Primer Congreso Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*, UNEAC, Havana.
- UNEAC, (1987), *La literatura cubana ante la crítica: Forum de la crítica e investigaciones literarias*, Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, Havana.
- UNEAC, (1993), “*La cultura es lo primero que hay que salvar*”—Fidel Castro, *Memorias del VI Congreso de la UNEAC*, Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, Havana.
- UNEAC (Consejo Nacional) (2000), *La difusión masiva de la cultura*, Consejo Nacional de la UNEAC 9 y 10 junio, Ediciones Unión, Havana.
- UNESCO (2000), Cuban Cultural Policy’, *Portal of Culture for Latin America and the Caribbean UNESCO*, [Online]. Available at: http://www.lacult.org/lacult_en/docc/politcult_cuba.pdf 02/05/06.
- Valle, A. (n.d.), *Brevísimas demencias: La narrativa joven cubana de los 90*, [Unpublished].
- Varderi, A. (1994), ‘Los talleres literarios en la formación de la literatura del fin de siglo’, in *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. 60, no. 166-167, Jan: 575-81.
- Von Richthofen, E. (2005), *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR*, PhD Thesis, UCL.
- Weiss, J. (1985), ‘The emergence of popular culture’, in Halebsky, S. & Kirk, J. (eds), *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution, 1959-1984*, Praeger, Westport, Conn/New York/London: 117-133.
- Whitfield, E. (2008), *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and “Special Period” Fiction*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London.
- Wilkinson, S. (2006), *Detective Fiction in Cuban Society & Culture*, Peter Lang, Bern/Oxford.

Williams, R. (1961), *The Long Revolution*, Chatto & Windus, London.

Wolff, J. (1994), *The Social Production of Art*, Macmillan, London.

Yudice, G., Franco J. & Flores, J. (eds) (1992), *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, London.

Yurchak, A. (2005), *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Zeitlin, M. (1967), *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Zizek, S. (2004), 'Cynicism as an ideology', in Lemert, C. (ed), *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, Westview Press: Colorado, Oxford.

Zvorykin, A. A. (1970), *Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, UNESCO, Paris.