

INTRODUCTION

In January and February 2007, a series of texts circulated through emails among many Cuban intellectuals. This came to be known as “The little war of emails,” or “The Intellectual Debate.” These emails formed a virtual historic debate on Cuba’s cultural policies over the previous forty-eight years. It’s important to remember that in 2007, Internet access was extremely limited in Cuba; hence, much of the debate took place among Cubans in the diaspora who had normal access to the Internet.

The email exchange followed the appearance on television of Luis Pavón Tamayo, Armando Quesada, and Jorge Serguera, all of whom were closely involved in designing and enforcing the rigid cultural parameters that negatively affected so many Cuban writers and artists in the 1970s, a period that came to be called “The Five Gray Years,” although it lasted longer than five years.

The digital magazine *Consenso* collected this email debate and posted it online. We at TranslatingCuba.com are working email by email, author by author, volunteer translator by volunteer translator, to translate these emails into English, in order to provide an invaluable resource to observers and scholars of Cuba.

Appearing here are those who wrote from within Cuba and those who joined in from abroad, the signatures of leading figures as well as those of the unknown, along with no shortage of pseudonyms. These texts are, in many cases, written in the “formalized” language of intellectual debate. They also include numerous references to people and events not always introduced or explained here. And, of course, they are rich in “Cubanisms” and playful use of the language. All of this is a huge challenge to our volunteers, and we are all doing the best we can. We welcome comments, corrections, and clarifications.

That said, there are many who have questioned why we are even bothering to translate “these old emails that no one cares about.” Because WE care about them and think they are a critical resource for a broader understanding of Cuban history.

Now, in 2022, we are also organizing and publishing these emails on Wikimedia, under the category “Cuba-The Intellectual Debate.” We hope this will allow additional access for academics and others interested in Cuba and in the use of digital media in countries where censorship impedes the expression of ideas.