



Outside the Revolution; Everything: A redefinition of left-wing identity in contemporary cuban music Making

Tom Astley

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In the often fraught political landscape of Cuba, a constant need to define and redefine the 'space' of national identity has long pervaded all manner of discourse. In its assumed role as the last bastion of resistance against the hegemonic forces of 'globalisation' ('Americanisation'), the Revolution of 1959 is often made an all-encompassing indicator of 'authentic' Cuban identity.

However, political recalcitrance, economic stagnation and the ever-present lure of the States has left generations of young Cubans questioning the ability of the Revolution to represent a contemporary Cuban identity. A growing number of what may broadly be classified as 'alternative musicians' are utilising a re-established and redefined left-wing voice - one that recontextualises notions of what constitutes 'el pueblo' ('the people') - precisely as a critique of the anachronisms of the Revolution.

This book examines briefly the work of three such artists - punk band Porno Para Ricardo, rapper Eskuadrón Patriota, and singer-songwriter Pedro Luis Ferrer - to provide examples of such reclamations of a left wing voice within Cuba. Redefinitions of 'the people' pan-nationally, along cultural and social, rather than exclusive nationalistic lines; attempts to reclaim the means of cultural production from an overbearing and censoring hegemony; narratives of Cuban history and geography that seek to augment the often rigidly defined space of 'official Cubanness' by recognising cultural difference (often made tacit in the unifying rhetoric of the revolution), yet appealing to the notion of social equality, are all constituent parts of this 'new' new left in Cuba. As yet another evental tipping point - the death of Fidel Castro - comes ever closer, yet potentially less traumatic, this book outlines a less epochal, and more measured reinterpretation of established symbols of Cuban identity; one that can maintain its localness whilst engaging in global politics and cultural flows.

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