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## RAFAEL ALCIDES

Translated by Regina Anavy

### **The reversible sofa**

There is a story that, due to everyday life in today's world, is already becoming boring. It is the one of the postmodernist husband who surprises his beloved wife, the woman of his life, up to her balls on the sofa in the house. Quickly, in order to save his honor, he throws away the sofa.

Something similar, hasty analysts think, is happening with a group of Cuban intellectuals. An increasingly numerous group positioned inside and outside the country, whose catharsis, as profound as it is resonant, has put those in the government had designed the future in a state of alert. Did I say something? Almost an avalanche, which began earlier this year with the surprise appearance of Luis Pavón in a television program dedicated to exalting and disseminating the values of the nation, honor and the honor of the homeland.

Who, and why, they wondered wildly, could have planned such an outrage? What is he doing again on Calle Pavón, now showing photos and trophies of his past importance, as if he had returned from Olympus after a very long trip? The emails came and went desperately.

The terrifying Pavón no less, they insisted, as if repeating it would stop that television slap in the face from being true; Luís Pavón Tamayo in person, who for years, who during several years was, back in the very dark decade of the '70s, president of the National Council of Culture (now the Ministry of Culture), and who is credited with having devised and put into practice torments that didn't exist even in Hell? Why? To what end? they said.

A test balloon launched by some Stalinist planted in the leadership of the Government? Sabotage to the government of Raúl Castro?

Quickly, before the terrifying situation created, the Secretariat of the UNEAC (Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba), which "shares the just indignation" of said intellectuals, summons them, listens to them, evaluates the facts with them, and nothing, everything is fine, false alarm, take the bottle of tranquilizers out of your pocket and sleep soundly again, life is short.

See in this regard the statement issued and published in the *Granma* newspaper on January 18. Historical jewel, by the way, in which, by mentioning the dangers that the annexationist enemy practiced, already putting its hand into what was a debate between revolutionaries (said as if in passing), took me back to the gloomy 1970s.

One day during those years, a middle-aged militiaman who had lost an eye in Girón found an almost-alive cockroach in the lunch peas of the workers' canteen and had to shut up immediately, drop the cockroach and, ashamed, sit down again in front of his plate when, fattened and final, in the most perfect silence, the arm of the dining room administrator

extended from the other end of the very long and dark room to point out with his forefinger a sign on the wall with the old slogan of that time. In very large and very red letters, the sign said: SILENCE. THE ENEMY IS LISTENING.

Be careful, adds the UNEAC Secretariat in its statement, that in the meeting with the “justly outraged” intellectuals, from the beginning it counted on “the absolute support of the Party leadership.”

Or is it to be believed, I ask, that the Party remained absorbed watching a prolonged game soccer match in the days when Pavón was operating in those worlds, without a god (I mean, without a Party) and without law? Without wishing to excuse him, Luis Pavón Tamayo, and the Cuban intelligentsia know this very well, if only in the sphere of our culture, that he was the Fulgor Sedano de la Comala then. Only that: the right-hand man of that time.

However, Pedro Páramo, who also knows how to play crazy, has gotten the message. Knowing that it’s not always intelligent to govern by making the past a mirror of the future, the precautions to say without seeming so from those who have seemed to repeat the strategy of the postmodernist husband in the story to the undocumented observer, do not deceive him. He knows that by thundering past Pavón’s windows, these intellectuals are suddenly “justly outraged” (which by their number are already crowds) and are not throwing away the sofa. They are, quite the opposite, making History. (Making History, not telling it). They are (we are) telling Pedro Páramo that his time has ended. That in Comala the dead have begun to rise again.

Rafael Alcides

## RAMIRO GUERRA

Translated by GH

I just received your message about Pavón's unusual appearance on national TV a few days ago, of which I saw the announcement, which I unreasonably did not allow myself to bother to see because of the repulsion I have towards the character. He used to go out as the ghostly dead from time to time, in important places and then disappear. A few years ago he appeared in the halls of UNEAC, and I told Aurora Bosch, who was then president of the Dance Section, that she should not count on my presence there while that character stepped on the UNEAC tiles.

After a time that I have now forgotten, she let me know that he had already disappeared and that I could return my presence to the institution. I didn't bother looking for the program in which the character would appear, unconsciously, it seems, rejecting the possibility that you now make clear that "a revival" could occur when the well-forgotten Serguera also appears, a sidekick in the colossal cultural disaster of the 1970s. Only one other remains to appear, whose name I have forgotten, who took the reins of the performing arts in that sad opportunity and swept away the theatrical movement that emerged in the shadow of the revolution. Dance suffered the disaster by making me disappear, although unusually, I think I was one of the few who kept a salary that had to go to a ghostly bag that was created and kept alive for several years in also ghostly places in the area of the National Council of Culture.

Important names in the theater movement were "parametrized" and sent to the Ministry of Labor, where they found only patching potholes and cemetery burials as job options. The puppet theater was mercilessly devastated and its beautiful dolls were sent to Cayo Cruz for garbage, which still exists in the bay, and the Camejos persecuted in a special way, erased from the national culture.

Meanwhile, the *Decálogo del Apocalipsis* [*Decalogue of the Apocalypse*] was suspended, my work that was to be released according to an invitation printed in beautiful bright red dated April 15, 1971m after a year's hard work and an enormous cost for costumes and set design and to mark an important milestone in the development of contemporary dance in Cuba, and the lack of which has been lamented by the generations that emerged after me in that area by graduates of art schools, who lost the dance references promoted by me in 12 years, and who they marked the successful development of a dance movement rooted in a national identity but successfully updated by of the avant-gardes of the time.

Much has been written about this phenomenon by the choreographers who followed me, especially Marianela Boan, heir to my creative work with her group Danzabierta.

What you have said in the message that I have received has opened my eyes to a danger that seems to be based on these days of possible changes in the course of the country's cultural policy when those ghosts of the past appear who want to return in search of new laurels in an opportunistic situation.

The fact that national TV takes them out of the grave of oblivion could herald a new storm.

Ramiro Guerra

## REINA MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ

Translated by Regina Anavy

### **Letter to not be a prisoner spirit**

About four years ago I read a book entitled *Un espíritu prisionero* [*A Prisoner Spirit*], published by Galaxia Gutenberg and translated from the Russian by Selma Ancira, which compiles texts by Marina Tsvetaeva, fragments of her diary, stories and poems. Also appearing, towards the end of this book, are documents taken from the KGB archives.

*Un espíritu prisionero* has an introduction that says: “Russian writers, who grew up in places where freedom has not abounded, have always felt they were bearers of this freedom; for this reason their luck has almost always been unfortunate. The early death of Pushkin and Lermontov, the madness of Gogol, the captivity of Dostoyevsky, the censorship, the faithful companion of all who protected with special zeal the work of Tolstoy and Chekhov, are some examples from the past.” And it continues: “this tradition has been perfected in Soviet times: years of praise, of cantatas and also of silence, prisons and exterminations...”

Let’s remember, I think now, Mandelshtam, Pasternak, Akhmatova, who didn’t even have a cemetery. After having read these authors and knowing how they lived and died (Mayakovsky, for example, and Marina, who hanged herself in Yelabuga), I cannot remain with my arms crossed before something that seems to me, at a distance from those events, and on this island in the center of the Caribbean, a tragedy for the Cuban nation that already experienced expulsions and censorship in the 1970s and is still experiencing them.

“Some favorable conditions?” writes Marina. “It is known that for the artist these do not exist... Life itself is an unfavorable condition...” But conditions can get even tougher, and this is what I’ve felt for the past few days. When I met in Stockholm in 1994 with writers in exile, I understood that the tragedy of separation was not resolved with events or dialogues. That disease (open and unhealed) was there, where revenge and remorse had created a festering Yaga, a spirit that confiscated any possibility of cure. The participants on one side and the other insulted each other first inside the meeting and then hugged in the corridors, as if the two shores were united in those ephemeral embraces. My ingenuity served as a bridge to give Heberto Padilla some poems by young authors unknown to him (among them, those by Antonio José Ponte) that Heberto later used for a presentation on Cuban poetry, which he read in Madrid that same year during “The Whole Island” meeting.

I thought that only things like affection and poetry could erase hatred and resentment, because I have always believed in writing as a way of salvation or therapy. Well, since we were all sick with paranoia (even those of us who, because we were very young, didn’t participate directly in the tensions and ruptures of the seventies, carried that ghost and the guilt complex of “not appearing to be revolutionaries” when we gave our opinions or did something different). We had to apply the ointment against pain, the italicized letter of the lived experience and the examples (to which so many letters of these last days now

refer), as a part of the healing: that “hard” period cannot return, but how do we eliminate today the sequels that still remain? How do we face its causes without thoroughly examining the motives?

By delivering those poems by unknown young people to Heberto Padilla (who wanted to come visit Cuba and was always denied “permission” until death granted it to him), I was doing an act of personal cleansing, trying to communicate, to understand each other, because it couldn’t happen now what happened in the past, because we believed, we were different.

With the events of February 2003, after discussions that took a year in the executive bosom of the Writers’ Union and the final, but rapid, deactivation (“death by silencer” I call it, without the right to have a written statement or an appeal) by Antonio José Ponte, poet, storyteller and essayist, writer of the generation that follows mine, despair has not left me calm. Very few didn’t accept that measure and the majority remained silent. If I were silent now, I would feel a shame that would not let me live in peace. If I have worked for culture, it’s because I think that any deviation towards areas of mutilation, censorship and repressive methods for artists would be abolished with confidence in creative work, which is the first source of culture that allows the proliferation of voices, nuances, styles and ideas, all in a diverse bundle.

When I remember the words of Luther that Marina puts in her mouth: “I will not submit! Nothing and no one will bind me, because the good that I value most is my own free will to choose, because without it the spirit dies!” I think that by destiny it’s the only objective that a writer has. I know that no literature has value if we yield to the ease or vanities that come from it without sacrifices of the spirit, without opinion, without character, and if we endure any wound inflicted on a writer, because what is the work of an artist, but a small rung on the ladder built by so many others? What is a writer, if not a hungry fish that devours another meat, the substance? A bone of the same vertebra, its trial; that verb of disagreement, of the rupture between tightrope and abyss. Between power and reality. Between reality and desire.

“Deactivate” is a foreign word. A writer always lives off others; he is activated with others, and does not deactivate, without also deactivating the group with which he trained, bought books, discussed authors, their lives. For art there is no such term that does not belong to the range of aesthetics. A writer who has undertaken this task with his destiny does not deactivate even after death, but by doing so by decree, they deactivate us in spirit with him; in spirit with those who inhabit the books he lent us, the ideas and stories we share together. Well, there is no regulation or code that puts into practice that word that can only exist for bombs, machinery, artifacts, not for the voices of a nation. Because we would be deactivating all the literature accumulated with it (in it) and disassembling all those gears of the past and wisdom.

I am writing this letter to remember other scenes in which Pavón and his acolytes did not participate, but where they were also present. It is retroactively complicit. One is complicit (even unintentionally) in the future. There are images burned inside our minds that are models that we must overcome. “Discipline and punish” are models that we must

overcome, fears that we must overcome to get closer to the risk of the truth. Horrors that we must overcome and that are not overcome with formalities, with commitments, decrees, deactivations. The easy and abrupt exit from now will be a black hole in our heads, one more darkness, and all harshness highlights the fragility of another dark and gloomy act. Only flexibly stretched nets will make a crack-free weave possible.

I hate this crack in my writing, in my life. The crack of a confidence lost, of the life that another is living without me, in some book, in any past that I now remember. My silence would also determine the atrocity committed, the pain. I only obey the illustrious dead on the shelves, to their voices that say: “everything that has been recounted is infinite. Thus, an unconfessed crime, for example, continues.” I don’t want to have my spirit imprisoned, there is no prison worse than that, that of the spirit. One is imprisoned in oneself, unable to say or do, feel or think. One becomes a puppet, a zombie, a beggar. A writer is not worth two fragments of any newspaper. There is no expulsion for a work, for every detail achieved in a trade that costs life. Take care of the page, the poem, the opinion, the challenges to reality, the positions and the ambiguity, even the mistakes, the political differences and the “No”. That *non rifutto* of the poem of Cavafis.

I have received some literary prizes; I request the highest prize for an artist: that of respect for one, in all and for differences. The homeland of a writer is the same, but at the same time, double and different, because it is also a mental homeland. Getting him out of that first homeland doesn’t cost much: visas, permits, passports, it’s easy. Taking him out of the writer’s homeland, not supporting him in it, divorcing him from his context is a crime against that legion that watches from the shelves and for them, for those who can never be removed from his books; for all those dead that we no longer judge except for his works, we must support him, one, in many, all, in some, even if it costs tons of differences and subtleties.

During sleepless nights, a stain that doesn’t belong to me has clearly remained inside me. I don’t want that stain! I discussed it with all the arguments I had at every opportunity, but I don’t want to be an accomplice to it, even without wanting to. There were also no subsequent meetings where I could discuss that topic, because there have been no more meetings since then, and four years have passed! that decided my affective separation from the group that decided that sanction and murder: and the No.

Today, while I read emails and emails from different parts asking for a healing (and to cure you have to scrape first and it hurts), I think about what Antonio José Ponte felt when none of his letters to the writers of the guild were answered. I think of Heberto Padilla, who was unable to physically return to the Island when he was already very ill.

Poetry has a freedom that is only conferred on her. In the name of that (utopian) freedom that poetry gives an artist, I condemn the measure taken with the creator of *Corazón de Skitalietz* [*Heart of Skitalietz*], [*Tales from Everywhere in the Empire*], of *Contrabando de sombras* [*Contraband of Shadows*], of *Las comidas profundas* [*The Deep Meals*], of *Asiento en las ruinas* [*Seat in the Ruins*], of *Un seguidor de Montaigne mira La Habana* [*A Follower of Montaigne Looks at Havana*], of *In the Cold of the Malecón*, of *El libro perdido de los originistas* [*The Lost Book of the Originists*], of *La fiesta vigilada* [*The*



*Monitored Party*, and I appeal today (in 2007) as if not a second had passed (because this time is measured by the destiny of art and the artist's work "for eternity") to the still small, incipient space for reflection, created from the criticism of the *pavonato* reactivated by a group of Cuban writers and artists, to return it (symbolically) and others to the only homeland of writers of all times and places: the homeland of the page of the culture to which they belong.

If no public space exists for the defense of artists, for their ideas; the place for a broad polemic of the spirit, the differences, the critique and the confrontation of thought reactivated at every moment, then what shelters us?

And what I wonder when other examples come to the surface and so many silences are broken in an unusual way (since we lack other ways to name ourselves intellectuals), is what we are. It is not a problem of this name today or of that other one from yesterday; of the faces that hold power for a while, but of the mechanism of the clocks that say: stop, expel, repress. Of the legality with which the artist can defend his utopias and even his denials. Although these are not problems that concern only artists and writers: it is a problem for everyone. Because as long as there is a straw or rubbish left in someone's eye, there will be no vision to build that cabin in Dersu Uzala, if we do not first clean the mountain that we have to climb together, without geographical, mental or political limits (those inside, those from outside); if we don't think about what we are going to leave to those who will come and with what leaves they will ignite that fire of culture, we will only be left with the sterile emptiness of silence as a judge.

Reina María Rodríguez

### **Message from Reina María Rodríguez to Zenaida Romeu**

Dear Zenaida,

It gives me great discomfort and a sour taste that the note sent in this way and published today in the press by the UNEAC secretariat is so far from reflecting the spirit and tension that we have all had these days, during this open and unusual debate that could benefit and resolve so many obscurities and unresolved dilemmas if we were to leave our personal resentments, cowardice and opportunism on a terrain where the things that affect us all, in one way or another, and that could also affect our children in an endless and deadly chain, could be discussed widely and without language being removed by some to the detriment of others. That note today is a plug and has, in my opinion, the same taste as any written many years ago, from a time we would not want to relive.

All the best,  
Reina María Rodríguez  
January 18, 2007

## REINALDO ESCOBAR

Translated by Ariana

### **The journalist Reinaldo Escobar enters the debate**

“Little war of emails,” “little *glasnost*,” “rebellion of the intellectuals” or “the situation created” have been some names with which this phenomenon has been baptized, which I prefer to name as “words of the intellectuals” with “of” in bold and underlined. Obviously, an augury was opened in this Pandora’s box (which was a gift from Zeus himself), where the evils that now populate the world not only were hidden but also the abuses that were committed against freedom of expression.

I promise not to use this space for personal complaints, first of all because I am deeply grateful to those who in December 1988 prohibited me from practicing the profession of journalist. To them I owe my freedom, which I exercise from Cuba, although unfortunately not in the ways allowed in Cuba.

Since it’s not possible to respond, argue or stand in solidarity with each of the ideas that deserve it, since that would imply writing a book, I’m going to limit myself to giving my opinion on what I believe is fundamental in this matter, which is certainly not, not even remotely, the appearance on the small screen of those who were once the obedient enforcers of a policy. What seems to be clear to everyone is that there are unhealed wounds, self-criticism to do and discussions to encourage.

I can understand the horror of the vindicated in the face of the vindication of their executioners; what I cannot fully understand is the simplicity of confusing the systemic with the casuistic.

As in those crowded buses, some of those who manage to climb to the first rung of this discussion ask that the door be closed because there is no room for anyone else, but those of us who remain below, those of us who are down here, think differently.

I believe that at the bottom of all the evils that have occurred is the intolerance to differences, which is not limited to the almost defeated intolerance towards differences in religious creed or to that other in the process of being overcome, which repudiates different sexual preferences. I’m talking about the undefeated intolerance of differences in political opinions. I would like to know on which general principle tolerance for a particular difference can be built, which is not also applicable to accept the others.

Since that fateful day when the cultural policy of the Cuban Revolution was subjected to a sectarian phrase: “Within the Revolution everything, against the Revolution nothing.” the abyss opened, because from that moment on a group of people it conferred or they conferred the right to decide where the borders of what could be classified as revolutionary were, which meant what could be published, shown and disseminated. As the creators of literature, painting, music or cinema usually achieve when their work is objective in something tangible for the public, they began to create in that direction, and self-censorship began there, because there is only one way to be sure that what we do

cannot be described as “outside the revolution” and to do only what is clearly with and within the Revolution.

That gray five-year period was only the act of drawing the dividing line a few meters from the border. The original sin was conceiving the border.

Some of those who participate in this controversy don't dispute the right of the government to decide the publication of a work based on its political affiliation. The only thing they dispute is that they and their work should be considered unwavering affiliates of the line of the Revolution. Others want to go further, which is why many things are being discussed at the same time in this debate.

Víctor Fowler, with his usual lucidity, introduces the idea of a “catalogue of practices of cultural violence.” In this catalog all the anecdotes fit: the prison of the one who translated the prophecies of Nostradamus, the famous Padilla case, the defenestration of Eduardo Heras, the sanctions against Norberto Fuentes, the ostracism of so many illustrious names: Cintio, Eliseo, Lezama, plus the endless list of the usual strangers, who in obscure municipalities of the country dared to read a controversial poem in a literary workshop session or who dared to introduce an uncomfortable song by Frank Delgado on a provincial station.

The question is how far to take the list, and if we listen to those who have already joined, who are yelling to close the door once and for all to continue the journey, or if we continue to let people in until the bus bursts. Who ordered the closure of the exhibitions of the Arte Calle group? What was the name of the decade or triennium in which Pedro Luís Ferrer was banned? What color was the five-year period in which Antonio José Ponte was expelled from UNEAC? Who was Minister of Culture when the film *Monte Rouge* was prevented from participating in the Film Festival? What, if not the “Black Spring 2003,” is that moment called when the poet Raúl Rivero was imprisoned?

Esteban Morales himself, former dean of the Faculty of Humanities, describes as “Saturns devouring children of the Revolution” not precisely the subordinates of Luís Pavón but the militants of the Communist Party who in the 1970s carried out relentless purges at the school of journalism and today publish in *Granma* and aren't disturbed by anyone.

And all this is being discussed today perhaps because some advisers at the ICRT who deal with the *Impronta* program are only historians trained in the 19th century, and they didn't know who directed the National Council of Culture 30 years ago. I wonder what would happen if in the space “50 years of Victories” someone recounted the exploits of Hubert Matos in the capture of Santiago de Cuba, or if someone who doesn't know the secret versions of history, speaking about the events in Granada, mentioned Colonel Tortoló as an emulator of the Bronze Titan. I bet that no one will ever make a mistake by giving an *Impronta* for Dr. Hilda Molina, as she well deserves.

What has really happened is not that one day someone who deserved to be buried in silence was mentioned, but quite the opposite. He has been silent too much, for an inordinate amount of time and not only in the cultural sector. As the critic Orlando

Hernández has courageously pointed out, “it would be very sad if all this fell into the ridiculous complaints and suggestions mailbox of the Ministry of Culture, or became the collective catharsis of a minority.”

I believe that criticism or self-criticism remains pending not only in the case of that First Congress of Culture, which changed its name in its second session to become the Congress of Education and Culture. The Military Units of Aid to Production, the Revolutionary Offensive of 1968, the repudiation rallies of 1980, the unfulfilled food plan of the 1990s, the sinking of the March 13 tugboat and the infinite catalogs that so many victims can open with so much right: they are also in need of a self-criticism, otherwise it will be very difficult to honor someone on television without running the risk that the interviewee has another hidden imprint in his illustrious biography.

Not only revolutions, but history as a whole is carried out by men who, when participating in the projects that are proposed, have successes and errors, greatness and baseness, nobility and vileness. That of Cuba is far from being heavenly history, although many have endeavored to sweeten it. It seems as if someone once again tried to marry us with the lie and force us to live with it, but fortunately, someone also taught us that the world is worth collapsing before living in the lie.

I don't want to end this intervention without referring to the cryptic Declaration of the UNEAC Secretariat published on Thursday, January 18. To say that the cultural policy of the Revolution, founded with Words to the Intellectuals, is irreversible, is to affirm that Luis Pavón failed to reverse it and therefore was only consistent with it to an extreme degree. On that we agree. What I cannot agree with is the element of terror that the text introduces by mentioning a supposed annexationist agenda in those who have wanted to take advantage of the situation created. I demand that you point to a single paragraph of the debate that has an annexationist flavor. Although it is suggested that this is the response agreed upon by the initiators of the debate, it is evidently a text that Leopoldo Ávila would proudly sign.

I propose a broad debate on all these issues. Since the UNEAC does not decide to hold its congress, since the Communist Party of Cuba does not hold its congress either, let us do it in a theater, in a ball field or in the middle of a pasture, without the rapid response brigades impeding its celebration, and where everyone speaks, the communist, the social democrat, the Christian democrat and the liberal, and if the annexationist has something to say, we are going to listen to it too.

Finally, it seems healthy to me that those of us who participate in this discussion do not have a common position. We are not going to repeat the scheme stating that “this is not the time to have differences between us because we must unite against the common enemy.” Much less will we proclaim something like: “Against the *pavonato* everything, for the *pavonato* nothing.” Please, let's not start with the same thing. Fortunately, as in the mythical Pandora's box, the only thing that has not escaped is hope.

Reinaldo Escobar

## REINALDO MONTERO

Translated by Regina Anavy

According to the dialectic that I like, chance is nothing more than an expression of necessity. The need, as if that were not enough, is so fertile that it quickly expands, takes root, flourishes; that is, it leaves a lot of traces and does a lot. I want to give the news, for those who still don't know, of a flourishing, of a recent censorship. The management of Cuban television prohibited the broadcasting of the play *Marx en el Soho* [*Marx in the Soho*] (text by Howard Zinn, acted and directed by Michaelis Cué), announced for December 25, according to the spot that was promoting it.

Of course they didn't ban it for aesthetic reasons, or the news wouldn't even be on television. *Marx en el Soho* premiered two years ago; it was seen by thousands of viewers, including Howard Zinn himself, Ricardo Alarcón and Abel Prieto. The play traveled to many countries and returned. Michaelis' work was awarded by Cuban critics, the ones there are. *Pavón De Venus* coincides with *Cisne De Juno* glass window. Chance that obeys some necessity, at least in the dialectic that I like. Depending on the specific need to show *Pavón y el Cisne* today, the prohibition of *Marx en el Soho* confirms the scope of double nonsense, or double success.

What it's about, following the dialectic that I like, is to not be scandalized by these scandalous facts, but to prepare and soon for what is to come.

Reinaldo Montero

## RENÉ VÁZQUEZ DÍAZ

Translated by Alicia Barraqué Ellison

### **Cuban forgetfulness**

Last year, several Cuban television programs interviewed, over a period of several months, some figures committed to the policy of cultural repression of the 1970s. The reappearance on the small screen of hateful characters, who recall the ferocity of management mechanisms hostile to creation, art and human dignity, culminated on January 5 with a five-minute interview with Mr. Luís Pavón Tamayo, who directed the National Council of Culture between 1971 and 1976, and whom most Cuban writers believed to be physically and politically deceased.

Opaque, cunning and unscrupulous, Pavón was a powerful official who implemented a dogmatic and shameless cultural policy that anathematized homosexuals, plunged the Cuban intelligentsia into what has come to be called *El Quinquenio gris* and ostracized leading writers, such as Antón Arrufat, Pablo Armando Fernández and César López. All of them have been recognized for the imprint of creativity and beauty that they have left in Cuban culture.

In all countries there are issues of national importance on which, for long periods, a tacitly agreed-upon silence hovers. In Sweden, it has been the surveillance and booking of the secret police against so-called “security risks,” which affected more than 300,000 people and ruined the working lives of many of them. In France, the excesses of the genocidal war in Algeria. In Spain, the silence about Francoist figures at all levels, from vulgar torturers to businessmen and characters like Fraga, whose television appearances never caused rejection in Spain.

Upon interpreting that the surprising reappearance of Pavón implied his public rehabilitation, and with it a regressive movement in which the Cuban intelligentsia lost a space for action that has grown without ceasing, numerous intellectuals protested with indignation and freedom. Immediately there were meetings in the Writers’ Union, the Institute of Radio and Television and the Ministry of Culture. It was soon seen that it was not a conspiracy or an institutional attempt to revive the past times of the *pavonato*. Nor was it about harming current politics, represented by the Minister of Culture Abel Prieto, and the majority of the island’s intellectual community. But the ensuing controversy offers some history lessons.

The first is that a rigorous study of that period is lacking, and that in Cuba there are still officials nostalgic for dogmatism and narrow-mindedness. With a sectarian spirit and a notable ahistorical sense, and taking advantage of the lack of culture typical of the small world of television in all parts of the world, someone wanted to test the possibility of giving a thrust to the current cultural policy. The sword was made of wood. The reaction of the intelligentsia and the authorities showed that this past has no possibility of returning. Another lesson is that the intellectuals who live and work in Cuba are engaged in a productive process of change, and they appear to have much to defend.

Their protest, open and constructive, started from the territory of responsibility and a feeling that their dignity had been injured, along with the dignity of the Nation. Instead, the reactions of many exiles were characterized by an exercise in selective oblivion, which draws them to write from the territory of revenge or gratuitous mockery. One wrote that there is an amnesia of the past and the present; another said that the 1970s were a decade of horror. This requires a separate analysis, to contextualize the horror and open the shutters of past and present amnesia.

How did that decade start? On April 17, 1970, a group of Cuban exiles, armed and financed by the United States, disembarked 22 kilometers from the city of Baracoa, killing four militiamen and seriously wounding two. On May 10, another group of exiles attacked two vessels belonging to the Caibarien Fishing Cooperative and kidnapped eleven crew members, who were abandoned to their fate on an islet in the Bahamas. On July 12, 1971, the same year as the Padilla case and the Congress on Education and Culture, a group of exiles declared themselves the authors, in Miami, of a terrorist act carried out in Guantánamo that produced a railway catastrophe with a balance of four Cubans dead and 17 wounded.

In October, an armed boat from Miami attacked the village of Boca de Samá. They killed the citizens Lidio Rivaflecha and Ramón Siam Portelles; there were four serious injuries, two of them to minors. On April 4, 1972, the same year that I came to Poland to study naval engineering, a plastic bomb exploded at the Cuban Trade Office in Montreal. The employee Sergio Pérez del Castillo died destroyed, and a Group of Cuban Youth claimed responsibility for the attack in Miami. On August 3 of the following year, a member of the terrorist group Acción Cubana died in Abrainville, near Paris, when the bomb he was preparing to launch against the Cuban embassy in Paris exploded in his hands. The explosion completely destroyed six rooms in the hotel where he was staying.

On February 13, 1974, a postal package addressed to the Cuban embassy in Madrid exploded at the Central Office of Cibeles. An employee was injured. On April 22, 1976, a high-powered bomb exploded at the Cuban embassy in Lisbon, killing officials Efrén Monteagudo and Adriana Corcho. On July 9 of that same year, a bomb that had been placed in one of the suitcases that was going to be introduced on a Cubana de Aviación plane in Kingston, exploded on the ground due to a delay in departure, which purely by chance prevented the plane from exploding in mid-flight. How did the Gray Five Year Period end?

Covered in blood: on October 6, 1976, the Cubana de Aviación CUT-1201 plane, which was on a regular flight between Barbados and Havana, exploded in mid-flight: 57 Cubans, 11 Guyanese and 5 Koreans, a total of 73 people, died in the first terrorist attack against civil aviation in modern times. Posada Carriles, the terrorist responsible for that monstrous attack and many more, is today in the United States enjoying absolute impunity without any Cuban writing in the United States-financed media demanding his extradition.

That period of horror cannot be analyzed using a relative, selective and opportunistic civility, as the majority of the Cuban exiles have done who say they sleep with a clear conscience, while writing in a magazine like *Encuentro*, financed by the same State that

maintains the horror of the so-called Commission for Aid to a Free Cuba. The danger of this document should unite all Cubans—regardless of the position we have towards the Revolution—in the same ethical and human effort to ensure a peaceful future for our compatriots.

The Cuban exiles will be able to reclaim their properties and evict the tenants who now own their houses, or charge them rent and even increase it. The United States will demand that its transitional government close down existing security institutions and swiftly prosecute officials of the “former regime,” with a long list of officials against whom “revenge” will be sought. As such measures (according to the report) can lead to violence and social unrest, “the domestic food supply, transportation, infrastructure, and storage base,” says the State Department, “could be disrupted by the chaos that would result from a vacuum of power.” But since the transfer of power has already taken place, and there is no chaos or power vacuum because no Cuban wants it, Washington has announced that there is a secret annex by means of which this chaos could be manufactured.

I propose that this secret annex be called the horror clause. Well, it’s not enough for them to appoint a special espionage mission against Cuba and a proconsul named Caleb McCarry, who with full powers (granted by a foreign power!) will lead the reconquest of Cuba: they also have that secret plan that cannot entail anything other than a military intervention against the people of Cuba.

Disregarding these facts in the analysis of the difficulties and atrocities of that time and the one we live in, speaking of Cuba as if it were not a country exposed like no other to criminal policies such as the blockade and the Helms Burton law, is a way of reproducing the propaganda that the United States promotes to justify its aggressions. But it will never be the honest exercise in historical introspection that we Cubans need, inside and outside of Cuba.

René Vázquez Díaz  
Sweden



## REYNALDO GONZÁLEZ

Translated by Regina Anavy

Anyone would say that freshening up the non-constructive image of Luis Pavón is a vindication of his daunting wealth. I don't think it's pure coincidence. There is a tendency to think that the victims of an outrage—in this case a historical error, although the word has been trivialized—increase the crime suffered. It is seen like this from those who committed the crime and from the silence of the indolent wedged into their positions. It happens with the Holocaust of the Hebrews by Nazism. By paying homage to the culprit—direct or instrumentalized—of a huge mistake, someone who cannot be cured with changing direction, his actions, his fault, are being favorably sanctioned.

Television and its managers—those who live on L and 23 and those far away—have taken a treacherous, contemptuous step towards the suffering of the protagonists of Cuban culture who were submerged in contempt and condemned to ostracism in a period whose wounds have not yet healed. The voice of the offended is silenced, and voice is returned to the showable face of the facts. Their claim is our mockery. You're right, Jorge Ángel, in all of this there is something more than clumsiness and insensitivity, or inadvertence. Will it be long before we see Carlos Aldana once again dictating “guidelines” to “the soft parts of society”? Are “the tough ones” back? How many true creators, who contribute to Cuban culture, have not yet been recognized by television while they recycle their “protagonists,” drawn from a tyrannical die, always crouching down waiting for the turn of revenge? Is television an entity apart from Cuban culture?

I authorize you to use these opinions,

Reynaldo González  
January 6, 2007

### **Message from Reynaldo González to Desiderio Navarro**

Dear, I know that it can seem different, but I wish that many would be sensitized to point out a mistake. Only one, but a big one. And I think that by combining ideas and expressions from your letter, from Arango's reflection and from my brief response to Jorge Ángel, we could put together a document, collect signatures and deliver it to the ICRT and our managing sources. Tell me something about this.

Reynaldo  
January 6, 2007

### **Response from Reynaldo González to Desiderio Navarro**

I agree with you. Like Arturo, others will send us opinions, or we can provoke them. And looking for a tone, the most difficult, that does not overwhelm ideas, because we are right. And that it shouldn't seem spiteful, but righteous. Obviously, the matter was elaborated, documented. When I learned that he was not mentioned in his work as an official, I see

that they wanted to save him from what he could reveal, but they give him the category of poet. A poet without a poetic environment. He must have been seen alongside Guillén, of course, but they highlighted his non-literary trajectory and his extra-cultural ties. That's what they tell me.

I only saw a parade of decorations and posters, which constitute his heritage. At once him, who spoke with the voice of a tired old woman. Nothing more. I had more detailed information from Antón. Okay, but let's stay tuned. I already know that this matter will constitute an impact, an incision in the roost. Not because someone doubts the son of a bitch, but for the same reasons that you mention in relation to the past. At present there are crossed interests, more interests. Let's see, but I don't think we should wait too long, because it gets cold. The indolent tropics, the tropics.

Until tomorrow,  
Rey

### **Message from Reynaldo González to Jorge Angel Pérez**

I agree with the answer you give to Sigfredo. Today Rebeca Chávez called me. She thinks that this implies the whole culture, including the filmmakers and everyone. Zenaida Castro Romeu wrote to me, and Cira Romero. And I think they are right. We will lead the national awards, offended or not, with which they want to join. And everyone. But now, with the summons for Tuesday, for Abel and Carlos Martí, I'm worried that they want to stop us. Anything we did would not have the massive reach of TV.

We must record, once in a while, that this so-called gray five-year period was a cancer. The operation has been good, but it has not been disclosed directly and that is why these audacities occur. A part of culture, of para-culture and of other disciplines don't have an understanding of the true drama, of the bias cut that was given to cultural life, a terrain where things are not corrected with decrees, with which they did such enormous damage. We must leave these things very well established in the meeting on Tuesday and persist in making them explicit.

Hugs, we continue in the fight,  
Reynaldo

### **Another Message from Reynaldo González**

Dear Abelardo, perhaps you are informed of the movement that has formed in repudiation of the *Impronta* program last Friday, dedicated to exalting Luis Pavón, ignoring his past by the National Council of Culture and how terrible it was for Cuban culture, the lives of his protagonists, including the deaths of some and the exile of many. We are promoting an adherence to the protest. In the dossier that I send you I include the greatest amount of information. I will be at the ministerial table, in a meeting that five of us will have with the minister tomorrow, Tuesday. It will be a first, to better prosecute the matter. Almost all the national awardees have already joined, and those of theater should not be left out, those who suffered the most from the broadsides of the *pavonato*. There are no messages

in this dossier, received by Desiderio, or Arango, or Jorge Ángel. I include what I have. Between today and tomorrow we will have the set, where I ask you to show your adhesion if you consider it pertinent.

A hug,  
Reynaldo González  
January 8, 2007

### **Message from Reynaldo González to Waldo Leyva**

You are right, Waldo. And we will do something, promptly, to put it in the hands of those who direct culture from the corresponding ministry and from the Party. The staging of the “interview” was very elaborate; the images, which, as has been said, “say more than a thousand words,” those of placed Pavón on a patriotic altar. Those who orchestrated this perhaps overlooked the suffering, the disappearances, the horror of a cruel, cruel period that has not been ventilated in its virulence and its subsequent consequences. Everyone sees the show as if they were in it. I have always thought that Pavón followed orders, but with the pleasure of a Nazi torturer, in an effort to position himself as a “poet.” We already know another “poet,” Aldana, who saw us and treated us as soft and manageable, and who went too far; and others from that time, including those who now, with the same fury, attack the revolution from the other shore and never stop discrediting it.

We could figure out how many privileged people of the Aldana *or pavonato* period are today in the opposite trench: simply, the most renowned. What is happening now is an insult to the memory of Virgilio Piñera, Lezama Lima and others who died without being vindicated. Look at the dates, something that demolishes the theory of a short period. The recognition of this man, who now, like the old lady of the play, “shows his medals,” has avoided, with an overly explicit trick, the period in which he brought evil to Cuban culture and the destinies of its creators as a colonial dictator...

The photos in which he is exhibited with the leaders of the revolution have been put up as a rehabilitation, a consecration. For him, who demonized so many. To accept it is to suffer once again the ridicule. It has been, due to the latency of this possibility, perhaps like a scalded cat, that for years I have argued for a fair and strong review of what happened in those dark years and their sequel. I don't want to think that the occasion will return. And I think we must quickly stop it. The insensitivity and insolence with which the ICRT, following mechanisms of the commercial era—Guastela, Sabatés, Crusellas—which continue to be its formal standards in terms of managing intelligence, with the method of trivializing the fundamental ideas. He takes his commitments too far, of whatever kind they may be. Obviously, they are not the commitments and ideas of the current cultural policy. I must understand it as an attempt to revive the most disastrous era that Cuban culture has experienced. I'm glad you're holding firm right now.

Hugs,  
Reynaldo

## **A nightmare without forgiveness or forgetfulness**

On the evening of January 30, at the Casa de las Américas, I was unable to read the following pages. I knew that the dialogue would branch off due to the innumerable pending issues of Cuban life, already present in the initial exchange of messages. Without minimizing the importance and indispensability of long-postponed claims, I wanted to highlight information unknown to those who came to public life after the nightmare euphemistically called the *pavonato* was extended and affirmed in a no less execrable variant, the *aldanato*.

Carlos Aldana, with his actions and “theory,” constantly overvalued the hard-core and was pejorative towards intellectuals and artists, defining us as “the soft parts of society.” They were “hard” and solid, the trustworthy people, the ones who “called the shots.” In plastic arts they preferred the marble archetypes of Stalinist socialist realism. In literature, poets also “reliable” and “firm as granite,” without excluding the commanding officers, determined that we consider their martial enthusiasm poetry. In narrative, the “literature of violence”—a definition that they owe to me, but not its hypertrophy and its canonical exaltation—and sycophants of all kinds.

The whole was a volley of *katiuskas* thrown like hosannas to well-known Soviet generals, more present in the mythology proposed by the mass media than our pro-independence heroes. The invitation was attended by emerging talents who took advantage of their time and moment, highly installed and willing to impose their fearful monstrosities, and a bureaucratic army that imposed what we call “mystery syndrome.” But how did he get to such aberrations? In the pages that I had to read that day, written in a torrent, dictated by the desire for justice, I included some giant leaps.

“Gray five-year period,” “black decade”: both definitions are ineffective to qualify the sectarian and dogmatic behaviors that generated an extensive rosary of suffering for Cuban cultural life. It cannot be reduced to a semantic disquisition, which dissolves into a farce what we experience as drama and, in some cases, as tragedy. The dates blur when the television resurrection of some of its culprits strikes the painful memory—without forgetting that they are figureheads. Supposedly cultural tributes on television were alarming because they allow us to assume accolades for their past performances and a validation of the events that gave them sad notoriety.

The protest that such transmissions aroused were responses to a serial provocation, behind which we could not help but see a purpose. On the highly monitored and politicized Cuban television it would be naive to imagine coincidences, especially when it glorifies those who yesterday were allowed acts that the courts described as unconstitutional and abuses of power. The unusual presentation of Luis Pavón Tamayo together with the two highest leaders of the Revolution and the silencing of the stage in which he viciously governed the destinies of Cuban culture, seemed like an exculpation. Those who decided, argued and carried out these programs argued that they were unaware of the exalted figure. That statement would already disqualify them as irresponsible and inept, but we didn’t believe them. The refusal to publicly acknowledge their ineffectiveness or guilt gave the matter the most unacceptable overtones of obstinacy

and mockery. We could no longer see them except as culprits, and imagine the affair as a plot whose ramifications escaped us. Were we facing an attempt to revive the old nightmares?

From the beginning of our revolutionary life, tendencies and groups appeared that entered the fight with different aesthetic budgets and participated in a struggle for power. They represented—or took refuge in—programs and convictions. One group arrived rooted in the aberrational and abortive Soviet cultural practice, its theories and its propaganda. They had a better organization and enough officials to fish in troubled rivers. Other groups, intuitive and inexperienced, responded to artistic conceptions active in the country and to the works of creators who experienced our eminently Western and avant-garde culture.

When the definition of the socialist character of the Revolution privileged committed art, it was assumed mainly by our intellectuals and artists, who throbbed in the hopeful consensus awakened by the Revolution, in the understanding that this did not imply the imposition of a particular school or tendency, much less the twists of socialist realism that were alien to our idiosyncrasies and our history. But we were not so uninformed about the tragedies experienced by the Eastern European intelligentsia as to accept the obstinacy of those who, accusing us of foreignizing, appropriated defining spaces and proposed, themselves, explicitly foreign formulas under the pretext of serving revolutionary ideals and the conformation of a new thought.

We understood—and their actions left no doubt—that it was not just about aesthetic conceptions and that they carried other objectives under the guise of ideological coherence. They were an extension of the aforementioned struggle for power. And they gained spaces. Their criteria would predominate in the black period, when they committed crimes against culture, overwhelmed, despised and destroyed. Then the environment did not favor them and they had to withdraw, but they became strong on weak terrain by inadvertence, or by collusion, or—as I see it—by explicit ineptitude. This history has ups and downs, twists and turns that have defined the terrain, sometimes disguised as philosophical conceptions, others as service records, always imposed dogma. In the foreground, or camouflaged, in advances and retreats, the representatives of the hard line have persisted in a sinuous struggle.

Once enlisted, hopeful at a peculiar and very delicate situation in our political life, they considered that it was time to emerge to openly contradict a cultural line that seeks a new type of dialogue. We are witnessing an escalation whose most obvious skirmishes we denounce. Some will have gone unnoticed. They became emboldened and assumed that they could exalt their symbols with impunity and refresh the ghost of dogmatism, which is not an understanding of art or the chicanery of communication, but a stubbornness in formulas that have already demonstrated their failure. What is astonishing in recent events is their domination and their vindictive arrogance.

I don't think it's pertinent to reconstruct the steps that led to the implantation of the disastrous period that we call the *pavonato* and the subsequent attempts to defuse it, revive it and return us to preaching that ignores our traditions. I do remind you that this

tragedy did not begin in 1970, but was laboriously put together, taking advantage of the loopholes of venal, egotistical actions, the bewilderment of novices and the stubbornness of groups that first served their own interests and then found themselves under the black cloud of the instrumentalization by those who were more opportune in the fight. In their saddlebags they carry the “reasons” that fueled the creation of the UMAP, the university purges, the raids, the instrumentalization of homophobic prejudices, ideological intolerance as a persistent element.

There was behavior of all kinds and very few constructive ones. Some, masters of the land that fell to them, adopted messianic poses, believed they were leaders of lives and works. Others justified their inaction with “discipline” understood as the highest virtue of the revolutionary, forgetting the rebellious assertion of Martí: “Unjust law is not law.” There were the compliant and the conservative, the insensitive and the indifferent, those who “took care of the chair and looked out the window,” as our people say. Those procedures are very fresh in the memory of those of us of a certain age. Then came the silence, imposed or tacit, the “it will be for something” to ignore the misfortune of the ousted, the warning to “not give the enemy reasons” and silence the protests, the hard training in the experience of living a revolution and the mistakes of those who could oppose those plans and didn’t do it.

And there were the minions, those who owe their prestige to the work of messengers, those who don’t count but make a difference. It’s understandable that there are those who came out into cultural life at that time, and those who owe their names to such horrors. They were silent, they were accomplices and some do not regret anything. We must understand that formed in such a long process, they are in places where they can do harm. They are joined by the faint-hearted and the cowed who do not believe in the triumph of justice. There are those who still listen to the dehumanizing sirens of Stalinism. They, and not others, embody enmity and intolerance. They, and not others, offend and despise, entrench themselves and act treacherously. They, and not others, gave weapons to the adversary. Remember that sexist policies have been a boomerang: the UMAP, the persecution of homosexuals, the programmatic intolerance.

We all know the character of the *pavonato*. It was the disqualification of those of us who thought in the opposite or even nuanced way, the order and command, the deactivation of institutions that were the pride of our culture and, above all, a criminal contempt for the different. Those of us who did not fall within its “parameters” were declared enemies deserving of public contempt. UNEAC, an institution that should have defended us, turned its back on us. In the name of these criteria they stigmatized, disabled and divided. The last straw was that they took as fetishes the symbols they destroyed, when exacerbated homophobia led them to dismantle the National Puppet Theater, and, in imitation of the Nazis, they burned the puppets. It was the glorification of *machismo*, its gratuitous violence, its cruelty and bestial loss of meaning. It was extreme politicization. The “revolutionary face masks,” the imposed silence, the fear, the fear. As in the title of a movie, fear devours the soul, intimidates, strangles.

It should be understood that a possible vindication of those executioners is held as a mockery of the memory of those who suffered insults from before and during the

*pavonato*, revolutionaries and true artists like Roberto Blanco, stigmatized, subjected to an onerous trial in the presence of his colleagues; Servando Cabrera Moreno, the brothers Pepe and Carucha Camejo and the talented Pepe Camejo; Raúl Martínez, the iconographer of the revolution, Virgilio Piñera and José Lezama Lima, who died in ostracism, and many others. Their individual stories cannot fit into these tightly packed notes.

The dogmatic seized the power for which they worked so hard, conferred privileged positions on some groups and individuals over others; they were merciless with those of us who did not respond to their exemplary patterns. They determined right or wrong, legal or criminal, sinful or healthy. They implemented methods of terror and persecution, police work, denunciation. Their criteria elevated them to hegemonic, not only in aesthetic conceptions, but also in intimate life, monitored and constrained, and they implanted mistrust as a habit. We know that damage of these dimensions can occur by decree and from positions of power in the culture, but they are not cured by similar methods because they weigh down generations, they inhibit thought and action. Nothing will return the damaged lives, the impeded vocations, the provoked absences, the fear planted in the mind.

Revanchism, which once again wants to claim its plausible purpose, cannot hide its true essence, which is hatred; its true ambition, which is power. We are here to unmask it. We are grateful that our work is recognized, but we have not lost hope for the “turn of the offended” that a poet told us about. Those of us who denounce recent acts do not harbor grudges, we are not encouraged by revenge, we do not hide the place of those who, thinking differently, can display works that enrich the Cuban cultural heritage. In the desire for justice, we exchange electronic messages spontaneously, without prior organization, to jump out of the horror, the same one that dictates these pages. It was the path we took, a minority in front of the television that in each house presented as a benefactor someone who seriously damaged our lives. We are not cloaked or in cahoots. And I warn you that we are not soft, nor moldable, nor will we allow ourselves to be confused by distorting propositions, from whatever direction they come.

Reynaldo González  
February 4, 2007

## RICARDO REIMENA

Translated by Regina Anavy

The brilliant, orchestrated comeback on TV, of the more than unspeakable guy named Luis Pavón; tip of the dark iceberg of an era..., and worth the contradiction between the iceberg and the darkness. It doesn't matter that the servers are blocked, as the delinquents of digital globalization claim when they ask the naive to forward prayers or silly cartoons about luck. Now it would happen due to the serious fault of the worst criminal of Culture and Art.

Ricardo Reimena



## RICARDO RIVERÓN ROJAS

Translated by Regina Anavy

Let's eat the unborn turkey!

Where do you want me to put the plate?

It might seem that Cuban cultural policy is risking its life based on a silly dichotomy. This is: the chronic demonization or rehabilitation (pyrrhic and extemporaneous) of three figures: Pavón, Serguera and Quesada. And that the whole story is summed up in those years, in the capital's space, in those people... It might seem, but it's only a perpetual mirage, a distortion magnified by the centralization of the protagonisms, always monopolized by the logic of the capital.

In Havana, between 1971 and 1976, atrocities were committed, it is true, but not everything related to the evolution of Cuban culture has its epicenter in the period that we know as the *pavonato*. There are other realities, where the geographical, the non-canonical, the marginal and alternative suggest nuances and different readings of a certain period and certain phenomena. And such is the case of the one that has (badly) occupied us today.

Reprisals, marginalization, censorship, abuses of various kinds experienced by some Havana intellectuals during the mandate of Luis Pavón Tamayo in the then National Council of Culture. Oblivion, discrimination, almost absolute minimization have been received, and still are received, by many worthwhile Cuban intellectuals residing in the provinces, or abroad (mostly writers) during the pre-, post-, and *pavonato* itself.

And since we are talking about *pavonatos*, I will take advantage of the funny neologism and try to define, based on its use, some differences in focus and circumstances that prevent a uniform reaction throughout the Island in the face of the recent resurrection, on Cuban TV, of the three cultural corpses.

The structural deformations of underdevelopment, it is known, generate hegemonic states of concentration of ideas and processes in the capitals of countries. The media make a decisive contribution to this. Physical proximity also does its thing, in Cuba in a more notable way, given the catastrophic state of the public transport system and the hotel veto imposed on those born on the Island. Going from a Cuban province to the capital is an odyssey; staying: the greatest of utopias. Let's take just one example: that of the poet from Villa Clara, Luis Manuel Pérez Boitel, winner of no less than the Casa de las Américas award, for whom the prestigious institution didn't provide transportation or lodging for the award ceremony, nor for the subsequent presentation of the award-winning book, all this at the height of 2002. The *pavonato* had been left far behind, but no authorized voice was raised to denounce the outrage, except those of the province, of course, and those are now less "authorized."

The interior territories establish closed preserves, of pedestrian self-validation, with very little participation in the tryouts of the “national” states of opinion. The debates, excesses and reparations of the *pavonato* are concrete examples of this marginalization: while in Havana they were burning heretics, in the provinces we were witnessing the birth of a movement that, more Pavón, less Pavón, proposed to trace the inherited cultural prehistory of the colony and the republic. While in that same Havana the skin of the previously burned was being reconstructed through institutional biotechnology, in the provinces and abroad we continued to have no significance in the summary of all the possible imaginary and nominated produced in the country.

First with Pavón, and then without Pavón (even better), literary workshops were born and grew in the provinces—debatable spaces, yes, but also instances of initiation of the majority of those who, between 1970 and 1990, have illuminated excellent pages for Cuban literature, both in Cuba and in other parts of the world. The great praise for the post-*pavonato* rightly lists the growth of institutional spaces for promotion as one of its best trump cards. And although I am very far from praising what happened in the seventies, where in some way, as a student, I suffered my own *pavonato*, that was also a moment of inauguration of institutional spaces: literary workshops being one of them. Would it be logical that provincial writers would then praise the *pavonato* based on institutional growth (rather birth)? The answer would be obvious.

In the provinces we were behind (what a shame!): we never had a Heberto Padilla, an Antón Arrufat, a Virgilio Piñera or a José Lezama Lima. We had literary workshops. Look at that! We also had and continue to have, yes, the misty quality of not existing. Notices have been posted on all roads ever since, but it’s best not to see them. Those who suffered so much with Pavón, enjoy with Abel and enjoyed with Hart enough demands. The “fed up” and the *abelato* were and continue to be prodigal in plastering chips on the wall with grain.

Both those affected and their disciples enjoy the benefits of perpetual therapy. The official delegations abroad and within (let’s review Abel’s entourage that travels the country during book fairs), the editorial spaces, the awards, the presence in the media, conform and open more promptly for those invested with the authority conferred by being a *patrontronado* or adjunct; almost never (I don’t want to be absolute) a provincial or resident abroad. Havana is the country. The province, almost as much as the foreigner (and this one too) is an exile, even if the contrary is claimed.

What is there to condemn in the attempt to “repair” those sad tigers? Good: condemned. But let us also condemn the other injustices and the most numerous omissions, the exclusive concentration of “literary power” in those who possess the safe-conduct issued by the author of *El tiempo* and the flags displayed by him. Another thing: let’s not be naïve. Cuban TV and the media in general have never left the *pavonato*. There is a reason why they are not subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, but to the PCC. There is a reason why they have remained with such devotion within the narrow limits of infinite apology, with no space for debate and criticism.

With Hart and especially with Abel in the Ministry of Culture, it is true, the spaces were expanded (without exceeding the closed union preserve), and not only physically, but also in the relative flexibility for debates, but the devastated building by Pavón is not the only one that must be repaired, precisely because it is not the only one devastated. The misuse of open spaces, or their tendentious, enshrined and sometimes negligent use needs new and fairer props. A blind eye to almost everything that remains outside the limits of the “aristocracy” branded with a hot iron by the *pavonato*, or the limits of the capitals (and the country) require dynamite for their demolition.

The debate, definitely open, to the problems of the entire nation, seen from the perspective of culture and without suspicions or suspicions around the polemicists, calls for a pick and shovel to bury the corpse of the gray five-year period. As long as that annoying corpse accompanies us, the unfeasible recovery of Pavón and others in the operating room on national TV will generate alarm, stir up the pool where the same fishermen from then and later will continue to fish. And to the entire world it will continue to appear, unfairly, that Cuban culture is risking its life around a silly dichotomy that in the end is pathetic. That’s as far as we could go, don’t you think?

Ricardo Riverón Rojas  
Madrid, January 15, 2007

## ROBERTO COBAS AVIVAR

Translated by Regina Anavy

Dear colleagues, friends!

I follow with interest and in detail the important Intranet debate that you are leading. I join the same and remain yours with all my solidarity and my willingness to exchange inside and outside our country. Below I attach the article that, motivated by the debate, I have just published on *Kaos en la Red*.

A hug,  
Roberto Cobas Avivar

“A burden is needed to finish the work of the revolutions /.../ so that our children do not beg on their knees for the homeland that our fathers won for us standing up” [1] Rubén Martínez Villena

This has been the transcendent idea of one of the founders of Cuban thought and the emancipatory process. And, for this, nothing more revolutionary in the Martian sense[2] than “going to the roots” of the contradictions, those that coerced, underestimated or misrecognized by the political power today in Cuba, are sharpened unresolved but unrepentant to sow the antagonism with the obsolete that has to give way to the necessary socialist renewal.

The current official resurrection that has taken place in Cuba of antithetical symbols of democracy embodied by former representatives and executors of government cultural policy imposed in a period of frank political, bureaucratic and criminal coercion of the free revolutionary spirit and creative autonomous action—known in intellectual sectors such as the “gray five-year period for Cuban culture”[3]—has unleashed an enveloping “unauthorized” debate among said intelligentsia.

The discussion that unfolds through the so-called Intranet in Cuba comes loaded with other symbols. It takes place among those few who, due to the political paradox of active party and state discrimination, have access to email. Its tone exudes the breath of “conspiracy” forced by another institutionalized paradox, the factual monopoly that the people don’t exercise, but the political-state power does, over the media. The predominant foundation of the debate is cloistered in the interests of the group (class?) that feels directly not so much the breaths of an apparently surpassed past but, for that apparent reason, the return of an experience as retrograde as it is lacerating. All this, beyond tremendous or apologetic interpretations against the supposed original sin that embodies the Cuban Revolution, indicates that the process of sociopolitical transformation is alive, struggling and pushing for its progress.

The importance of an official outbreak of undeniably counter-revolutionary evidence such as that conveyed by state public television when paying homage to the champions of the former National Council of Culture, an instrument of a government cultural policy that is reactionary by cultural definition and repressive by mistaken ideological definition,

demands that the discussion of Cuban intellectuals transcend the approach of divorce between form and content, between the apparent and the essential. Therefore, the initiated discussion doesn't have the right to "private property." The ongoing debate is a debate that belongs to the Cuban people. And that is nothing more than the vindication of the fair- and free-access principle of the organic [Italian Marxist] revolutionary intellectual, Gramsci.

There is no problem of Cuban culture that is not a consequence of the unresolved problem of the citizen sovereignty of the Cuban people as subject of the socialist project that is intended to continue advancing.

Ex officio political dissidents or occasional ones shouldn't rub their hands for the assertion that I put on the table once again. But neither should the partisan state bureaucracy do so with this necessary delimitation. Both currents ignore the legitimate interests of the people.

The fact that certain voices of the "unauthorized" discussion that reverberates on the Cuban Intranet have agreed of their own free will to discuss in "private" with representatives of the state and the Party the issue that concerns them as a social group, regardless of the necessary understanding of the parties, can denote citizen responsibility but not citizen sovereignty. The apparent can only unfold the essential. That is the responsibility of the revolutionary intelligentsia in Cuba. Since not only the legitimacy but also the political effectiveness of the battle of ideas that is appealed to as a bulwark of the Revolution itself depends on the roots of critical thinking.

The fact that the intellectuals involved in the "unauthorized" debate about the meanings that they glimpse in the official counter-revolutionary media outbreak do not realize that it constitutes a reflection of the deep contradictions that exist within the entire Cuban society, of its socioeconomic movement, could become a mediating factor of the current revolutionary momentum.

The project of socialist transformations in Cuba is at a high point. A moment that needs the revolutionary drive of the people and critical thinking; all that, contrary to existing official and common orthodox political reluctance, contributes ideas and convictions that overcome both the self-confinement of convictions and the will to free and political participation, committed to the viability of a socialist project that can only be perceived as a process of socio-human emancipation and, for that reason alone, of cultural emancipation.

Freedom of artistic expression is neither a port nor a premise of the right to free expression and creative citizen action—a right, whose fullness must be synonymous with popular redemption to the exact extent to which it is personified by the meaning of the post-capitalist transformations unleashed by the Cuban revolutionary process. The premise and expansion of all creative and transforming freedom of reality is, first, the citizen's right to self-determination, a right at the center of the debate about the need to situate the socialist project on a definitively viable trajectory summons Cuban society.

That right and no other is the very legacy of the revolutionary triumph of 1959, and that is the liberating burden that the Revolution needs today more than ever.

If the “words to the intellectuals” (1961)[4] were expressed in the context of political definitions of class reaffirmations or denials, not only contradictory but for that reason highly antagonistic, the discourse of the University of Havana [5] in 2005 revealed that the sociopolitical contradictions of the Cuban revolutionary process, without being class-based, when left unresolved, also become antagonistic. The antagonism, as in childbirth, lies in the creative rejection of the body that has given rise to the embryo of the new forms that will come. But, unlike human birth, that will not occur without the frontal confrontation of the ideas up for bid, and that, similarly, will carry the genes that identify it with its parent.

The fact that the recent congress of the *Central de Trabajadores de Cuba* has ignored the discussion of the problem of the property system over the means of production (material and immaterial) and that it has been preferred, according to subsequent central political decisions, to grant it the patrimony of the analysis of one of the keys to the viability of the socialist project to a group of experts, speaks more about the distrust in the revolutionary wisdom of the workers than about trust in trained and committed thinkers. It is the determining difference between the essential and the apparent.

This is the case because the concept of citizen sovereignty remains imprisoned in political dogmas that resist the dialectical negation of controlled democracy, fostered today in the Cuban reality by an extemporaneous immanence of the historical concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A dictatorship that, in such a self-legitimized way, comes to be conducted by the only party of the Revolution.

Citizen sovereignty is not given in a vacuum nor will it be the exclusive work of society’s legitimate right to freedom of political, artistic and intellectual expression, or the result of the free expression of popular opinion. And it will not be so as long as its genesis in economic democracy is not conceived. Since the pillar on which the concept and practice of political dictatorship is sustained is the monopoly of state property over the means of reproduction of human life. The all-encompassing economic power enables the state to accommodate the forms of authoritarian governance of the entire movement of society. Bringing this observation to the forefront of analysis and debate means taking sides for the socialist renewal of the foundations of the prevailing mode of production and socioeconomic relations.

Consequently, I’m speaking of a principle of economic democracy that assumes the right of worker-citizens to free association as producers, to self-manage production processes (and immaterial creation), to the rights to self-distribute the profits of the work and to determine the economic budgets that promote the social and cultural development of each and every one. A revolutionary principle of socioeconomic relations that definitively places the social being, the citizen, at the center of the transformation processes of the cultural quality of life.

Both concepts—economic democracy and citizen sovereignty—constitute a synergistic pair that is called upon to frame the political viability of the Cuban socialist project. The historical continuity of the Cuban Revolution and the trajectory of the viability of its socialist project require an intellectual and popular responsibility that assumes the imperative of critical thinking and speaking, not as a personal risk, real or imagined, but as socio-cultural self-emancipation. A self-emancipation that generates the spaces for direct participation and political decisions that today, paradoxically, the other dissidents dispute, not without success, however unsustainable it may seem without the economic and political encouragement of external intervention.

It's the essential beyond the apparent. The partisan state bureaucracy, the one that entrenches itself in political conservatism in the face of a social reality marked by economic and citizen insufficiencies as pressing as systemic, will always be incapable of understanding the need for such spaces. The party itself does not escape unresolved internal contradictions, today subsumed for having been left out of the control of Cuban society. By dispensing with the control of society, the party has disdained its revolutionary condition to become a state party and supra-societal political power.

This is the key that allows us to understand the nature of state-partisan bureaucratic power. This basic problem becomes a destructive factor of social cohesion and, therefore, of the viability of the socialist project around which it has to take place. Old schemes of political thought do not work where reality requires overcoming the new contradictions generated by the process of socioeconomic and political transformations.

Those handcuffed contradictions that occur within the Cuban party will not be able to release their creative potential without the critical thrust of the self-emancipation of thought and the revolutionary word of society itself. That and no other dialectic of political interaction is the call to remove the obstacles that today condition the peak moment in which the process of social and economic transformation is found in Cuba. Not because the Revolution is established, the support and viability of its socialist project will depend on the role of political vanguard that the party signifies. It has been the critical interaction between the people and the political leaderships that emerged from it, as free subjects, that has set and will set the course and pace of the revolutions.

The commitment of critical thought and revolutionary action is with the viability of the socialist project, with the determination to enrich the cognitive horizons of a revolutionary process that must be emancipatory *par excellence*. Conquering citizen sovereignty, in the same sense that Antonio Maceo[6] also appealed not to beg for freedom, unquestionably enthrones the citizen as a transformative and self-transformable subject.

Waiting for the authorization of the party and the state representatives and not owners of the popular will for the open recurring debate about the best social and economic organization that the people must give themselves as a culture of democratic participation has always meant contributing to the stagnation of the revolutionary forces of society and of the party itself. It means giving up the condition of free men and women. Allowing open popular debate to be replaced by intramural debate means leaving the state and party

apparatus out of social control. That is why, for intellectuals and the people in general, the renewal of the role that the media must play within the socialist project must be the subject of greater debate.

If the appearance of ghosts from a past of contradictions that seemed to have been overcome mobilizes the Cuban intelligentsia today in legitimate defense of their group interests and doesn't allow them to distinguish that the essential thing to question is the self-complacency of the propaganda of success, induced or imposed, which at the same time occurs in the recently closed VIII National Festival of the Written Press[7], it will not mean more than legitimizing the violation of the revolutionary role of the media, of their status as a means of communication of the people in function of the critical sovereign exercise of information and opinion on the sociopolitical process, its daily life, its complexities and ideas about its projections, as well as the evaluation and democratic control of its institutional actors: the party, the state, social and cultural organizations.

If the debate that today moves a wide spectrum of intellectuals and artistic creators is reduced to lamenting injustices suffered, past and present, compensated or not, it will be devaluing the need for a greater debate that Cuban society should convene. Trying to make overcoming specific contradictions irreversible without taking sides in the face of structural contradictions will become a recurrent sisyphic effort. That is where the determining field of revolutionary action is and the guarantee of the renewing capacity and viability of the socialist project, which is assumed precisely as the path towards that cultural emancipation for which work is being done and discussed.

It cannot be forgotten, on pain of alienating the intellectual debate, that despite the complex web of internal contradictions and the pronounced wear and tear of society in the face of its perennial urgencies, these same village folks have not stopped working and weaving another web of advances, economic, social and undeniably cultural. Nor can the fact be underestimated that the majority of the adult Cuban population—70% born after 1959—don't consider the problems that afflict them in terms of debates on issues that they have not directly experienced. These generations are interested in debate about the present and the future, about solutions and projections, about reality from the perspective of expectations. And it will be like that no matter how hard you try to assert that it's necessary to learn from past mistakes. There is no antagonistic contradiction here by definition.

It is of the utmost importance to understand that in conditions of chronic economic deprivation and the mediatization of citizen sovereignty, the immanent social conflict leads to reactionary or progressive changes by sectarian interests. The only guarantee so that the flow of contained creative energy is not concealed by internal forces identified among themselves by sectarian interests—always fertile ground for foreign interests—is in the full participation of society in open popular debates. Everything that is discussed and decided outside of the transparency of popular participation will be an unequivocal sign of internal struggles for economic and political power that extends and consolidates the privilege of bureaucratic power. They will be attempts to consolidate the monopoly of state property as sustenance of that bureaucratic power. They will, therefore, be attempts



to perpetuate the media coverage of citizen sovereignty and with it the viability of the socialist project. The Revolution cannot be usurped.

Roberto Cobas Avivar  
Spain, January, 2007

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## 1. CIVIL LYRIC MESSAGE

(To José Torres Vidaurre, Peruvian poet. In Madrid).

José Torres Vidaurre: Cheers! Health and glory, brother Apollonida: Health for the miserable scum of the body and glory for the exquisite and suffering soul; let the kiss of the palm and the laurel descend on your fertile temple. Fight with the storms! May your vessel sink!

Perhaps what a beautiful beach the shipwreck will bring! Always fight and trust: your last name is a harbinger of brilliant battles and resounding triumph; that over the anonymous darkness of Oblivion,

Vidaurre, Vita aurea, for his golden life, The symbolic towers of your last name will shine.

(Another etymology, of Biscayan origin, also gives me Vidaurre as “first path”.)

And after my greeting, I will tell you my sorrows for the things in Cuba that are not alien to you, and that they cannot be foreign to you because of my brother, and because of your fervor as a South American.

I well know that the land of the Inca-Yupanqui did not suffer from the sad Yankee protectionism, although a future fear well justifies appealing to Washington about Tacna and Arica, but my homeland, which you also love as I love the glorious stamps of Peru, our Cuba, you know well how conducive to the hunting of nations, and how it supports the permanent threat of the North that its ambition incubates: Florida is an index finger that points to Cuba.

We have destiny in our own hands And it is sad that we, the Cubans, are the ones who achieve the probable misfortune, adulterating, infamous, the noble democracy, living between concerns of Charybdis and Scila, and ignoring the danger of the North that keeps watch.

Because you look closely at our strange dementia I will tell you the sweet story of Santa Clara, a convent that the State—a foolish merchant—wanted to buy at triple the true price.

And if in the big business there was a “secret” with a change of letter, it became a “decree.” Such a thing was carried out by the President, Buy, and by decree! most devoutly, although our Charter, foreseeing some excess, left such a delicate power to Congress.

(But the Honorable Chief regarding Santa Clara said that it be acquired, but not that it be paid for). Thus, as a lawyer, he entrusted himself to San Ivo; he hatched his foundation, improvised a reason, and consistent with his own nonsense, walled himself in sophistic Chinese reasoning.

But, since a distinguished colonel of the noble contention was then Secretary of the Treasury, who carried the sacred keys of the Treasury with merits equal to the same decorum as his epic stripes and his immaculate last name, the Honorable Chief neutralized the obstacle, and this is what we saw with unanimous astonishment:

He endorsed the decree to the seraphic Erasmus!, lord incapable until Sin and Vice, with a maximum crime: his drama “The Sacrifice.” Thus the sad fable of the old convent was an embarrassing pact between a fox and a donkey, since vile cunning and imbecility came together in the shadow of a single wickedness.

And who tells you, friend, that because I made use of a right to criticize what was provided for by the magical decree, and I told the Secretary himself face to face how the people were against such a measure, they judge me a criminal?

I’m living in the first act of a judicial drama!

And since twelve illustrious friends supported me, we will suffer strong punishments together.

The seraphic Minister was bitten by the Furies: we suffered a ridiculous process of insults!

But this is only a symptom: a barricade is needed to save Cuba from the cursed waves: there is the aspiration to perpetuate the crime and the fierce politics surrender to the scoundrel.

There is false patriotism, flashy and pompous, accompanied by timpani and horn; Secretaries are changed in a very critical situation for petty “high political reasons.”

But where do we go, forgetting everything: History, Honor and People, through muddy roads, if you no longer recognize the fatal stubbornness or even the sacred and sad right to protest?

Where are we all going, brutally misguided, but to the Platt Amendment and Uncle’s boot? To the repeated clash of the iron on the pebble, went the troop of hooves walking to the stars!

It takes a charge to kill scoundrels, to finish the work of revolutions; to avenge the dead, who suffer outrage, to clean the tenacious crust of colonialism; to be able one day, with prestige and reason, to remove the Appendix from the Constitution;

so as not to make useless, in humbling luck, the effort and the hunger and the wound and the death; for the Republic to maintain itself, to fulfill Martí's marble dream; to guard the earth, glorious of spoils, to save the temple of Love and Faith, so that our children do not beg on their knees for the homeland that their parents won for us on their feet.

I swear by the blood that flowed from so much injury, to yearn for the salvation of the beloved land, and despite all unjust persecution, continue administering the caustic and the whip.

The sacred obligation increases in danger. (The opprobrium deserves the word choleric).

I pull my soul, as if it were a sword, and I swear, on my knees, before Mother America.

(1923)

2. José Martí Pérez (1853-1895), Cuban revolutionary (killed in combat), poet, distinguished exponent of Spanish-American letters, intellectual, founder of the Cuban Revolutionary Party with which he organized and led the war of independence against Spain, hero of Cuba and Latin America.

3. 1965-1971, period in which the National Council of Culture (CNC) functioned. Its then director, as well as the director of the Cuban Radio Broadcasting Institute and the director of the theater sector, are identified by the Cuban intelligentsia as relentless commissioners of a factual policy of violation of freedom of artistic expression. At that time, the director of the CNC was tried for abuse of power and unconstitutional action.

4. See: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1961/esp/f300661e.html>

5. See: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2005/esp/f171105e.html>

6. Cuban revolutionary (1848-1896), General of the Mambí Army that defeated the Spanish Army in Cuba. Together with José Martí Pérez, hero of Cuban independence (killed in combat) and Cuban libertarian thought.

7. See: <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2007/01/14/nacional/artico6.html> Message from Rogelio Rodríguez Coronel.

## ROGELIO RODRÍGUEZ CORONEL

Translated by Regina Anavy

Dear Friends:

I have followed the debate with great interest. It is possible that I do not know all the opinions expressed, but I firmly subscribe to the concern shown and the denunciation of television irresponsibility. I believe that the articles by Desiderio and Arturo collect, with moderation and depth, the most outstanding aspects. However, there is another one that seems extremely disturbing to me and that I have not seen reflected with complete transparency: Why now, precisely, this display of what could be understood as opportunism, now that Commander Fidel Castro delegated command to the Second Party Secretary and Minister of the Armed Forces?

I think it's something more serious than manifest political opportunism. I believe that resurrecting these ghosts at this time is profoundly counterrevolutionary, since—as in the game of billiards—the resurrected figures (or better, the tendencies that they represent, which are there, have always been there and have never disappeared, above all in education) have wanted to identify, through television speeches including iconographic resources, with the highest leadership of the Revolution, which is harmful not only for its image, inside and outside the country, but also because it exhumes scars that have not completely healed (impossible in such a short time; an error of this nature in culture and education can only be corrected with the passing of generations), and this conspires against the unity that is needed in these times and corrodes the claimed trust. It's more serious, I think, than simple opportunistic attempts, perhaps vengeful.

Dr. Rogelio Rodríguez Coronel

## ROLANDO A. PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ

Translated by Regina Anavy

Hi, Tomasito:

I am writing to you with the request that you send this message to the mailing list, and with it my adherence to the feelings of the Cuban intelligentsia in relation to the Pavón issue. In a few days (February 27) I will be 60 years old and, although it's true that I didn't suffer firsthand the excesses of Pavón and Quesada, I did suffer the consequences of a prejudiced, arbitrary and unfair policy towards artists that manifested itself in all areas of life for those years (which should never return), before and after the so-called "gray five-year period."

I also wish to express my total agreement with Enrique Colina's opinion expressed in his lucid message to Desiderio Navarro. In it, Colina writes: "If the light we radiate will continue to shine eternally only because of the humanism of our doctors or because of the splendor of our education, of which I am proud and know very well that it counts for a lot, but they ignore contradictions that undermine the democratic sense of the system, its economic efficiency, which cries out for reforms and internal changes; if we continue to believe a state that controls and takes care of everything without being able to take care of everything or control everything; if we do not face the deformations of all those recognized that go to the core of the problems, which is the essential issue that is in the pipeline of these concerns, I sincerely believe that the lighthouse and guide, sooner or later, will go out, and we will remain only as a historical reference of nobility, resistance and dignity, but we will lose the public sphere."

By way of testimony, allow me to narrate the following personal anecdote. On January 29, on the eve of the meeting at the Casa de las Américas, which I would have wanted to attend, I was the victim, along with other citizens, of an outrage that I could never have imagined. After having dinner at the El Asturianito restaurant, in front of the Capitol, and going to my home on Amistad street, between Bernal and Trocadero, Centro Habana, I was arbitrarily arrested at the corner of Prado and Teniente Rey when I stopped to greet an acquaintance. After waiting for half an hour or more at that corner, I was taken in a patrol car, along with other detainees, to a nearby police station, where I had to remain behind bars in a cell for about two hours, without knowing what the reason for that injustice (executed, as I could hear, under "Operation Plane") (?), and without being offered any apology when they finally returned my identity card and allowed me to get out of that humiliating place.

It was useless for me to show the guards my UNEAC card, signed by Abel Prieto, and a copy of my book *La música afro-mestiza Mexicana* [*Mexican Afro-Mestiza Music*] published by the Universidad Veracruzana, which I carried in my backpack, since I had used it that afternoon in the course he taught at the Center for Research and Development of Cuban Music, entitled "The study of traditional and popular music seen from the South." Great paradox: some participants in said course, which included research work on Cuban musicology within the framework of internationalist collaboration agreements

in Granada and Angola, had dropped out due to its strong political charge (I know that some ironically compared my course with the well-known “Round Table”).

In the midst of this unexpected event, I was extremely indignant, burning with the fire of anger and my high blood pressure, and I told the prison guards a few things that their inexcusable behavior deserved. But the many young people who surrounded me, victims like me of that abuse of power, displayed an enviable serenity. One of them whispered to me: “Father, don’t look for a fight.” That made me reflect on something important: their detention was so unjust, being the same as I, Cuban citizens and residents. And I was no more a human being than they were for the simple fact of being a musicologist and a member of UNEAC. After all, they also had to be released, since none had committed any crime or infraction.

All this is relevant because, as Colina rightly says, contradictions like these “undermine the democratic sense of the system,” and “the deformations that are all recognized” are “the essential issue that is in the pipeline of these concerns.” When will the “Round Table” address this and other issues that concern us all? Not only the impunity of Luis Posada Carriles, the unjust arrest of the Five Heroes, neoliberalism and US barbarism in Iraq are issues of general interest. The present and future of our people and our country demand a deserved and urgent space.

Rolando A. Pérez Fernández

## ROSA ILEANA BOUDET

Translated by Regina Anavy

### Intellectual debate?

Intellectual debate It may be that I have a lot of respect for the word but I cannot consider the exchange of emails a debate between a group of intellectuals who came to me through third parties. Everyone who uses this procedure knows that he has an avid network and a captive reader. If they wanted to promote intellectual debate, they would place their messages and their ideas in the newspapers, in their columns on *La jiribilla* and *Cuba Literaria* or on the dozens of Cuban Internet sites. They would demand an explanation of the minister and the president of UNEAC and something would be done. They would call a meeting somewhere and do something more constructive, because Cuban society needs to heal that wound that, like so many others, is open as long as the victims and their censors share—and it has to be like that, there is no other way—the beaten “public sphere.”

I understand the indignation of those who saw one of those responsible for cultural policy who reigned during the black five-year period reappear on television—not gray as Fornet coined—and it’s very clear that they want to go ahead and prevent the ghost from reliving the years of “civil death,” marginalization and ostracism that caused irreparable losses to the intellectual and artistic movement. But the ghost is like Pachenco waiting in the coffin, not because the old Pavón appears in one program or the sixty-year-old Quesada in another, but because the breeding ground that made it possible for them to have power remains.

Not only because they weren’t the ones most responsible, but because their victims have been rehabilitated and the period continues “in silence it has had to be,” while books have been written, nor essays and rectifications published, and there have been no mea culpas so that those who were children at the time can understand what we are talking about. And there will be those who will tell what happened with *Pensamiento crítico* and the censored works and the prohibited premieres, as some novelists and writers have already done. And the lists of prohibited premieres and the resolution of the “parameterization” will be published, and only when that documentation and testimony circulates in freedom, will it matter very little to us that someone had their little piece of glory on television in a program in bad taste.

Desiderio Navarro may accuse me of not having said it before. He now uses against the censors the same email technique that he used against me in 2002, when I dared to touch him “with the tip of a *Criterio*” \* (he added the disqualification of émigré to the many of the public sphere). If you read his text “In medias res publica” calmly, you will see how many rhetorical figures he uses to not call bread “bread” and wine “wine,” and yet how much arsenal he uses to argue with a colleague. In “In media ..” he writes with tweezers about the period that cost others losses and disappointments, small indeed in comparison with the sufferings of others.

What we have to do is write and rectify and analyze with serenity and continue denouncing the Pavón that we still have inside.

\* If you touch me with the tip of an opinion, touch me with love, Desiderio.

\* Anonymous verse widely circulated in the intellectual milieu.

You will find the texts if you search in the nooks and crannies of Google, which doesn't let us forget. Mine, if you search for "Patrice Pavis' own gaze," Desiderio's, in "Desiderio en Teatro en Miami."