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A COMMENTED TRANSLATION
OF EXCERPTS OF HILDA PERERA'S
P L A N T A D O

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and
Research of the University of Ottawa in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Translation

Presented by:
Javier Gómez-Martínez
Supervised by Dr. Roda P. Roberts



Javier Gómez-Martínez, Ottawa, Canada, 1992



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This novel about the inhuman conditions forced upon thousands of male political prisoners in Cuba owes much of its human dimension to the presence of the female characters in it. Likewise, this commented translation has greatly benefited from the contribution of three women.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Hilda Perera for her hospitality. She, most graciously, allowed me to go through her personal files, where I found valuable information on the gestation and writing of Plantado. Moreover, she provided me with precious advice on some important literary points. Thanks to her, the short weeks I spent doing research at the University of Miami in February 1987 produced a wealth of information.

I have many reasons to be grateful to Dr. Roda Roberts. I am especially indebted to her for her detailed comments and criticisms which were invaluable for the clarification of many points. She not only showed an outstanding degree of professionalism in her task, but also displayed an inexhaustible amount of patience with my serious illnesses, my periods of mourning, and my heavy burden of personal and professional commitments which severely limited the time I could devote to this thesis.

The debt to my wife, Sherry Smith, cannot be expressed in mere words. Without her, I might never have finished this commented translation. She not only provided incentive to devote the time needed to do the intense amount of reading and writing involved, but she also encouraged me when delays beyond my control increased my anxieties. Our long daily discussions, often lasting well into the wee hours, about a myriad of points concerning the English language enormously improved the readability of the final version of my translation. Its completion has not diminished, in any way, my gratitude for her precious assistance.

Needless to say, whatever shortcomings still remain must be attributed solely to my own limitations.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Truth, like light, blinds. Falschhood, on the contrary, is
a beautiful twilight that enhances every object.

— Albert Camus (The Fall)

It is axiomatic that the translator should ideally work from a language he knows well into his own native language, since he must control intimately all the resources of the language into which he is translating. For this thesis, however, I have chosen to translate, into English, Hilda Perera's novel Plantado, a book written in Spanish, my native language. The reasons for my decision are twofold.

First, the translation of Plantado represented a real linguistic challenge for me, both because of the difficulties involved in dealing with its wealth of allusions to Cuban culture and Cuban expressions, which are absolutely essential elements of the book, and because of the need to respect the author's style and command of figurative speech. Moreover, the fact that I am not a literary translator made the task an even more taxing exercise. But I felt, and rightly so, that this translation would greatly increase my capacity as a translator in the process.

Second, my first-hand acquaintance with the real life hero of the novel added a personal dimension to the task. Having been a witness to the suffering of one of many thousands of Cuban families who have had their dreams shattered and their lives ripped apart by the separation of family members, through death, prison or exile, I had the necessary motivation to surmount the many hurdles of the translation of Plantado.

At a time when Communism is crumbling and democracy is being restored in eastern Europe, the situation in Cuba, unbelievably, receives very little world attention. There is a tendency to forget the past atrocities which have taken place in Cuba and to be blind to those which still occur. Some prefer to overlook anything that does not fit their image of Castro. This is strikingly similar to the position of those who, before 1956, when Khrushchev presented his report to the 20th Congress of the USSR Communist Party, considered any denunciation of forced labour camps in the Soviet Union a calumny or a blasphemy. It is time, therefore, to make known, in English, a novel which sheds light on the suffering of tens of thousands of Cubans who escaped execution by firing squad only to languish in Castro's prisons for decades.

Hilda Perera's Plantado was written in the late 1970's, when the very first political prisoners were being released from Castro's prisons due to heavy international pressure. The novel is an accurate and poignant description of prisoners who — despite being subject to the most abject physical and psychological pressures for many years — did not abandon the ideals for which they had fought: honest government, freedom from dictatorial rule, democracy and the welfare of the poor. It is the true story of the hero of Plantado who, in the total isolation of a blackout cell, devotes what little energy is left in his emaciated body, crippled by confinement and hunger, to thinking about a world free from injustice:

"I always returned to the same thought: the Revolution, the betrayed Revolution that might still be saved. I questioned myself again and again: Was it possible to organize a totally industrialized society that would guarantee the basic rights of man without limiting his freedom? ... At times I refuted Marx; communism has as many contradictions as capitalism. It raises the proletariat to power but, in less than a generation, it breeds yet another class anxious to think and create and dissent. Is it necessary to dismember the learned middle class of technicians and specialists, throw them in jail or force them into exile when, just fifteen years hence, another such class will begin fighting for its freedom?

In the blackout cells, right beside me, there were young men, sentenced to twenty years, young proletarians who had already become dissenters. What basic changes were needed so that capitalism could eradicate hunger all over the world? What alternatives were left open to underdeveloped countries, so they wouldn't necessarily have to choose between colonialism and communism? What was the difference between an oligarchy of capital and the oligarchy of power set up by the communists?

Thousands of questions flashed through my mind. I thought of democracy and its shortcomings, of the difficulty of establishing working democracies in underdeveloped countries. I thought of communist slavery. Was it inevitable? No nation had ever overthrown the dictatorship of the proletariat to return to democracy. When would people — specially intellectuals, left-wing bourgeois — realize that Stalinism and communism are always synonymous? When would they understand that communism pretends to fight for justice and stresses nationalism only to establish repression? When would Latin America finally realize the complete failure of the Cuban revolution? How could we convince the hungry men, the workers, the landless, the uneducated, the hopeless, that we, the plantados, were on their side? Would we ever be able to make known to the whole world our tragic experiences as Cuban political prisoners?" (p.141-142)

That is the message of Hilda Perera's Plantado, a message that deserves to be known in the English-speaking world.

CHAPTER 1

THE AUTHOR AND HER MAIN WORKS

Whenever conscience commands anything, there is
only one thing to fear, and that is fear.

— St. Theresa of Jesus, Maxim, c. 1575

1.1 Biographical notice

Hilda Perera, the daughter of Hilda Soto and José Francisco Pérera, a magistrate of the Supreme Court, was born in Cuba in 1926. While attending Baldor, an outstanding secondary school, she received encouragement in her literary vocation from Oscar Fernández de la Vega, Professor of Literature, and a noted educator.

At the early age of 21, she had already demonstrated her writing abilities. In 1947, she won the American Cultural Institute of Havana award for her Biografía de Lincoln. That same year, she published Cuentos de Apolo - a collection of poetic vignettes centred around Apolo, a black child - whose artistic merits have been favourably compared to those of both Platero y yo by Nobel Prize winner J.R. Jimenez and Le Petit Prince by A. Saint-Exupéry.

In 1948, Hilda Perera obtained a one-year full scholarship for academic merit at Western College for Women, Oxford, Ohio where she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1950, she received the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Havana.

From 1948 to 1960, she directed the High School Spanish Department at Ruston Academy in Havana. During that period, she wrote several successful textbooks, each meriting several editions. One of them, La lectura, was published by the National Library of Cuba, where she was course planning counsellor from 1960 to 1962. Another, Cómo escribir para recién alfabetizados, was published by the Cuban National Commission of UNESCO, where she was educational counsellor during the same period.

In 1960 she published her first novel, Mañana es 26 [The 26th is Tomorrow], which reveals the writer's initial enthusiasm for the Revolution. However, she soon became deeply disappointed with the Castro regime, and she left Cuba in 1964 with her husband and two children for Miami, where she still lives.

At the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Hilda Perera obtained her degree of Master of Arts in 1970. One year later, her thesis Idapo: el sincretismo en los cuentos negros de Lydia Cabrera was published. In 1972, Hilda Perera was appointed consultant in a Federal project for the Spanish Curricula Development Centre.

She continued her writing career in her adopted land. An exiled writer, without the backing of her native country, she overcame the obstacles that this fact imposes. In 1972, her novel El sitio de nadie [No man's land], which she

had smuggled out of Cuba, was the first runner-up in the international novel contest sponsored by the publishing house Planeta, and a best-seller in Spain that year. Her novel ¡Felices Pascuas! [Merry Christmas!] was a runner-up in the Nadal Novel Contest of 1975. The Spanish Ministry of Education twice granted her the Lazarillo Award for Children's Literature: once in 1975, for her book Cuentos para chicos y grandes, and again, in 1978, for her collection of short stories for children Podría ser que una vez. Pericopín, another collection of short stories for children was included in the Honours List for the best children's books published in Spanish in 1980. Besides the pre-primer reader La pata pita vuelve and many short stories for children, Perera wrote two novels for children: Mai (1983) and Kike (1984). The many editions of these novels attest to their success.

In addition to her writing activities, Perera has lectured in many cities of the United States and Spain and has been a guest speaker at meetings of prestigious literary associations. Once a co-editor and editor of women's magazines, she is also a free-lance writer for newspapers, especially those of the Miami area.

Besides her many literary awards, Perera has received the Floridiana Award given by the Cuban Women's club to the ten most prominent women in Florida; she is an honorary member of the National Foreign Languages Honour Society, and has been included in the Pequeño Larousse dictionary and the Dictionary of Minority Women of the United States.

1.2 Perera's novels of the Cuban revolution

Hilda Perera's writings have been deeply influenced by the Cuban Revolution, which she began by supporting and ended up reviling and fleeing. Five of her novels have the Cuban Revolution as a backdrop.

Mañana es 26 [The 26th is Tomorrow], published in 1960, is the only novel of the romantic period of the Revolution written by a woman, and the only novel in which Perera presents an optimistic view of the Revolution. It is the story of the risky activities of underground groups who fought against Batista. The main plot revolves around urban revolutionaries, most of them university students, who are engaged in propaganda, terrorist activities, and supplying arms to Castro's guerrillas in the Oriente mountains.

Intertwined with the main plot which revolves around upper- and middle-class revolutionaries is a subplot about the lack of comprehension the heroes find from their parents. The enthusiasm and idealism of the young revolutionaries clash with the disbelief of the older generation, who point out that the fall of the dictator Machado in 1933 did not put an end to the evils afflicting Cuba.

Another subplot is the story of the life of a poor peasant. In other novels about the Revolution published in 1959-1960, characters from the lower classes

are almost totally absent. The presence of a peasant in Mañana es 26 is, therefore, extraordinary and serves to contrast the frivolous way of life of the main character, Doña Teresa, and the miserable conditions of her servants, who usually come from large poor peasant families. It is through this peasant that we are made aware of the author's social preoccupations:

"Sometimes we ate; sometimes we didn't. Sometimes we had shoes, sometimes we went barefoot. Sometimes we could afford medicine, sometimes we had to do without. Sometimes we were able to get meat, sometimes we couldn't get any for a long time. In this way, I raised my son, ploughing, washing clothes — just look at my hands! ... He had just turned 16 when one day they came and accused him of being a rebel."

Although this novel, published in 1960, ends with the arrival of Castro in Havana in 1959, the dialogue reflects the ideological crisis of the Revolution during Castro's first year in power. For Rafael, the young revolutionary, the revolution is not Communist ("even the Communists know that! [...] The Revolution's intentions are to implant Social Justice, with its own methods. Fidel calls this 'humanism'" (p.33-34). Rafael stresses the need for agrarian reform and the establishment of protectionist barriers to restructure the Cuban economy. He sees the implications of the Revolution in a much wider context: "In Cuba, we are going to find out whether profound economic transformations can be carried out in Latin America within the framework of institutional democracy, or whether this requires, inevitably, a leftist dictatorship" (page 34).

El sitio de nadie [No man's land] (1972), published twelve years after Mañana es 26, reconstructs the environment of crisis and confusion which surrounded the first three years following the revolutionary victory of 1959, a period of transition in Cuban history, during which Castro deviated from and eventually abandoned the original democratic principles of the Revolution. It is the story of the bourgeoisie who organized and supported the struggle against a dictator to restore a certain way of life, only to fall prey to the destructive forces they themselves had unleashed. It is a dramatization of the unexpected measures and changes which shattered the institutions of the old society and replaced them with a revolutionary mystique based on the utopic vision of a society totally dedicated to the process of social and economic transformation.

This novel of undeniable merit does not deal with the revolution as an historic event of epic dimensions, but rather with the way it affected the lives of the people who lived through it. The chaos of the period of social and political upheaval is conveyed by the large number of characters drawn from all sectors of society, who are trapped by the oppressing changes in society. Each character struggles to find self-fulfilment and to attain a meaningful place in a society shaken by contradictory objectives. The novel reflects the Cuban idiosyncrasy of smiling and even laughing in the most bitter or desperate of situations. The humour found on many pages seems to be an antidote to tragic events in a convulsed society.

Three families personify the bourgeoisie, for whom the original revolution gradually becomes a monster that devours its children. Teresa, the main character, tries to justify some of the changes, even though they lead to her own destruction. Her internal conflict and indecision explain the title of the novel: Teresa is psychologically torn apart in no-man's-land. After three years of painful indecision, she finally realizes that for the revolution the bourgeoisie is but an enemy to be destroyed:

"The bourgeois or the counter-revolutionaries are not people ... Those of us who are on the left are all the same: there is no difference between Black and White, worker and intellectual, farmer and artist. But this is not the case with the bourgeois: they can neither see nor feel. They have no blood in their veins, merely privileges; their wounds bleed only injustice." (p. 220)

This is the climax of the novel: since she is a bourgeois and cannot modify her past, Teresa realizes that as a human being she has no rights left and her only option is to flee her country.

Through the psychological portrait of a person who suffered the effects of the political events, Hilda Perera describes the gradual disillusionment of those who conceived the revolution and made it possible, their sense of betrayal, and their final realization that they had no rights left since their original ideals had been replaced with a markedly different ideology. Above all, the novel presents an unshakeable belief in human equality.

¡Felices Pascuas! [Merry Christmas] (1977) is very different from Perera's previous novels. It is a psychological close-up of a Cuban woman in exile in Miami, as she approaches menopause, that disturbing time of life when the end is in sight, when one realizes that aging is inevitable. But aging involves more than wrinkled skin and white hair; it brings with it the realization that one is no longer a pillar of support for one's children, their magic antidote against all fears.

The inner turmoil of the protagonist is closely analyzed. The search for identity, loyalty to one's ethnic roots and the complexity of human relationships are also key themes. In this narrative, the relationship between the mother, who is the protagonist, her husband, her son and his girlfriend is the vehicle used to re-create the life of Cubans living in a foreign country. The book is full of scenes portraying the life of Cuban exiles in Miami, and the author makes many allusions to Cuban places, institutions and customs. The author uses many Cuban words and expressions as well as English ones, which clearly reflect language use among exiles in Miami. The novel also underlines some problems typical of American society which threaten the younger generation: broken families, drugs, permissiveness, all inevitably leading to a tragic outcome.

Of all Perera's books, ¡Felices Pascuas! lacks her usual sense of humour, which generally attenuates the grimness of life. Among the greatest merits of Felices Pascuas are its impeccable structure and the creation of strong, complex characters, portraying the complexity of human beings.

Plantado (1981) is a strong accusation against human rights violations in Castro's regime. In it, Hilda Perera presents in direct, bare and impressive prose the conditions of political prisoners in Cuban jails. The novel contains more than one protagonist who is the symbol of endurance and dignity. The core of the novel is the inferno of thousands of men living in subhuman conditions. Armenteros, the "hero", is not only a character, but a symbol of many different men who suffered a common fate: humiliation while in prison, and even death as their ultimate freedom. Plantado presents much information about life and events in the Cuban prisons, but it is the literary elements that give the novel its strong impact.

Kike (1984) is a short novel written for children. It presents the funny and tragic events of Cuban children sent into exile to escape unacceptable conditions in their homeland. They enter a different society, in which the language is a major obstacle to overcome. The ordeals of Kike are many: among other things, he is given refuge in different homes. He suffers from loneliness, fear and hunger, and has difficulty adjusting to new customs and a different school system until he finds a home where there is an abundance of respect and especially of love for each member of the family, including the newcomer. The arrival from Cuba, after some years, of Kike's parents creates a clash between generations and adds to the clash between two ways of life.

The basic concepts found in Kike, subtly reiterated throughout, are loyalty and pride in one's ethnic origins, and a refusal to accept any type of

discrimination, whether it is against Jews, Puerto Ricans, Blacks or Indians. Humour is, once again, an important element of the novel, and is used by Perera to facilitate understanding of the values presented: smiles, or laughter, reinforce the truth and make it palatable. Kike presents historical information under the veil of comic episodes, and suggests that the clashes between the North American and Cuban ways of life may not be irreconcilable.

The *leitmotifs* of all Perera's works are her democratic creed, her concern for freedom, and her insistence on the need to work for the well-being of those who are dispossessed. This is especially true of her novels dealing directly or indirectly with the Cuban revolution. In Mañana es 26, the young novelist voices her concerns about the future of her convulsed nation and creates accurate, vivid portraits of construction workers and poor people. In El Sitio de Nadie, in the full maturity of her creative talents, Perera shows the dramatic consequences of Castro's abandonment of the original democratic principles of the Revolution and gives us a masterful gallery of portraits of militia men, each one an individual personality. The material prosperity of the heroine of Felices Pascuas does not blind her to the absurdity of a society which spends more money on dog food than on relieving the hunger of the poor children of Bangladesh. Plantado's vivid portrayal of terror in the tropical Gulag depicts the courageous fight of Cuban political prisoners against Castro's total contempt for the lives and suffering of his opponents, and their willingness to sacrifice the stability of their family and possibly even their own future for the sake of an ideal — human freedom and dignity.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL AND PRISON BACKGROUND

Whilst we have prisons it matters little which of us occupies the cells.

— Bernard Shaw, Maxims for Revolutionists

2.1 Introduction

Plantado, the work I have chosen to translate, is one of Hilda Perera's novels on the Cuban Revolution. In order for a reader to be able to understand it, he must have some knowledge of the political situation in Cuba in the pre- and post-Revolution period. And, since Plantado is a novel of the treatment meted out to political opponents in Castro's prisons, a clear picture of the latter is required if the full horror of the situation of the Plantado is to be appreciated. This chapter thus presents a brief summary of both the political situation and the prison situation in the 1950's and 1960's in Cuba.

2.2 Overview of the Cuban Revolution

Most observers agree that the Cuban Revolution has changed course decisively since 1959. What began as a program of social and political reform within a framework of constitutional democracy and capitalism exploded into a socialist revolution on the Marxist model. Where observers disagree is on the reason for this transformation and on their assessment of the results.

Right-wing opponents of the revolution see the Cuban Revolution, from first to last, as a communist conspiracy with Fidel Castro as its diabolically clever concealed agent who, at the opportune moment, threw off his mask. A less extreme point of view is held by authors such as David Burks who states flatly that "as Castro struggled in the mountains he became in fact increasingly committed to a more radical kind of program" (1964:25). Liberal critics of the Castro regime tend to view the process as a 'betrayal' of the revolution by Castro, and denounce with mingled sorrow and anger the destruction of a beautiful hope. This is the point of view of the main character in Plantado.

All Cubans rejoiced at the overthrow of the Batista tyranny and welcomed Castro's promises of political freedom and social justice for the Cuban people. The nature of the Batista regime had made a violent popular reaction almost inevitable. The rapacity of the leadership, the corruption of the government, the brutality of the police, the regime's indifference to the needs of the people for education, medical care, housing, social justice and economic opportunity — all these, in Cuba as elsewhere, constituted an open invitation to revolution.

The Cuban Revolution could not, however, have succeeded on the basis of guerrilla action alone. It succeeded because of the rejection of the Batista regime by thousands of civilians behind the lines — a rejection which undermined the morale of the superior military forces of Batista and caused them to collapse from within. The reaction of the Cuban people was not just to the cruelty and oppression of the dictatorship, but also to the clear and moving declarations made repeatedly by Castro concerning his plans for postrevolutionary Cuba.

2.3 Opposition to the Batista regime

Opponents of the Batista dictatorship were divided into four basic groups, each with its own method of opposition. One faction of the Auténtico Party, led by former President Ramón Grau San Martín (1944-1948), resorted only to legal opposition, hoping that Batista would repeat his performance of the 1940's and allow himself to be voted out of office. The Auténticos who followed former President Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948-1952) stuck to the traditional Latin American tactic of trying to oust Batista by a military coup. The leaders of the Students Federation, emulating their predecessors of the Machado dictatorship periods, believed in personal terrorism and the physical elimination of Batista and his top officials. Finally, Castro and his small group of young supporters had plans to destroy the Batista regime by means of a civil war launched in the less accessible parts of the countryside but, hopefully, supported by organized groups in the major cities.

Castro had been imprisoned in 1953 after an unsuccessful attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago, the capital of Oriente province. On his release in May 1955, he left Cuba and helped to organize a new group, to be known as the 26th of July Movement (in memory of the Moncada assault). According to Thomas, most of Castro's followers came from the lower-middle or even lower classes, but included many like himself of upper-middle class or provincial upper class (1967:259-260). Throughout 1956 Castro prepared in Mexico for an invasion of Cuba. Former President Prío Socarrás and other exiles in the United States supplied funds with which the rebels bought an old yacht, the Granma.

Slipping away from the Mexican authorities on November 25, 1956 with 82 men, the ship made slow progress. Castro planned to land his men on the southern coast of Cuba, near Santiago de Cuba, at the same time as members of the 26th of July Movement, led by Frank País, its National Coordinator, mounted attacks on government buildings in that city. Unfortunately, the plan misfired. País kept his side of the bargain, assaulting a variety of targets on November 30, 1956. Contrary to expectations, however, no general revolt or even widespread protests accompanied these actions. The rebels in Santiago were quickly rounded up and Batista closed the university; it remained closed until Castro's victory. Castro's force of 81 armed men aboard the yacht did not land until December 2, by which time Batista had restored order with his usual ruthlessness. As if that was not enough, Castro came ashore many miles from Santiago de Cuba and, 72 hours later, walked into an army ambush. Only a few guerrillas survived, forcing Castro to rethink his strategy.

With the 26th of July Movement scattered and his own force decimated, any chance of seizing power by a coordinated military action had clearly disappeared. Faced with this situation, Castro decided to lead his remaining forces into the sparsely populated Sierra Maestra mountains, on the southeastern coast of Cuba, aiming to set up a base. This was in line with Mao Tse-tung's principle of 'revolutionary war', which advocated establishing firm bases of popular support before mounting guerrilla attacks. However, there was little evidence at that time that Castro was following a deliberate policy of communist insurrection.

For the first few weeks, the rebels from the Granma who had escaped the army ambush sought simply to survive in the isolated rugged mountain terrain of eastern Cuba. Contact with the 26th of July Movement was quickly restored: País was able to supply food, money, arms and recruits to Castro. In March 1957, some 58 recruits from Santiago joined the remnants of the original landing party. These were primarily middle-class students or recent graduates. Recruitment into the guerrilla forces was a slow process. By May, 1957, Castro still had only 80 active fighters under his command and even as late as mid-1958 there were barely 300 rebels in the Sierra Maestra. To maintain himself in the mountains, Castro needed the support of the local peasantry and to this end he began to champion their cause. As Draper has pointed out, a few recruits continued to come from the urban middle classes, but by 1958 the majority of the small fighting force consisted of peasants from Oriente under the leadership of urban middle-class intellectuals and students (1965:60).

In the cities as well, the underground rebels against Batista were overwhelmingly middle class and young, except for some old-time political opponents of Batista. But this middle-class following alone proved unable to overthrow the regime. Its weaknesses became evident in the students' failure to assassinate Batista on March 13, 1957 and, more strikingly, in its inability to carry off the strike called by Castro in the spring of 1958. At that time, it is apparent, the organized urban workers still supported Batista, the Communists still regarded Castro as a 'bourgeois putschist,' and the mass of the urban and rural lower classes remained unorganized and probably ignorant of the issues in conflict.

Except toward the very end, Castro commanded only about 1,000 men, and although his support in the cities could be reckoned in the thousands, the vast majority of the population remained aloof from the struggle until it was virtually over. The trade unions for the most part favoured Batista right to the end — they refused to respond to Castro's call for a general strike — but the opposition was, nonetheless, able to influence large numbers of working-class Cubans, mainly the unemployed or partially employed, who were not unionized. Anxious to seize power quickly, Castro wanted to exploit the widespread grievances of various sectors of Cuban society, regardless of their political leanings.

In March 1958, Cuban business leaders and landowners — by now totally fed up with Batista — asked the United States to halt arms sales to the government. Washington was clearly embarrassed by the pervading air of corruption that enveloped the Batista regime; yet both the State Department and the CIA were divided on the issue of whether Castro represented a viable alternative. This debate was of crucial importance. Fresh injections of aid, perhaps with direct intervention by the US government, would have certainly prolonged the struggle and might have tipped the scales in Batista's favour. Cubans of every class joined in the appeal and the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower finally cut off the arms flow.

In the major cities, incidents of bombing and arson became commonplace and these, in turn, provoked savage reprisals from the regime, which seemed prepared to hit out in any direction in an effort to stem the rising tide of opposition. The indiscriminate brutalities inflicted on the urban population by

Batista's police and army only served to drive many previously uncommitted Cubans to side with the rebel cause. The intense terror practised by the Batista regime, which murdered some 20,000 people and injured and jailed thousands more, as well as its extensive and all-pervasive corruption, led to growing support for Castro, who began to capture the imagination of the people.

As the year 1958 progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the Castro forces were gaining momentum and that the revolution was certain to triumph sooner or later. Popular support of the 26th of July Movement mushroomed, while the elements around Batista, political as well as military, showed signs of demoralization. By the end of December, as A. Suárez has succinctly put it, "while some Batista generals were being bribed by the guerilla leaders to avoid any confrontation, other generals were opening negotiations with Castro, the central cities of Cuba began falling to the Rebel Army, and the imposing military machine of the despotic Batista collapsed" (1967:29).

2.4 Castro's promises

During the fight against Batista, Castro promised a free and democratic Cuba dedicated to social and economic justice. It was to attain these goals that the Cuban people turned against Batista, young Cubans joined the guerilla in the mountains, and all elements in favour of revolution finally supported the 26th of July Movement. Because there was widespread belief in Castro's promises and integrity, the accession of his regime to power on January 1, 1959 was met with jubilation throughout Cuba.

As early as 1953, Castro had promised that the first revolutionary law would proclaim the Constitution of 1940 as 'the supreme law of the land' (1959: 33-43). In this and subsequent statements, Castro promised absolute freedom of information, all the individual and political rights guaranteed by the 1940 Constitution, and a provisional government that would hold general elections at the end of one year under the provisions of the Constitution of 1940 and the Electoral Code of 1943 and would then hand over power immediately to the candidate elected. Castro's promises, according to Draper, "contained nothing that had not constituted standard fare of leftist (but non-Communist) political leaders since the early 1930's" (1965:21).

A widespread belief prevailed that political leadership and political institutions had failed the Cuban people. As J. O'Connor has aptly suggested, it is quite possible that some of the business support that accrued to Castro was predicated upon the belief that he would tackle some Cuba's pressing economic problems. After all, he had demonstrated considerable concern with such matters in his Moncada defense (1964: 236-239).

In pursuit of liberal, middle-class support, Castro masked his true political beliefs. For the international press, Castro's voice proclaimed a loud and clear democratic message. In an interview for Look (4 February 1958), when asked to explain his plans once Batista was toppled, Castro answered: "Within a year [...] hold a truly honest election." And he added: "In the 'Sierra Manifesto' issued last year we called for the temporary government to free immediately all political prisoners, restore freedom of the press, reestablish constitutional rights."

He emphatically disclaimed any radical intention on the part of the 26th of July Movement, particularly the nationalization of foreign investments.

In an interview with Castro published in the New York Times (25 February 1958), Homer Bigart wrote that "upon withdrawal of the Government forces, Señor Castro would agree to general elections under President Batista, provided the elections were supervised throughout the island by the Organization of American States." The Bigart interview contained many other interesting passages which throw light on the early strategy of disinformation used by the Castro movement, such as the following: "Señor Castro showed some uneasiness when questioned about his economic and social platforms. The reason is obvious: he is a symbol of a middle-class reform movement rather than of economic and social revolution. His financial support has been derived mainly from wealthy and middle-income groups..." As M. Llerena, one of the authors of the Manifiesto of the 26th of July Movement, clearly puts it, "the highly influential middle class, tired of corrupt, mediocre politics and longing for a decent, progressive, yet free society, believed the Castro movement to be the honest instrument of such an ideal. They provided the moral and financial support without which it is extremely doubtful that the unsuspected Castro revolution could ever have reached power" (1976:191).

2.5 Castro's about-face

In its early stages, the Castro movement had centred around three elements which opposed the military dictatorship of Batista: the youth of Cuba; civic resistance formed of respected political, business, and professional groups; and honest, patriotic officers and men within the Armed Forces. When the Castro forces assumed power in January 1959, the old tradition of middle-class politics seemed assured of reinstatement. The older and more experienced leaders among the opponents of the dictator predominated in the Cabinet; Castro had given repeated assurances of free elections and the restoration of the Constitution of 1940; and many of his followers in the 26th of July Movement, while reformers, were known to be moderate in outlook.

After Castro came to power, a provisional government with a rather indeterminate constitutional basis was established. Castro did not restore the 1940 Constitution, which provided for a strong president, bicameral legislature, and a kind of parliamentary regime. The Castro regime issued a provisional constitutional document, modifying that of 1940. Elections were promised within eighteen months, but Castro later declared elections unnecessary. In theory, the social and economic provisions of the 1940 Constitution remained in force, but its political sections were 'temporarily' set aside because of the revolutionary situation prevailing. Castro announced, however, in early 1959, as he had done during the fighting, that he did intend to hold general elections and to restore the Constitution of 1940.

Political confusion and uncertainty prevailed during the first few weeks after the fall of the old regime. Castro, at first, assumed no official position except that of commander of the armed forces, while provisional President Manuel Urrutia appointed a civilian cabinet composed predominantly of the older and more experienced political opponents of Batista. Throughout Cuba, however, real power at the local level lay with the young commanders of the rebel army. Army officers occupied key positions in the civil administration.¹ Castro, the great national hero, continued his speech-making, in the course of which he often announced major public policies without prior consultation with the cabinet. In an attempt to bridge this gap between the theoretical and actual holders of power, Prime Minister Miró Cardona resigned in favour of Castro in mid-February 1959.

With the assumption by Fidel Castro of the post of Prime Minister in February 1959, real executive power passed to that office; the president became little more than a figurehead. In July 1959, Castro forced Manuel Urrutia from the presidency, and all of the moderates in the cabinet were replaced by men of the radical left and of unquestioning loyalty to Castro. Several were or had been members of the [Communist] People's Socialist Party (PSP). Raúl Castro became minister of the armed forces, and Guevara president of the National Bank and, in effect, czar of the national economy. It became clear that the more conservative and moderate elements of the revolution, regardless of age or

¹ Later, the 'Rebel Army' was drastically purged.

previous alignments, were being systematically eliminated, and more radical leaders, both young and old, were taking control.

During the first ten months of the Castro regime, a number of groups that had participated in the anti-Batista struggle, including the Communists, functioned openly, although none were granted the legal status of a political party. Starting at the end of October 1959, however, Castro began to suppress all groups except his own 26th of July Movement, the Students' Revolutionary Directorate, and the Communist Party. He purged the anti-Communist members of the first two groups from leadership positions in the government, the trade union movement, and other organizations. Throughout the process ultimate power, as distinguished from titles and positions, rested in Fidel Castro. The new men coming to prominence in his wake represented, first of all, the leaders and organizers of the PSP and, secondly, the more radical leaders of the 26th of July Movement. The older generation of political leaders was forced out of politics and their political parties forbidden. The PSP became the only legally recognized party. The labour union leadership was purged and replaced by Communists, and the 26th of July Movement was downgraded because of the strength of moderate and anti-Communist forces within it.

However, throughout this early period, Castro continued to declare that he was certainly not a member of the Communist Party, though he also rejected Capitalism, and he took pains to point out in his early speeches that his was a 'humanist' revolution. He repeatedly declared that he could not side either with Capitalism, which sacrifices man, nor with Communism which, because of its

totalitarian nature, sacrifices the rights of man. The ideology sounded impressive, but it was coolly received by many Cuban liberals who had supported Castro against Batista, who were beginning to understand that Castro was establishing a Communist state closely allied with the Soviet Union.²

For about a year and a half, the Revolution had no defined ideological position, although Marxists and Communists clearly dominated political and economic activities. In July 1960 Che Guevara defined Castro's movement as 'applied Marxism'. The drift toward Communist control intensified, and on May 1, 1961, Castro officially proclaimed Cuba a Socialist state on the Soviet model. The formation of a new party merging the remainder of Castro's personal followers with the Communists was announced on July 26. From then until March 1962, organization of the new party was in the hands of leaders of the old Communist Party. In that month Castro denounced the behaviour of the old Communists and assumed the secretary generalship of the new party, the Unified Party of the Cuban Socialist Revolution (Partido Unificado de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba) which, in 1971, adopted the name 'Cuban Communist Party'.

After the revolution unveiled its Marxist-Leninist designs, a few moderates turned opportunist and jumped on the bandwagon; but most, when they finally realized what had taken place, began to cry foul, claiming that the revolution had been betrayed. So originated the concept of the 'betrayed revolution' which

² It was only on December 2, 1961, during a radio-TV broadcast, that Castro clearly proclaimed, "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will be one until the day I die." Castro went on to admit that he had concealed his Communist views in order to court 'bourgeois' support during his rise to power.

became a bitter lament among disappointed Cubans. M. Llerena points out that the truth in this charge depends on what meaning one assigns to the term 'revolution': "From a moderate standpoint, the Cuban revolution amounted basically to the ethical reform of public life, complemented by a series of vaguely defined socioeconomic and educational reforms [...] The popular clamour was for the restoration of the 1940 Constitution, not for its substitution. No major change was contemplated in the fundamental democratic structure of society, much less its transformation into a totalitarian order [...] It is in this sense that the idea of a 'betrayed revolution' acquires a ring of ethical legitimacy. For in taking advantage of massive popular support while conspiring to make Cuba a communist satellite, Castro and his close associates did commit an act of treason — not only against the middle class that credulously carried them to power but against Cuba's historical legacy as well." (1976:251)

Despite earlier promises to establish a democratic state, the Cuban government banned political opposition, outlawed free speech and an independent press, and threw thousands of political critics into prison. The history of the Castro Revolution has been the history of the destruction of both the free-spirited guerrilla army who fought against Batista and the 26th of July Movement, which was superseded as the main political force by the Communist Party. It has been the history of the disillusionment, persecution, imprisonment, exile, and execution of men and women who originally supported Castro and in many cases fought side by side with him, but who later doomed themselves by trying to make his regime live up to his own promises. Seldom in history has a revolution so rapidly devoured its children.

2.6 Political prisoners in Cuban prisons — from colonial times to Castro

The mistreatment of political opponents in Cuba by no means began with Castro. The horrors of life for political prisoners in Cuban jails have been depicted and decried since colonial times. In 1871, from his exile in Madrid, José Martí who, two decades later, would be the main organizer of Cuba's final war of independence against Spain, wrote El presidio político en Cuba in which he described the harsh conditions and hard labour imposed on him when he was barely sixteen for expressing support for the fight for independence which had broken out in 1868.

Conditions in prison during Machado's ruthless regime (1925-1933) were denounced by Pablo de la Torriente Brau, a writer, journalist and revolutionary militant who would later join the International Brigades and die in Spain in 1938 fighting against fascism. In his memoirs, Torriente Brau described the brutal conditions he witnessed during his confinement in the prison on the Isle of Pines (which he nicknamed the island "of the five hundred assassinations".)

The police persecution and episodic torture of members of the underground opposing Batista's dictatorship (1952-1958) were the subject of some important short stories, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante's fifteen one-page vignettes published in Así en la paz como en la guerra (1960): these vignettes, numbered, but with no title, are compact, scenes which portray the

various kinds of beatings, tortures and senseless murders both revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries alike were subject to.

During the Batista years, the outrages of the police and security forces were committed mainly during the pursuit, detention and interrogation of opponents by the police and security forces. However, once the family of a revolutionary got word that they were being held in a police precinct, it was usually possible to exert pressure to have the detainee appear before a court. And, the existence of a judicial system largely independent from the dictator made it possible for those accused to get fair trials. Once sentenced, their lives were spared and their constitutional rights were respected.

Although no major literary work was ever written about conditions in Batista's prisons, many newspaper articles and letters do exist which attest to the fact that life in prison was, at least, bearable. Fidel Castro, the most famous political prisoner of that time, admitted as much himself. Sent to the Model Prison on the Isle of Pines, south of Cuba, in 1953, Castro spent several months as a prisoner, not in a cell but in an area of the hospital reserved exclusively for him. In a letter written by Castro on April 4, 1955 he said:

"I get sun several hours every afternoon, and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in the morning too. A big empty yard, completely closed in by a gallery. I spend many very pleasant hours there. [...] I'm going to have dinner — spaghetti and squid, Italian chocolate for dessert, with fresh-brewed coffee, and an H. Upmann No. 4 [cigar] to finish off. Don't you envy me? They take care of me, everybody does his little bit to take care

of me ... They won't listen to me — I'm always fighting with them so they won't send things in to me. When I'm getting my sun in the morning in shorts and I feel the breeze off the ocean, I feel like I'm on the beach — and then off to a little restaurant. They're going to make me think I'm on vacation! What would Karl Marx say about such revolutionaries?" (1976:97) (my translation).

In another letter written in June of the same year, Castro says:

"They opened my cell up into another apartment four times bigger, with a big patio open from seven in the morning till nine-thirty at night. Prison personnel do the cleaning, we sleep with the lights out, there are no headcounts or lining up all day, we get up whenever we want to — I didn't ask for these improvements, it goes without saying. Plenty of water, electric lights, food, clean clothes, and all for free. No rent. Think things are any better "over there"? (1976: 105) (my translation).

2.7 Political imprisonment in Cuba under Castro

After Castro took power in 1959, the horrors of prison life would reach unprecedented heights. Castro not only denied to his opponents the amenities he himself had enjoyed just five years before, but he violated all fundamental human rights of prisoners. Whatever gains Communist Cuba may have made in the name of economic 'equality', its failure in the realm of personal and political liberty has been monumental.

Castro's mistreatment of political opponents goes back to the early days of his regime. In early 1960, opposition to Castro led to the formation of guerrilla groups in various parts of Cuba, most notably in the Escambray

mountains. Castro reacted by launching a massive military operation and by ruthlessly 'relocating' tens of thousands of peasants. The women and children of the campesino families in the areas where the guerrillas operated were separated from the men and shut up in houses in a section of Havana as though they were in jail. Several families would be packed into each house. Young women had to go into the country to work on farms while the older women among them stayed behind to care for the children. This situation lasted for years during which time they were never permitted to see their husbands or brothers. The men were taken to the inhospitable Guanajacabibes peninsula, the most westerly part of Cuba, hundreds of kilometres away from the theatre of war and their families in Havana, where they were put to hard labour on farms and on the construction of Sandino Concentration Camps 1, 2, and 3, which still exist. Although they were never brought before a tribunal, these campesinos were prisoners all the same; they were threatened with execution if they tried to escape, and were told that reprisals would be taken against their relatives if they failed to obey.

Castro has resorted, over the years, to a variety of such schemes to jail opponents to his regime under a cloak of legitimacy. One of his most ignominious schemes was the creation, in the mid-sixties, of the Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP) [Production Support Military Units]. The 1963 Law of Compulsory Military Service made conscription for all males between the ages of 17 and 45 mandatory for the first time in Cuba's

history. This allowed the Castro regime to round up thousands of dissident students, homosexuals and men of various religious persuasions and send them to the most remote areas to do forced labour, under the pretence that they were serving their three-year term of military service. The nightmare of the UMAP camps in the province of Camagüey between 1965 and 1968 was described in a direct, sincere and restrained style by Beltrán de Quirós³ in Los unos, los otros y el seibo (1971). His twelve short stories, each two to three pages long, describe very effectively the lack of liberty and exhausting forced labour in the sugar cane fields endured by Cuban youth.

During his three decades in power, Castro has made many efforts to conceal the huge numbers of political prisoners, and has even denied the existence of political prisoners in Cuba. In 1967, the authorities launched a plan to make the category of 'political prisoner' disappear by forcing all political prisoners to wear the blue uniform — the same uniform worn by the common prisoners. The rationale behind this undertaking was that Castro's regime recognized only one class of prisoner — the common prisoner — and therefore all prisoners had to wear the same uniform.

At the same time, the regime intensified its efforts to force all political prisoners to agree to 'political rehabilitation'. The Political Rehabilitation Program is comprised of three 'phases'. During phase one, 'maximum security',

³ Pen name of Jorge Luis Romeu.

the prisoner is held in prison. During phase two, 'medium security', prisoners are sent to forced labour camps called 'granjas' ['farms'], located in strategic areas where workers are most needed. Finally, during phase three, 'minimum security', also called 'phase of re-insertion [into society]', prisoners are sent to forced labour sites, work sites run by the military, called 'frentes abiertos' ['open fronts'], to which workers are assigned for an indeterminate period. The officer in charge of re-education decides the duration of each phase. The goal of re-education is to bring the prisoners to a state of physical and psychological extenuation in order to force them to submit.

According to Carlos Franqui who, before his defection in 1968 after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, was Castro's main propagandist, editor of the official newspaper of the 26th of July Movement and Castro's personal biographer:

"The Cuban prison system has no end. Prisoners pass from a prison to a labour camp, and sometimes get short periods of conditional freedom, only to be sent back to a military camp, according to the whims of the police. For the regime, opponents are 'sick' people, and the police are their 'doctors'. Prisoners are released only when they inspire confidence in the police. If the prisoner does not accept the 'treatment', time halts. Those who are innocent must declare themselves guilty. Revolutionaries, socialists, and communists, arbitrarily arrested, rot and die in prison. [Plantados] have steadfastly refused to declare themselves guilty, or to repent. Therefore, they do not get any consideration, and the 'rehabilitation phases' do not apply to them. They have to serve their whole sentence in the most dreadful prisons. And once they have served their sentence, the sentence is automatically renewed, because these prisoners refuse to repent and accept 'rehabilitation' through hard labour" (1978:81) (my translation).

Pierre Golendorf, a member of the French Communist Party who spent over three years in Castro's prisons, has given a vivid description of conditions in the 'frentes abiertos':

"With some exceptions, work is so hard and hours are so long, from twelve to fifteen hours a day (and if a truck loaded with cement bags shows up at one o'clock in the morning, there is no question of making it wait; all prisoners must be on their feet, and, after the truck is unloaded, stand in line for the showers before going back to bed, if it is not already time to get up) that, after a few months, prisoners are totally exhausted. Despite a semblance of freedom, a monthly pass, and more abundant food than they received on the 'granja' or in prison, some prisoners desert, spend a few days or a few hours at home, and give themselves up again. This is the beginning of a new infernal cycle: prison, 'granja', 'frente abierto'." (1982:15-16) (my translation).

The above conditions apply to the prisoners who agree to undergo 'political rehabilitation'. For those who 'stick to their guns', the plantados, Castro's regime has even less consideration, treating them with a total contempt for human rights. In the early 1970's, prisoners in "blackout cells" in Boniato prison were subjected to biological experiments devised by both Cuban and Eastern European scientists to study the effects of diet composition, caloric restriction, creation of disorienting situations and the manipulation of wasting diseases on human beings. For instance, in order to alter the inmates' metabolism, the authorities would put too much salt in the food for several weeks, then, they would totally eliminate the salt for a while. Men who suffered from kidney disorders and blood-pressure problems were devastated by these experiments. There were many cases of pellagra, scurvy, edema, and other

similar diseases due to malnutrition. Valladares describes the effects of these nutritional experiments:

"Our diet was designed to bring on deficiency diseases and metabolic disorders. Food, consisting only of carbohydrates and a greasy broth, was weighed and measured. Cornmeal, or sometimes a mixture of rice and boiled macaroni, was basically our only source of nutrition. We calculated that we were receiving less than a thousand calories a day. Soon, the results of undernourishment, of eating food completely lacking in protein and vitamins, began to be evident. We seemed to grow thinner day by day, hour by hour. Hunger made our stomachs gnaw at themselves. It was during that time that I began to have dreams of a table set with all sorts of food, a luxurious banquet. Hunger became an obsession, but not a single man among us gave in because of it. The months passed monotonously, with no event to differentiate one day from another, one month from another." (1984:303)

Prisoners were also subjected to psychological experiments. Members of the Department of Psychiatric Evaluation of the Political Police periodically subjected the prisoners to interrogations to see whether they would yield the results they were hoping for. They insisted that the prisoners tell them what times of the day they felt the best and the worst, what bothered them the most, what they dreamed about, whether they thought about their families frequently, etc. Some men who were locked up for years in those tiny blackout cells lost their sense of balance and were unable to walk a straight line when released. There were men whose vision was permanently affected by their years in darkness.

In addition to being subjected to these sophisticated biological and psychological experiments, prisoners were also physically abused on a daily basis. Valladares, who spent years in Boniato vividly recalls terror in blackout cells:

"We never knew who might be walking along the corridors. We could only hear the sound of footsteps from time to time or see fugitive shadows passing in front of the chink in the hinges of the door. They no longer gave us beatings at specific times — sometimes several days would pass without beatings, and then suddenly they would burst in, at any hour of the day or night. So there was no rest. At the slightest noise, you'd jump awake, thinking the entire garrison was outside your cell. It was better when they were beating us only at the headcounts in the morning and evening, because between one beating and the next you knew you could have a few hours of peace. Sometimes their tactics were even more refined — shrieking and screaming, they'd beat on the doors with their rifle butts and weapons, shake the locks and chains, and yell at the soldier who carried the keys, "Open this cell, open this cell!" And then they wouldn't come in, they'd go away, while you sat there in unbearable tension and anxiety. The adrenaline had started pumping and all your body's defenses were at work to prepare you for the aggression. The guards did this frequently, and since sometimes they did in fact come back and beat you, I was always anxious, my stomach was always balled into a knot." (1984:305)

In the early 1980's, hard pressed for credits from Western countries to prop up his crumbling economy, Castro bowed to international pressure and gradually released most of the political prisoners who were still alive after having spent 20 to 25 years in the most inhuman conditions. Just as they were being released, however, Castro began a new crackdown on dissidents.

Like Cuban dictators of the past, Castro permits no political freedom and operates a wide network of informers who report the slightest anti-government

activity of any individual. In Cuba, any expression of doubt or criticism is suspect and dealt with in typical Stalinist fashion: workers are assigned to hard and low-paying jobs, students are expelled from University, dissidents' families are threatened and persecuted, and prisoners are subjected to all the refined methods of torture that the Cuban G-2 learned from the KGB.

The political prisoners released are far outnumbered by the thousands of prisoners of conscience who remain in prison, often under the most vile conditions, for nothing more than opposing the Communist state. Cuba remains one of the countries with the highest number of political prisoners per capita in the world. These are not people convicted of violent acts of rebellion, but rather peasants who resisted collective farming, workers who tried to organize free unions, people who tried to leave the country without permission, former revolutionaries who expressed 'counterrevolutionary' views, and youths who refused to sacrifice themselves in Angola at the command of Castro.

CHAPTER 3

PLANTADO

The man who faces and who fears the right things and from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave.

— Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. III, ch. 7, 1115b, lines 16-18

3.1 Comparison with other major works on the subject by Cuban authors

Plantado is one of three major works dealing with life in Castro's prisons by Cuban authors. The other two are Perromundo (1974), by Carlos Alberto Montaner and Contra toda esperanza [Against All Hope] (1985) by Armando Valladares. Hilda Perera's Plantado (1981), the only book ever written by a woman on the condition of political prisoners in Cuban jails, differs in many respects from the other two, which will be briefly presented below for purposes of comparison.

Montaner, author of the novel *Perromundo*, has personal experience of Castro's prisons. He had been involved in the underground movement against Batista at the tender age of sixteen. Just a year after Castro came to power, he and his classmates at the Faculty of Law opposed his regime. Arrested in late 1960, Montaner was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Before being transferred to the Isle of Pines prison, he escaped from Pity Fajardo (a prison for minors),

then took refuge in the embassy of Venezuela, and eventually got a safe-conduct out of Cuba.

Montaner's novel incorporates many techniques in vogue among modern Latin American novelists. For instance, the story is told in the first person when the main character encounters other people; the second person is used to report the advice the main character gets from his subconscious; finally, in some chapters, the author resorts to the all-knowing third person to narrate what happens to each prisoner. The setting at the beginning of the novel is a prison. However, the novel consists of a series of flashbacks, with the action jumping backwards several times, forcing the reader to reconstruct events in the lives of the main characters. Perromundo is a successful effort at universalizing the Cuban experience. To this effect, Montaner never mentions the places of arrest, trial and confinement of the main characters, nor the names of Cuban historical personalities. The author also avoids Cuban colloquialisms and expressions.

Armando Valladares' *Contra Toda Esperanza [Against All Hope]* is not a work of fiction, but rather a powerful account of the continuous violations of human rights and wretched living conditions in Castro's prisons. Valladares spent 22 years in Castro's prisons and was released in a wheel-chair thanks to the relentless efforts of many groups in several countries, including Amnesty International, and the direct intercession of French President François Mitterand.

Valladares' memoirs begin with his arrest and end with his release from prison. The author specifies names, places and dates to tell the stories of hundreds of political prisoners whom he met during his years of confinement in Castro's most dreadful prisons all over Cuba. In his memoirs, he describes vividly the prison system; the abject conditions in which prisoners live; the atrocities; the shootings; his escape from the Isle of Pines prison and his subsequent recapture. Probably the most poignant part of Valladares' book is his description of the years spent in the dreaded blackout cells. The author also comments on political events which occurred during that period, both in Cuba and abroad.

Hilda Perera's *Plantado* combines fiction with historical facts. This novel is remarkable in many respects. It is not only the only novel about life in Cuban prisons ever written by a woman, but the only such novel written by a person who was never in prison herself, nor had any close relatives in jail. Perera was able to produce an accurate and vivid portrayal of real events in Castro's prisons, in all their brutality, based on conversations held with former political prisoners, or with their relatives. The novel shows all the cruelty of a political regime that not only changes the main character's life for the worse, but destroys his marriage and seriously affects the lives of all members of his family.

Although the events in Plantado extend over twelve years and life in solitary confinement can be agonizingly slow, the quick pace of the narration

contrasts with that of other novels dealing with life in prison, such as Solzhenitsyn's A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, where the plot seems to drag on. The continuous transfers between prisons stress the terror in which the prisoners live in the tropical Gulag. Time flows in a straight line. The novel is narrated entirely in the first person by the main character, who recalls the twelve years he spent in many prisons in Castro's Cuba. The dialogues, always in the present tense, have the conciseness typical of a play. The past tense is used sparingly in the narration; the present tense, which dominates throughout, serves to heighten the vividness of the memories. Perera does not include many reminiscences and retrospective visions, and the few that the novel does contain are there merely to clarify, justify, or round off events behind prison walls.

Perera mentions places, dates and the names of scores of prisoners, but omits the names of the killers because, as she declares in the short prologue, it is not her role "to perpetuate hatred". She also mentions some *causes célèbres* of the Human Rights Movement, such as those of the Cuban poets Jorge Valls and Armando Valladares, who were still in prison at that time.

The issue of political prisoners in a totalitarian regime is treated from a purely Cuban perspective. In contrast to the meek Ivan Denisovitch in Solzhenitsyn's novel, or the conformist character in Koestler's Darkness at Noon, these Cuban prisoners become plantados, rebels within their prisons. Perera's skilful images and vivid descriptions of the various prisons are combined with a

wealth of Cuban expressions and prison jargon to create an unequivocally Cuban setting for this story of man's wit and courage in his unending struggle against oppression.

3.2 Synopsis of Plantado.

Presented below is a synopsis of Plantado, intended to provide the reader with an overall idea of the novel and situate the translated excerpts. The disruption of family life serves as the theme uniting the passages chosen for this commented translation. The translated passages not only illustrate the toll that imprisonment takes on family relationships, but also shed light on the rounding up of political prisoners, conditions in the prisons, the 'justice' system under Castro, and the brutality of the prison system and the guards. Finally, the excerpts chosen show the lengths to which plantados would go to defy the system, and reveal their indomitable loyalty to their ideals despite the utter hopelessness of their situation. In the synopsis below, translated passages are indicated in italics.

The novel begins when Armenteros, a Cuban lawyer in his mid-thirties, is arrested by G-2 (secret police) men who barge into his home armed with submachine guns. Armenteros' wife, Irene, is taken by surprise; she has ignored her husband's

underground activities and is indifferent to Cuba's political turmoil. Her only concern is for the safety of her husband and their three children.

Armenteros is taken to G-2 headquarters and kept isolated for weeks of interrogation and mistreatment. He is then transferred to La Cabaña fortress, where he meets old friends, hears the rifle fire of executions and suffers the unbearable treatment given to political prisoners.

In Armenteros' trial, his father, a lawyer and a former judge, acts as his son's attorney, but his impassioned defense succeeds only in reducing Armenteros' prison term to twelve years. Armenteros has a dramatic reunion with his wife and urges her to divorce him. Irene refuses, thinking her husband will eventually accept a "rehabilitation program" proposed by Fidel Castro.

When all his daring plans of escape from La Cabaña fail, Armenteros seeks to be transferred to the hospital in Castillo del Príncipe prison, hoping to escape from the prison hospital, or, at the very least, be permitted to see his family. Only a major injury will get him into the prison hospital, so he kicks his iron cot until he fractures the bones in his left foot. Irene tries desperately to coax him into accepting the costly intervention of Donovan, the lawyer who negotiated the freedom of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. Armenteros flatly refuses, arguing that he is not for sale. Irene then accuses him of selfishness and irresponsibility towards their children.

She later realizes her marriage is doomed when Armenteros is transferred back to La Cabaña and then to the Isle of Pines prison compound.

On the Isle of Pines, Armenteros faces a grim choice between the rehabilitation program or forced labour in the fields. A born leader, he favours organized resistance, but is confronted with a lack of unity among political prisoners and the atrocities committed by the guards. He joins the starving men who, devoid of all human rights, suffer the slavery of forced labour.

Armenteros' best friend dies when the guards deny him medical assistance. Some of the prisoners resort to self-mutilation to avoid forced labour. One of them severs his toe and sends it to the lieutenant wrapped in brown paper; others rebel in the labour camps and are either wounded or killed.

The guards react by ordering strip searches at any time of the day or night; the prisoners burn their clothes, refuse to work and go to roll call half-naked, with a towel around their necks, as a symbol of defiance. There is constant conflict between the savagery of the guards and the mounting rebellion of the prisoners.

When one man is killed with a bayonet and two others are gunned down, rebellion turns into mutiny. Prepared to wreak havoc, the prisoners ready the water tanks to hurl them at the guards, and raise an infernal din clanging their

plates and spoons against the iron bars. The inmates who had brought in the bodies of the slain men jump on the platoon, trying to grab their rifles; many are wounded. A half-crazed corporal barges into the building ready to shoot.

All of the political prisoners unite in the rebellion and organized resistance. In the midst of hell, they celebrate workers' and students' congresses; they print a newspaper and prepare for the liberation of Cuba. Unable to break them, the government decides to dismantle the Isle of Pines compound and separate the rebels, or "Plantados," by transferring them to different prisons throughout the island.

Back at La Cabaña, a plan is devised by the authorities to confront the prisoners with their pleading relatives. Armenteros again refuses to put on the uniform of the common prisoners, and Irene realizes her husband's unflinching determination to continue fighting. Her attitude contrasts with that of Cari, Armenteros' sister, who has always understood and accepted her brother's firm stand.

Irene becomes adamant about Armenteros accepting a rehabilitation program when their eldest daughter, Tere, bravely confronts her schoolmates' threat to condemn her to forced labour in the countryside. Armenteros decides that his wife and children must leave Cuba, but Irene refuses, on the grounds that he must first accept the rehabilitation program, which would lead eventually to his release and their future reunion. Unmoved, Armenteros remains rebellious. After unsuccessfully

pleading with the guards to let the children say goodbye to their father, Irene finally leaves for Mexico. In a bitter letter, Irene accuses her husband of being a Quixote and hurls Armenteros into a turmoil of agonized confusion and self-recrimination. Yet, he continues to pledge himself to the cause of human freedom and dignity.

After he has joined a hunger strike which lasts 21 days and which brings him to the brink of death, Armenteros' sister and father break the news to him that Irene has asked for a divorce. Defiantly, almost ruthlessly, Armenteros asks his father to act as his lawyer in the divorce proceedings and makes it clear to him that he is determined to keep custody of his children.

Later, his children's letters make Armenteros realize the hardships they face in adjusting to a different country, and he is tempted to appeal his sentence. However, another hunger strike breaks out and Armenteros feels forced to accept the vote of the majority and join in. The hunger strike is eventually a failure. Then his father dies, and Armenteros is allowed a brief visit to his home, where he has an emotional reunion with his mother and bids his dead father a last farewell.

Soon after, he is transferred to Boniato, a prison especially designed for hard-core rebels, and spends years in a totally walled-in cell, where he loses the use of his legs. The warden thinks Armenteros' failing health will break his will to continue fighting, and transfers him back to La Cabaña prison in Havana and later to a hospital. There, he is told he may never walk again, sees his mother

again after almost three years, and fights with informers. When he almost kills a man to defend a young prisoner, Armenteros experiences a spiritual crisis: he starts to feel his own weakness and his need of God.

Back at La Cabaña, he faces the painful ordeal of physical therapy given him by his inmate friends, under the supervision of a doctor, who is also a prisoner. When Landa, one of the men in the infirmary, commits suicide, Armenteros is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, but he emerges with a firm resolve to walk again and to continue the fight.

Armenteros finally understands Irene's determination to protect their children and foresees a possible reunion with his family. Still on crutches, he joins the Plantados in their unflinching resistance, leading them on to daring demonstrations of defiance. *When he completes his twelve year sentence, Armenteros is informed by the authorities that he will not be set free. He fights on, demands a second trial, defends himself bravely — but to no avail.* Seven months later, Armenteros is in the infirmary when a guard comes in. Another transfer? he thinks. The answer is: "No, you're a free man."

Armenteros leaves the prison leaning on his crutches, a towel around his neck: still a courageous, unbroken man. The inmates cheer him and sing the national anthem as a farewell to Jose Raúl Armenteros, a symbol of the inviolability of the human spirit.

TRANSLATED EXCERPTS
OF
PLANTADO

—José Raúl, piérdete. Cogieron a Berto.

Tenso, colgué el teléfono. Una sed súbita me secó la garganta. Mi corazón huía precipitadamente y un sudor cobarde me humedeció las manos. Había llegado la hora; tenía que desaparecerme en seguida.

Cancelé la marea de pensamientos confusos que turbaban mi mente y fijé rumbos: cerrar el bufete, ir a casa, hablar por lo claro con mi mujer, despedirme de los niños, dejarle algún dinero y perderme. A estas alturas Irene no sabía hasta qué punto yo estaba comprometido, o no quería enterarse. Ella es así: del árbol, quiere sólo la sombra.

Cuando me vio desarmando la pistola para llevármela limpia, ni siquiera percibió el mensaje de mis ojos prófugos. Llamó a comer. Nos sentamos los cinco a la mesa, como si fuese un día cualquiera, y no el 10 de mayo de 1962. Hasta Raulito comió con nosotros esa noche. Papá, que había subido a echar un párrafo conmigo, se sentó a la cabecera. Me sorprendió el contraste de la escena tan cotidiana y doméstica, con la inminencia de mi fuga. Irene cumplió todos los ritos familiares concienzudamente: coló el café, batió el azúcar amulatándola con sólo dos gotas del café hirviente, y sirvió las tazas pequeñas, rebosando espuma. El timbre del teléfono las dejó intactas.

—Hijo, aquí están unos individuos preguntando por ti, de parte de Roberto.

"You've got to split, José Raúl, they've got Berto." I felt very tense when I hung up the phone. My throat suddenly went dry. My heart was fighting its way out of my chest and I broke out in a cold sweat. The time had come. I had to go into hiding.

My thinking rode the tidal wave of my emotions and set course: close my law office, clear things up with my wife, say good-bye to the kids, leave her some money, and disappear. At that point, my wife, Irene, had no idea of how deeply I was involved in the underground movement against Fidel, or she just chose not to know. That's just like her: from the tree, all she wants is its shade.

When my wife saw me cleaning the pistol, as I was preparing to leave, she did not even notice that I was avoiding her glance. She told us that supper was ready. The five of us sat at the table as if this were just an ordinary day, not May 10, 1962. My two daughters, and even my son Raulito, two years old then, ate with us that evening. Father, who had come up to have a chat with me, sat at the head of the table. The contrast between this everyday family scene and my imminent flight seemed almost unreal. Irene dutifully carried out all the familiar rituals of family life: she brewed the espresso, pouring steaming drops over some sugar, stirring until it was brown, then, served it in small cups, brimming over with froth. The telephone rang and they were left untouched. It was Mother, calling me from downstairs.

"Son, there are some guys down here asking for you. They say Roberto sent them."

Como mi madre tiene la hospitalidad confiada de los pueblos chicos, lo de «individuos» me puso en guardia.

—¿De parte de quién, vieja?

—De Roberto.

—Diles que bajo en seguida.

¿Roberto? El único Roberto que yo conozco es Berto, el Chino, y acaban de avisarme que está preso. Intuyendo el peligro, corrí a la habitación. No tuve tiempo de recoger la pistola. Ya iba a tirarme por la ventana del fondo, cuando llamaron a la puerta.

Mi padre previó el riesgo, y fue a abrirla. Entraron cuatro individuos con metralletas; los niños se prendieron a papá llorando y yo abandoné todo proyecto de fuga.

—¡Baja la porquería ésa, que me vas a matar a un muchacho! —le ordené al que parecía jefe.

—¿José Raúl Armenteros?

Intentando pasar por mí, mi padre adelantó un paso. El de la metralleta se abalanzó a encañonarlo.

—Oye —le dije—, él es José Raúl Armenteros, pero el que tú estás buscando soy yo.

Bajamos. Mamá estaba a la puerta. Desvalida, presagiaba lo que el destino la citaba a vivir. Cuando vio que salía escoltado, preguntó:

—Hijo, ¿qué has hecho? ¿Dónde te llevan?

—Sube y ocúpate de Irene y de los niños —le dije, dándole un corte brusco a la sospecha que aterraba sus ojos.

Me subieron a la perseguidora (1) y recorrimos cuatro manzanas a la redonda para avisarle a las postas que ya yo estaba preso. Luego giraron hacia la calle 64, escenario de mi vida, que custodiaban dadivosos álamos. La alarma de las sirenas sorprendió a un hombrecillo leve, paseante de atardeceres y testigo de mi niñez. Miró el acoso y se preguntó

(1) Coche patrullero.

My mother is a good exponent of hometown hospitality and she doesn't normally call visitors 'some guys,' so I knew she was trying to warn me.

"Who did they say sent them?"

"Roberto."

"OK, I'll be right down."

Roberto? The only Roberto I know is Berto, the Chinaman, and they've just told me he's been arrested. Sensing danger, I ran into my bedroom. I didn't even have time to pick up my pistol. I was about to jump out the window, when someone knocked at the door.

Father anticipated the risk and opened the door. Four men holding submachine guns barged in. My children started crying and clutched Father; I gave up all plans of escape.

"Put those fucking guns down before you kill one of my children!" I yelled at the one who appeared to be in charge.

"Are you José Raúl Armenteros?"

In an attempt to pass for me, Father took a step forward. One of the men rushed toward my father pointing his machine gun.

"Look" — I told him — "his name is José Raúl Armenteros, all right, but I'm the one you're looking for."

We went downstairs. Mother was standing by the door. Watching helplessly, she had a vision of what destiny had in store for her. When she saw that I was being arrested at gunpoint, she asked me:

"Son, what have you done? Where are they taking you?"

"Go upstairs and take care of Irene and the children," I told her, in an attempt to dismiss the suspicion that showed in her frightened eyes.

They forced me into a police car and drove around for four blocks to let the sentries posted throughout the area know that I had been captured. Then they turned down poplar-lined 64th Street, where I grew up. The sirens startled a slight old man I'd known since I was a kid, who always strolled the neighbourhood at dusk. His sad eyes stared at my captors and seemed to ask

con ojos tristes ¿ahora a quién?, ¿a dónde?, sin saber que era yo. Fue como la última atadura que un barco y muelle, un adiós no dicho. Desembocamos en la Quinta Avenida, donde había grabado yo el comienzo y término de tantos días de playa. Nos detuvimos en la calle 14, frente a la casa de Grau (2). Era el G-2: una casona hospitalaria y próspera, ahora convertida en mundo hostil de encierro e interrogatorios. Al entrar, me crucé con rostros sombríos —los de otros como yo— y los que la seguridad del mando hacía invulnerables. Alguien verde olivo gritó mi nombre. Por un pasillo largo, me condujeron a un cubículo helado. Cuando cerraron la plancha de hierro que hacía las veces de puerta, entré a una desamparada soledad donde no me protegía ningún derecho. El clima ruidoso y ártico del aire acondicionado me dio escalofrío. Vi unos bancos de cemento e intenté sentarme, pero estaban adosados a la pared en declive, y me deslicé hasta el piso. Allí me quedé atento a cada ruido, como una fiera en acecho. Mi pensamiento taquígrafo escogía qué decir y qué olvidar, mientras la incertidumbre trazaba pesadillas sobre mi espera. Me asediaba un miedo elemental.

No sé qué tiempo pasaría. Por fin, un guardia flaco, de ojos fanáticos, me condujo a un garaje para interrogarme. Me acusó de esbirro, de conspirar contra los poderes del estado y la seguridad de la nación, y como era costumbre, de ser agente de la C.I.A.

Entre estas alternativas rápidas, escogí una: hacer el papel de siempre fidelísimo.

—Mire, compadre —le dije—, ¿usted quiere saber si yo soy esbirro? No me pregunte a mí. Llame al propio Fidel Castro y pregúntele si José Raúl Armenteros es esbirro.

Me mantuvieron aislado más de dos semanas. La guanina que se le da a los puercos en Guanahacabibes era mi único alimento. Me llevaban a interrogar

(2) Ex presidente de Cuba.

'now who' and 'where will they take him', not knowing it was I. The last mooring which had held the ship to the pier had been silently cut without a farewell. The car turned onto Fifth Avenue, stirring fond memories of so many family trips to the beach. The car stopped at 14th Street, across from former president Grau's home. I was taken into a big mansion which had belonged at one time to a prosperous, hospitable family, but which was now the headquarters of the Secret Police, a hostile environment of confinement and interrogation. When we entered, I was met by the sombre faces of other people in my situation and by the harsh faces of those who felt invulnerable because they had power. Somebody in an olive green uniform shouted my name. They took me down a long corridor into an ice cold room. When they closed the steel door behind me, I realized I had stepped into a forsaken solitude where I had no rights whatsoever. I shivered as the powerful, noisy air conditioner blew Arctic-like air into the small enclosure. I noticed a cement bench and tried to sit on it, but it was sloped and I slid to the floor. There I crouched, listening to every sound, like a wary wild animal on the lookout. My stenographic thinking sifted through old memories, sorting what to say and what to forget. The uncertainty of what loomed ahead made me feel as though I were living out a nightmare. A basic fear was taking hold of me.

I don't know how long they kept me there. Finally, a thin guard with dark zealot eyes took me to the garage, now serving as an interrogation room. There, he accused me of being a henchman of the former government, of having conspired against the powers of the State and national security, and, of course, of being a CIA agent.

I quickly weighed all the alternatives and made my decision: I would pretend I was still a faithful Castro supporter.

"Look, man!" I told him, "if you want to know if I'm a henchman of the former government, don't ask me: ask Fidel Castro, himself. Go ask him whether José Raúl Armenteros is a minion of the former government."

They kept me in isolation for more than two weeks. All there was to eat was their pigswill. They interrogated me at any time, day or night.

a cualquier hora. Me dejaban, y a los cinco minutos, apenas había dado un cabezazo, volvían a buscarme. Para hacerme perder la noción del tiempo, la luz de la habitación estaba siempre encendida; no había vista hacia afuera y me confundían trayéndome la comida a horas disparatadas. Vivía en una constante vigilia interrumpida sólo por parches de sueño quebradizo. Alguien más viejo, o más vivido, o menos insolente, hubiera sido incapaz de soportarla. Pero yo estaba en pleno uso y disfruté de mi soberbia; toda mi vida se me figuraba hechura de mi solo albedrío. Para arremeter contra las circunstancias, me bastaba mi juventud autosuficiente. (La humildad llega lentamente cernida a través de los años y da a cada cual la justa medida de sí mismo.) Entonces todavía yo era José Raúl Armenteros, uno que ya no existe.

Por eso, cuando el interrogador clavó en mí sus ojos escrutadores, y preguntó casi persuasivamente: «¿Por qué traicionaste a la revolución, Armenteros?», salté como una fiera:

—¡El que la traicionó fue Fidel Castro!

Se apagaron las luces y en la total oscuridad alguien me golpeó hasta dejarme semiconsciente. Caí de bruces y sentí que me brotaba sangre de una herida en la sien.

Cuando se encendieron las luces, el interrogador continuó tranquilo como un Valium, con la exención de remordimientos que le confería su militancia dogmática.

—¿Por qué traicionaste a la revolución, Armenteros?

—¡El que la traicionó fue Fidel Castro! —insistí terco.

Volvieron a apagar la luz y descargaron sobre mí golpes furiosos. Esta vez no sé cuánto tiempo permanecí inconsciente.

Por la mañana me trasladaron a una habitación donde había cuarenta y tantos ex militares de Ba-

They'd return me to my cell and five minutes later, as soon as I'd fallen asleep, they'd come back and start all over again. The light in my cell was always left on to make me lose my sense of time. I was unable to see outside and, to confuse me even further, they'd bring the grub they called food at the most unlikely hours. I lived in a constant state of vigil, interrupted only by fragile patches of sleep. If I'd been older, more experienced, or less contemptuous, I might not have resisted. But I was in my prime and full of pride, my whole life subject only to my will. My youthful self-confidence seemed weapon enough to fight against those circumstances. The humility which gives us a just measure of ourselves comes but slowly with age. In those days, I was still José Raúl Armenteros, one who no longer exists.

That's why when the interrogator's eyes bore into me and asked me in his most persuasive voice, "Why did you betray the Revolution, Armenteros?" I sprang up like a wild animal:

"Fidel Castro betrayed the Revolution, not I!"

Suddenly, the lights went out. In the total darkness, I was beaten until I almost lost consciousness. I fell down, blood running from my forehead.

The lights came back on and, cold as ice, my interrogator resumed his questioning.

"Why did you betray the Revolution, Armenteros?"

"Fidel Castro betrayed it, not I!" I insisted stubbornly.

The lights went out again and this time I was beaten senseless. I don't know how long I was unconscious.

The next morning, they took me to a room in which they were holding more than forty former Batista military people. Looking at them, I wondered,

tista. Mirándolos pensé: ¿Qué relación tengo yo con esta gente? ¿Por qué me han traído aquí? Veía sus caras flácidas, sus ojos desvelados, sus manos vencidas, como si a todos los anduviera carcomiendo la espera. ¿Por qué me mezclan con esta gente blanda, anfibia? ¡Cómo mata el terror a morir! Me clasifiqué aparte. Así estábamos: ellos puestos donde los puse, y yo en otra tierra, cuando alguien tiró un puente mencionando a Johnny.

¡Johnny! ¡Juanito Arias! Casi sentí las piezas del acertijo cayendo en su sitio.

Mayo de 1961. Yo, convencido que Fidel había entregado la revolución a los comunistas, conspiraba con el M.R.P. (3) Militar. La dirección del movimiento me envió a entrevistarme con un tal Johnny en los altos de una bodega situada en 23 y 2. El objeto era nuclear a todas las organizaciones clandestinas para trabajar juntas. Me presenté con mi nombre de guerra: René Landa. Entré a una sala con dos rectángulos de luz de atardecer al frente. Fui recorriendo los rostros, batistianos todos, que conocía de vista. Eran otros o quizás los mismos que torturaron al Chema y le aplicaron la ley de fuga al Crío, y dejaron a Felo Domínguez con tres tiros en la nuca, por la carretera del Cacahual.

—Con esta gente no voy a ningún lado —decidí interiormente.

Johnny ya estaba presentándose y comenzaban a recibirme extendiendo hacia mí sus manos cómplices. Respondí con el ímpetu antibatistiano que desde los dieciocho años me había convertido en acusado y prófugo.

—Mire, compadre —dije con deliberado intento de zaherir—, aquí no se me ha perdido nada. Yo no conspiro con esbirros. —Di media vuelta y me fui.

A Johnny lo tenían infiltrado hasta los dientes. Su

(3) Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo, Militar.

what have I to do with these people? Why have I been brought here? I looked at their flaccid faces and their defeated hands, clear signs of their fear and hopelessness. Why had I been thrown in with this bland, reptilian scum? I thought how much deadlier than death is the fear of death. I felt I must stay away from them: these people belong to another world. There we were, they on one side, where I had pigeonholed them, and I on another, when suddenly the mention of Johnny's name bridged the gap.

Johnny! Juanito Arias! The pieces of the puzzle were beginning to fit together.

A scene from a year ago came to my mind. Convinced that Fidel Castro had sold out to the Communists, I had joined the Military Branch of the People's Revolutionary Movement (P.R.M.) In May 1961, the Movement's executive sent me to meet someone named Johnny on the upper floor of a grocery store at the corner of 23rd and 2nd streets. The purpose of that meeting was to coordinate the efforts of underground organizations working against Castro. I introduced myself as René Landa, my nom de guerre. I entered a large room bathed by two rectangles of sunset light. I looked at their faces: people I knew by sight, all former Batista supporters. A thought suddenly passed through my mind. Some of these men might have been the ones who tortured my friend Chema, or shot Crio in the back as if he had been trying to escape, or shot Felo Dominguez three times in the head and left him on the road to Cacahual.

I decided I would have nothing to do with these people.

Johnny was already introducing me and some of them were already holding out their hands to shake mine. I couldn't help it: I had been fighting Batista since I was 18 and these people had persecuted me and driven me underground in the past. My youthful impetuosity made me snarl at them:

"Look, man," I said in a deliberately mocking tone of voice, "I don't belong here. I won't conspire with Batista's jackals." I turned around and left.

Johnny's group had been infiltrated by many of Castro's secret police.

chofer, agente del G-2; su segundo, capitán del G-2. Al mes de la fallida entrevista, cayó preso.

Yo seguí trabajando con mi gente: compañeros de la Universidad y ex revolucionarios en su mayor parte. Intervine en más de veintitrés misiones para hacer contactos, conseguir armas o infiltrar grupos. En diciembre de 1960, al dejarme por última vez en el aeropuerto, me había advertido Quesada, el agente nuestro en el exterior.

—José Raúl, no te vayas. Te van a desgraciar.

—Mi hermano —le dije—, la bronca es allá, no aquí.

Regresé y a los cuatro meses fracasó la invasión de Playa Girón. Muchos se asilaron. Otros, huyeron. Los pocos que seguimos en la calle, trabajamos un año más, pero el movimiento clandestino quedó completamente desarticulado. El 9 de mayo de 1962, cayó Berto. La noche siguiente, yo.

Johnny's driver was a member of the secret police and his second-in-command was a captain in the Secret Police. Less than a month after that unsuccessful meeting, Johnny was arrested.

I continued working with my own people: mostly classmates from my University days and disillusioned former revolutionaries. I took part in more than 23 missions which involved making contacts, procuring weapons, and helping the groups that were infiltrating the island. In December 1960, when we parted at the airport, Quesada, our agent in the USA, warned me:

"José Raúl, don't go back to Cuba. They're going to kill you."

"Buddy" — I replied — The fight is in Cuba, not here."

I went back. Four months later, I witnessed the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Many members of the underground took asylum in foreign embassies. Other fled Cuba secretly. The few of us who remained continued working for another year, but it was useless, the movement was in complete disarray. On May 9, 1962, Berto was captured. The following night, it was my turn.

Habían tapado las ventanas del microbús y no podía mirar hacia afuera, pero el camino, bien conocido por mí, me dictaba el itinerario: la Quinta Avenida, Calzada, el Malecón y el mar, el túnel sordo, los puentes sobre los fosos, el eco en las murallas. Por fin, sentí el traqueteo de los adoquines en la callejuela tortuosa y medieval, término del viaje.

El microbús se detuvo. Nos bajaron frente al paredón que limita el patio interior de la prisión. Hacia el oeste, en dirección al vecino Castillo de El Morro, quedaban las cotorreras o galeras destinadas a los chivatos. Allí dejamos a Juanito. Dos guardias con metralletas me escoltaron hasta el gran portón cubierto con plantas de hierro perforadas con huecos en forma de estrellas. Alcé la vista. En la semi-oscuridad, leí el letrero: Prisión Militar, La Cabaña. Miré la noche: otro portón negro, también cerrado.

Abrieron el de la fortaleza y entramos a un espacio limitado al frente por la reja o rastrillo que da al patio central. Siguiendo, a mano derecha, pasamos al Cuerpo de Guardia.

Allí, dos ojos fieros y taimados me celebraron juicio sumarísimo con veredicto de traidor. Pertenecían al negro Toribio, célebre por su habilidad en dar patadas, como pude comprobarlo un minuto después.

—Yo lo conozco a usted —dijo buscando mi cara en su archivo mental de contrarrevolucionarios.

I couldn't see outside because they had covered the windows in the van. Knowing the city well, though, I could trace the route in my mind: deserted Fifth Avenue, bustling Calzada Street, the long Malecón driveway, the tunnel under the harbour; then, the clatter of the bridges over the moats followed by the echo on the ramparts and, finally, by the rumble of the cobble stones paving a twisting Medieval back alley that marked the end of our journey.

The van stopped in front of the massive stone wall surrounding the prison yard. Johnny was taken to the so-called 'parrot cage', a galera reserved especially for informers, located on the west side, close to the neighbouring El Morro Castle. Two guards with machine guns took me to the huge wooden gate covered with planks of iron perforated with holes like stars. I looked up. Standing out against the starless night sky was the sign 'La Cabaña Military Prison.' I looked out into the night: another dark and forbidding portal.

The fortress gate opened. We walked into an area which was separated from the central yard by a heavy iron grille. We turned right and entered the Guardhouse.

The officer glared at me. His sly cruel eyes judged me summarily: the verdict was treason. It was Toribio, the Black, notorious for his dexterity at kicking, as I soon found out.

"I know you," he said, as he searched for my face in his mental file of counter-revolutionaries.

Tenía que conocerme. A cada rato iba a La Cabaña a ver a gente mía que había caído presa. Me servía de salvoconducto un carnet de abogado defensor: doctor no sé cuánto, natural de Holguín. Falso, naturalmente.

Suprimiéndome la barba y el cansancio, logró ubicarme.

—¿Usted no era abogado?

—Era no; soy.

—Pues mire a ver si se va buscando uno de veras; ahora sí que va a necesitarlo.

Yo llevaba un *pullover* blanco y unos pantalones de mecánico marcados con las pes mayúsculas que distinguen a los presos políticos.

Toribio se puso en pie, escogió un uniforme amarillo de soldado, me tomó la talla aproximadamente y ordenó:

—Póngase esto.

Me atreví a contradecirlo:

—Mire, compadre, yo me pasé siete años combatiendo esa porquería. ¡Ese uniforme no me lo pongo yo!

—¿Ah, no? —dijo sin inmutarse, dándome la espalda. De pronto hizo un giro rápido y con una ágil patada de judoca me metió de *fly* debajo del buró.

Me levanté burlándome de mí mismo, como siempre que pierdo.

—Ah, bueno, usted ve, así es distinto. ¡Por las buenas sí me lo pongo!

Se quedó un instante decidiendo si era un zoquete o un mierda.

—Llévenlo para la galera 14 —me despidió al fin.

Ya tenía nombre y dirección: número 2693, galera 14, La Cabaña.

Una galera es algo así como una cloaca gigante de unos treinta metros de largo por seis de ancho y otros tantos de puntal, abierta de lado a lado en la muralla. No hay en ellas más puerta ni ventilación que la reja del frente, que da al patio, y una doble

Of course, he knew me. I'd been to La Cabaña often as counsel for the defense for some of the members of my organization. I had a forged identification card in the name of some lawyer born in Holguín, at the other end of Cuba.

He saw through my unshaven face and weary looks and managed to place me.

"Weren't you a lawyer?"

"Still am."

"You'd better get a real one now; you're going to need it."

I was wearing a white T-shirt and blue jeans marked with huge P's, the standard identification of political prisoners.

Toribio stood up, swiftly measured me with his eyes and picked out a khaki military uniform of approximately my size.

"Put this on," he ordered.

I had the audacity to answer back:

"Look, man, I spent seven years fighting against the fucking Batista soldiers who wore those uniforms and I'll be damned if I'm going to put this shit on."

"Oh, really?" he said, without batting an eyelash. He turned away from me; then, suddenly, he swung around and with one swift, agile judo kick sent me sprawling under a desk.

I knew I was beaten so I pulled myself up and made light of the matter.

"Well, that's different, then. How can I possibly refuse such a generous offer. I'll put it on."

He stared at me trying to decide whether I was crazy or scared.

"Take him to Galera No. 14," he said finally.

From now on I was merely Number 2693; my address: Galera No. 14, La Cabaña Prison.

Galeras look like gigantic sewers, each being thirty meters long, six meters wide and some six meters high. They are carved out of the depths of the ramparts. There are no doors and no ventilation except for a barred gate at the front, which leads to the courtyard and a double barred gate at the back,

reja de dos metros de ancho por unos cuatro de alto, que da al fondo. En esa área de menos de doscientos metros cuadrados, con sólo dos letrinas, había más de doscientos hombres. Como no alcanzaban las camas, dormían en el suelo, en los pasillos, recostados a las paredes. Al entrar, por la falta de luz y el hacinamiento, fui a dar un paso, y tropecé. Alguien me mentó la madre. Seguí abriéndome camino a tientas, hasta que encontré un espacio estrecho junto a un negro cenizo, de ojos insomnes. Intercambiamos silencio, y me dio una de las dos frazadas que tenía. Me cubrí con ella, me acomodé como pude, y no hice más que cerrar los ojos —llevaba dos días sin dormir— cuando me alzó en vilo una descarga.

—Eh, ¿y eso qué es?

Me dijo el negro:

—Hoy están fusilando a la gente de la causa de Jaruco.

Nos pasamos la noche en un silencio interrumpido por fusilamientos.

Cuando amaneció, las sombras arrebujadas alrededor mío se convirtieron en hombres demacrados que me miraban indiferentes. Yo no era noticia. Todos los días aparecían caras nuevas. Me acerqué a la reja. Por el pasillo venía la copia, muchas veces desvaída, de un compañero mío del bachillerato. Decidí que si reconocía mi voz, era él.

—¡Antonio de las Mercedes Goldarás y Blanco!

—Compadre —exclamó acercándose—, ¡cómo se parece usted a José Raúl Armenteros!

—¡Soy yo, Toño! ¡Soy yo!

Me miró cancelando años.

—¡José Raúl, mi hermano!, ¿qué haces tú aquí?

—De vacaciones...

Ahí mismo me adoptó.

—¿Cómo es la fiesta esta? —le pregunté cuando abrieron las rejas y entraron al patio los guardias.

Comenzó a instruirme con paternalismo de iniciado a novicio.

two meters wide, four meters high. More than 200 men were crowded into this small area of less than 200 square meters. There were only two latrines and not enough beds, so we had to sleep on the floor in the narrow corridor or leaning against the walls. It was so dark and so crowded that when they closed the gate behind me, I stumbled at the first step I took. Somebody cursed me. I groped my way, until I found a small space beside an ash-grey Black. He looked at me, glassy-eyed, and, without saying a word, gave me one of the two blankets he had. I lay down on the floor, wrapped myself in the blanket and tried to make myself as comfortable as possible. I hadn't slept for two days so I dozed off right away. Suddenly, a loud cracking noise jerked me awake.

"What was that?" I asked.

"The firing squad. Tonight they're executing those convicted in the city of Jaruco," the Black answered.

We spent the night in silence, punctuated only by sporadic volleys from the firing squad.

At dawn, the slumped shapes around me became haggard men who looked at me with a blank expression. Nobody paid any attention to me. There were always new faces in this place. I approached the gate. I noticed somebody walking down the corridor. He looked like a dilapidated copy of a former high school classmate of mine. I called out his name to see if he recognized me.

"Antonio de las Mercedes Goldarás y Blanco!"

He stopped, approached the gate and said "Brother! You sure look like José Raúl Armenteros!"

"It is, Toño! It's me!"

The way he looked at me seemed to make the years drop away.

"José Raúl, old pal! What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I decided I needed a vacation."

He smiled at me broadly and took me under his wing.

"So what's the score here?" I asked Toño as the gate opened and the guards walked into the courtyard.

He began to advise me like an older brother.

—Primero, viene el recuento. Luego, sigues en la fila y te dan un pan. Cómete una mitad y guarda la otra; si no, por la noche se te suman el hambre y el insomnio y no pegas un ojo. Aquí dormir es la única libertad posible. En la otra fila te dan un poco de agua chirle que llaman café. Con eso desayunaste.

—¡Contra! ¿Y la comida?

—Le decimos *la boba*, así que calcula por ahí. El almuerzo lo dan a las once y la comida a las cinco. Hay dos temas: macarrón sancochado, que tienes que cortarlo con la espumadera o harina de maíz, también sancochada y sin sal. De Pascuas a Ramos, dan un huevo duro o un rastrojo de pescado. Sub-- sistimos gracias a la *jaba* (1).

—Tradúceme eso.

—Lo que manda la familia. Avisa que te consigan leche en polvo, gofio, y chocolate. No dejan entrar otra cosa. Ni azúcar siquiera. Hoy mismo busca la manera de entrar en una cooperativa: te pones de acuerdo con seis u ocho compañeros, juntan lo que le traen a cada uno, y se reparte entre todos. Así, te vas defendiendo. Además, la cooperativa tiene la ventaja que cuando falta el agua, los socios reúnen la que sobra de los tres jarros que dan al día y se bañan por turno. Cuando ordenan requisa, tienes que salir corriendo; como pestañees, la emprenden a planazo limpio contigo. Si no estás vestido, sal en calzoncillos o desnudo, pero sal. Entonces te almacenan contra una pared como un fardo, entra la guarnición a las galeras, destruyen todo lo que encuentran, tiran la leche, le echan agua al gofio; pero tú, tranquilo. Un consejo —terminó con una solemnidad cómica—: métete la lengua donde no le dé el sol.

Me eché a reír.

Ya aleccionado, salí primero al recuento, y luego cogí mi turno en la fila del pan. Al verme Lalo Benítez, que trabajaba con la organización del 30 de

(1) Jaba: especie de cesta.

"In the morning, the first thing is the headcount. Then you have to stand in line to get some bread. Eat half and save the rest for later; hunger and insomnia make a goddamn pair and you won't be able to sleep a wink, and here, in prison, sleeping is the only freedom there is. Next, you have to stand in another line to get some swamp water they call coffee. That's all you get for breakfast."

"Christ! How about the other meals?"

"We call them the 'slop' — so you can figure it out for yourself. There are two menus, sticky macaroni that you have to cut with your spoon, or boiled corn meal without salt. Once in a blue moon, they give us a boiled egg, or a bit of fish full of bones. We survive thanks to the bags.

"What do you mean 'the bags'?"

"The bags, the food packages our families bring us. Tell your relatives to bring you powdered milk, oatmeal and chocolate. Those are the only things they'll let in. Nothing else gets through — not even sugar. The first thing you should do is join a co-op with six or seven other guys so you can pool what your families bring you. That's the only way you can survive here. The co-op has another advantage. Whenever there's a water shortage, we pool whatever's left of the three cans we get each day and take turns washing. Remember this too: when the guards order a strip search you'd better move your ass or they'll beat the living daylights out of you. Get out there even if you've got nothing on. Don't waste any time. Then they shove you up against a wall, they barge in and destroy everything they can get their hands on, pouring out the milk, the oatmeal, whatever. One more piece of advice, José Raúl: Keep your trap shut!"

I couldn't keep myself from laughing; his voice was so solemn that it seemed almost comical.

I already knew the routine when the guards opened the gate. I went out when they ordered the headcount, then I stood in line to get some bread. I was standing there when Lalo Benitez, a member of the November 30th

noviembre, soltó jarro, soltó pan y como es —digo era, porque lo fusilaron— más grande que una torre, me cargó en peso para abrazarme.

Ahí empezó a correrse la voz: «¡René llegó!» «¡Cogieron a René!»; cuando vine a ver estaba rodeado de gente ansiosa por recibir noticias frescas. Opté por despistarlos diciendo: «Señores, yo no estoy en nada. Se han equivocado. Yo no estoy en nada.» Mi primera demostración de mesura: callar con público.

A la hora del almuerzo, Toño volvió a acercárseme.

—José Raúl —me advirtió—, tú hazte el chivo loco con los guardias; conmigo no. Yo ya estoy de vuelta. ¿Quieres un consejo? Búscate un abogado en seguida. Mira, hoy por la tarde me toca visita. Prepara una nota con el nombre y el teléfono de tu padre. El viejo mío le avisa que tú estás aquí y así empiezan las gestiones en seguida. No puedes perder tiempo. Esta gente primero da el palo y después averigua.

En la próxima visita de abogado nos llamaron juntos y nos condujeron a una especie de oficina. A los diez minutos entraron el padre de él y mi padre.

—Armenteros, éste es mi hijo Antonio.

Papá le tendió la mano a Toño y tiró la vista buscándome.

—¿Y mi hijo? ¿Dónde está mi hijo?

—Viejo, estoy aquí. ¿Qué pasa? ¿No me reconoces?

Del hombre de mediana estatura, ancho de cuerpo, trabado y duro que soy, no quedaba ni traza.

Mi padre abrió los brazos y exclamó:

—¡Ay, mi hijo, cómo te me han puesto!

Yo había entrado al G-2 pesando 155 libras. Ahora, a los dos meses, no llegaba a cien.

Organization, saw me. He dropped his can and his bread and gave me a bear hug lifting me right off the ground; he's such a strong man — I should say 'was', because they shot him a few weeks later.

People started to whisper to one another "René is here!" "They got René!" Before long, I was surrounded by men anxious to hear the latest news. I decided to stick to my story and keep pretending I was innocent, so I exclaimed loudly: "Hey, fellows, I haven't done anything. You're all mistaken. I'm not involved in anything. I swear." I was trying to show a maximum of restraint by keeping my mouth shut in public.

At lunch time, Toño approached me again.

"José Raúl," he said to me, "you can put on an act in front of the guards if you like, but you can't fool me; I know you too well. Take my advice: You'd better get a lawyer, and soon. I'll tell you what. My old man is coming to visit me today. Write down your father's name and phone number and my old man will tell him you're here so he can get you a lawyer. There's no time to lose. These bastards shoot first and ask questions later."

The next time lawyers were allowed to visit, Toño and I were called down together. They took us to some sort of an office. Ten minutes later, his father walked in with mine.

His father said "Armenteros, this is my son Antonio."

My father shook hands with Toño and looked around for me.

"And my son? Where's my son?"

"Dad, I'm right here. What's wrong? Don't you recognize me?"

There was no longer any trace left of the strong, muscular man I had once been. Now I was just a ghastly bag of bones.

"Son! What have they done to you?" gasped my father.

When they arrested me I weighed 155 pounds. Now, only two months later, less than 100.

Cuando me dieron visita por primera vez después de notificada la sentencia, le mandé el recado a Irene de que viniera sola. En cuanto nos vimos, empezó a llorar calladamente. La hubiera abrazado contra mi pecho. En vez, levanté las manos y me prendí a la reja. ¿Qué podría decirle? ¿A qué leyes ni a qué justicia apelaría, si ninguna era válida? Me conmovía el ¿por qué? dramático que reflejaba su rostro. ¿Por qué forzaba sobre ella el destino que yo sólo tracé para mi vida? ¿Qué poder mío o ajeno me había conferido el privilegio de exigirle un heroísmo que ella ni comprendía ni compartiría nunca? Sus ojos huérfanos me recordaban los de la zorra en las cacerías o los de los venados fugitivos. Quise ofrecerle la liberación que debieran merecer aquellos a quienes nadie consultó su destino.

—Ire, me han echado doce años. Me quedan once por cumplir. Tú no entiendes esto, ni lo compartes siquiera.

Levantó la vista y recorrió mis ojos para anticipar mis palabras.

Seguí con un esquema lógico que me presentara dueño de la situación ante ella. Cuando la lástima me ahoga, intento dominarla disponiendo un orden para enfrentarme al futuro o postergarlo. Es alarde o soberbia, no sé.

—Divórciate —le dije—. Por los niños no tienes que preocuparte. Mi familia te ayudará a criarlos.

The first time I was allowed visitors following my conviction, I sent for Irene, asking her to come alone. The moment she saw me, she began to weep silently. I desperately wanted to take her in my arms. Instead, I could only raise my hands and cling to the wire mesh that separated us. What could I say to her? To what laws or justice could I appeal, since none were valid? I was deeply moved by the querying look on her face. How could I ask her to live out a future I had chosen only for myself? On what grounds could I ask her to sacrifice herself for something she could neither understand nor share? Her waif-like eyes reminded me of a hounded fox or a stag at bay. I wanted to give her the freedom deserved by those whom nobody has consulted about their destiny.

"Irene, they've given me twelve years. I still have eleven to go. You don't understand my cause; you don't even share my ideals."

She looked up and stared at me as if she were trying to read my mind.

I tried to appear as though I were master of the situation while I presented my arguments. I always do this when I am overcome by self-pity. I try to control it by making plans to face the future, or to postpone it. It is either arrogance or foolishness, I don't know which.

"Get a divorce" I told her, "don't worry about the children. My family will help you raise them."

Hundió el pecho, como si la hubiera herido.

—¡Por Dios, José Raúl! ¡Por Dios!

Pero yo seguí convenciéndola con sensatez, como si liberarse en amor fuera sencillo:

—Tienes que ser realista, Ire. Si no, te hundes. Tú te divorcias y me sigues viniendo a ver; si cuando cumpla quieres, nos casamos. A mí no me interesa más mujer que tú, gallega.

—Entonces, ¡cállate! Vamos a vivir al día. Puede haber un cambio. Además, a los que se cuadran (1) les reducen la condena.

Sentí furia porque sus pensamientos no marchaban mansos junto a los míos, o porque se negaba a aceptar mi mandato sobre su vida, o porque al interpretarme, se equivocaba siempre.

—¡Ni me cuadro ahora, ni me cuadraré nunca! Entiéndelo. Tienes la puerta abierta para divorciarte cuando no puedas soportar más la situación. No lo tendré a mal, pero no voy a ceder un paso ni por ti, ni por los niños, ni por nadie. Voy a halar la condena esta. Me la han echado y la voy a halar, a menos que pueda quitármela por los métodos que tú no apruebas.

—¡Por lo que más quieras, no hagas una locura!

—suplicó.

Sentí la prisa de la impaciencia y terminé tajante:

—¡Divórciate! ¡Divórciate y déjame vivir en paz lo mío!

Se me quebró la voz. Cuando saqué los dedos entre los alambres, a mí mismo me parecieron garfios.

A los pocos meses tenía otro plan de fuga. Me di cuenta que era más fácil escaparse del Príncipe que de La Cabaña. Para los presos de aquella época, el Castillo del Príncipe, que funcionaba como hospital, era una especie de Hilton. Allí no había requisas y la visita era directamente con la familia, sin reja por

(1) Cuadrarse: aceptar el plan de rehabilitación propuesto por Fidel.

Her chest sank, as if I had wounded her.

"For God's sake, José Raúl! Don't do this to me!"

But I continued to press her with my arguments, as if releasing a woman from her love were a simple matter:

"You have to be realistic, Irene. If not, you'll be destroyed. Get a divorce; that doesn't mean you can't visit. When my sentence is over, if you want to, we can get married again. You're the only woman in my life, babe."

"Then, shut up! Let's take this one day at a time. Things may change. Besides, those who agree to the political rehabilitation program have their sentences reduced."

Suddenly, I felt a tremendous rage well up inside me because we were obviously not on the same wavelength, or perhaps because she denied my authority, or perhaps because she always misunderstood me.

"I'll never be broken. Not now, not ever! Let's get that straight. I've left the door open for you; you can divorce me whenever the going gets too tough for you. I won't hold it against you. But I want you to understand that I'll never be broken, not for you, not for the kids, not for anyone. I'm going to serve my time. They've condemned me to prison and I'm going to serve my sentence, unless I can get out of here by some means I'm sure you wouldn't approve of."

"For Heaven's sake, don't do anything foolish," she implored.

I felt so impatient with her that I snapped at her.

"Get a divorce! For Christ's sake, get a divorce and leave me in peace!"

My voice was hoarse with emotion.

When I unclenched my fingers from the wire mesh, they felt like claws.

A few months later I came up with another plan to escape. I realized that it was easier to escape from El Príncipe than from La Cabaña. For us prisoners, El Príncipe Castle, being used at that time as a prison hospital, was as good as the Hilton Hotel. There were no strip searches and no wire mesh to separate

medio. Quizas la idea de abrazar a Irene y a mis hijos me motivaba tanto como la posibilidad de fugarme. Por eso, en mayo, cuando se me presentó una otitis media supurada y sentí el dolor intenso y el escalofrío de la fiebre, pensé: ahora no tendrán más remedio que hospitalizarme. ¡Qué equivocado estaba! En presidio, para esos casos, una aspirina basta.

Entonces hice algo que sólo entiende otro loco como yo, o quizás cualquiera que haya estado preso. En frío, o al contrario, con toda la rabia que había acumulado en meses, empecé a darle patadas a la cama de hierro hasta que me partí los metatarsianos del pie derecho. Mareado por el dolor, y dando con la cuchara y el plato en las barras de hierro, llamé la atención del guardia. Me llevaron al botiquín y me pusieron una bota de yeso. La rompí. Me pusieron la segunda. La rompí también. Entonces un compañero mío de galera que trabajaba en el botiquín y era el que hacía la lista de los enfermos hospitalizables, decidió darme una mano y añadió mi nombre. Como tenía la pierna hinchada y los dedos enormes y amoratados, me dieron el ingreso y me enviaron al Príncipe. No logré fugarme, pero sí verlos.

us from our families. Perhaps the thought of embracing Irene and my children was as strong a motivation as was the possibility of escape. In May, I had a severe inner ear infection and when I felt the piercing pain and the chills of fever, I said to myself: 'This is my chance; they'll have to send me to the hospital now!' I was so naive! At La Cabaña, for these types of problems, all they give us is an aspirin.

Then, I did something crazy, something only a madman or a prisoner can understand. In cold blood, or rather with all the fury and impatience raging inside me, I kicked my steel bed until I broke several bones in my right foot. Dizzy with pain, I banged my plate against the iron bars until a guard came. They took me to the infirmary where they put a cast on my foot. I broke it. They put another cast on my foot. I broke that one too. Finally, a friend who worked in the infirmary helped me out. He was preparing the list of prisoners who required hospitalization and he added my name to it. My leg was swollen and my toes were almost black, so they sent me to El Príncipe. I did not manage to escape, but at least I got to hug my wife and kids.

Aquel invierno de 1967 fue crudísimo, y como estábamos en calzoncillos, el frío y la humedad nos calaba hasta los huesos. Monquín, Paco y yo nos pasábamos la noche caminando de un extremo al otro de la galera para no congelarnos. Una vez se me ocurrió sacar la cuenta, y en una noche caminamos veinte kilómetros.

Desde diciembre nos tenían sin visita, pero el 4 de mayo, sin yo esperarlo, me llevan a un cuarto, abro la puerta, y me encuentro a mi padre y a Irene.

Apoyándose en una muleta, mi padre vino a abrazarme.

—Hijo, vine para que vieras que estoy bien. Que ya camino.

Su voz era la de siempre, animosa, fuerte, como si hubiera ensayado muchas veces lo que iba a decirme. Yo, mirándolo, recordé aquel otro padrazo que ya no existía. Lo que me quedaba de padre era este viejecillo encorvado, de ojos vivos, que tanto se parecía al último recuerdo que tuve de él. Ya tenía la nariz perfilada en sombras. Lo abracé con ternura: por primera vez, como si el padre fuera yo, y él el hijo.

Levanté la vista, miré a Irene y debo haberle dicho con la mirada mi orfandad súbita, porque me abrazó, en silencio, como si ya lo hubiéramos perdido y me diera el pésame. Me consoló sentir su cuerpo cálido, vibrante, ceñido a mí.

—Mi mujer —le dije al oído—, ¡cómo te necesito!

Papá, que se había quedado con las dos manos apoyadas en la muleta, esperando, dijo de pronto:

—¿No te has decidido a vestirme, verdad?

—No, papá.

—Entonces dile, Irene.

The winter of 1967 was unbearably cold. As we were dressed only in undershorts, we were chilled to the bone by the freezing damp air. To keep from freezing to death, Monquín, Paco and I spent hours every night pacing from one end of the galera to the other. One night I counted the number of trips we made back and forth — I figured out we'd walked twenty kilometres.

We'd had no visitors since December. Then, unexpectedly, on May 4 they took me into a waiting room. I opened the door and there, to my surprise, was Father with my wife Irene.

Father rushed towards me on his crutches.

"Son, I'm feeling much better now. See, I'm already walking."

His voice was, as usual, strong and determined, as if he had rehearsed many times what he had to say. I looked at him and remembered how strong he used to be. Before me now was but a hunched frail old man who had the look of death on his face. I took him in my arms and hugged him tenderly. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was the father, and he, the son.

I turned to Irene. She must have seen the despair in my eyes because she hugged me compassionately, not saying a word, as if Father were already gone and she was comforting me. Her warm vibrant body against mine made me feel better.

I whispered in her ear, "My love, you don't know how much I need you!"

Father, still leaning on his crutches, watching us, suddenly said:

"José Raúl, you haven't agreed to wear their uniform, have you?"

No, Dad, I haven't."

"Then, tell him, Irene."

—¿Que me diga qué?

—Lo que hay. Es un asunto importante y no quise que se tomara decisión sin contar contigo.

Papá hablaba con su autoridad invicta. Irene hizo un gesto suplicante, como pidiendo tiempo, pero mi padre la conminó:

—Vamos, hija.

—Qué, ¿ya no resistes más? —le pregunté.

—No, Jose, es por los niños. Te lo juro.

—¿Les falta algo a los niños? ¿Están enfermos? ¿No tienen familia acaso?

—Jose, óyela primero.

—Tere ha tenido un problema grave en el colegio.

—Bueno, habla, explícame de una vez.

—Cállate tú y oye —dijo mi padre.

—Hace pocos días, en el colegio hicieron una asamblea y empezaron a decir horrores de los presos políticos. Tere se quedó callada, pero cuando terminaron pidió un turno para hablar y les dijo:

»—Ninguno de ustedes sabe una palabra de lo que es presidio político. Yo sí, porque mi padre está preso hace seis años. Desde 1965 lo he visto sólo tres veces. En diciembre fue la última vez que supimos de él. Mi padre es de los plantados, porque se ha negado a ponerse el uniforme de preso común, como se ha negado también a aceptar el plan de rehabilitación. Desde que está en presidio ha perdido más de sesenta libras. Lo han insultado, lo han humillado, lo han hecho trabajar de sol a sol. Un día, delante de nosotros, se abrió la camisa y tenía la espalda hecha una llaga. Yo le he visto las marcas de las bayonetas en los brazos. Yo he visto a presos con la cabeza vendada, a presos heridos, a presos inválidos. A muchos los han fusilado después de celebrarle una pantomima de juicio, pero a otros los han matado en los campos, o en los pabellones de castigo y nadie se entera.

»Terminó llorando y se fue del colegio. Por la noche la llamó una compañera y le dijo:

"What is it she has to tell me?"

"Something has happened. It is something important and I didn't want to make any decisions before we talked to you."

Father's firm voice was as authoritative as ever. Irene looked at him imploringly, as if begging for time, but Father was insistent:

"Tell him, Irene."

"Tell me what? Are you leaving me?"

"No, José, it's not that; it's the children."

"Do they need something? Are they ill? Doesn't my family help you?"

"José, let her explain".

"Tere has a big problem at school."

"What? What happened? Tell me at once!"

"Shut up and listen, Son!"

"A few days ago, there was a political meeting at school. They denigrated political prisoners in front of the children. Tere listened quietly to everything they had to say. When they finished, she asked for permission to speak. She said:

"You don't know anything about political prisoners. I do because my father has been in prison for six years. I've seen him only three times since 1965. We haven't heard a word about him since last December. My father is a plantado, you know, a rebel. He refuses to wear the same uniform as the common prisoners. He also refuses the political rehabilitation program. In prison, he's lost over sixty pounds. He's been harassed, humiliated, and forced to work in the fields from sunrise to sunset. One day, he took off his shirt in front of us; his back was covered with wounds. I also saw the bayonet scars on his arms. I've seen prisoners with their heads wrapped in bandages, wounded prisoners, crippled prisoners. Many have been shot by firing squads after a mock trial. Many others have been killed while working in the fields, or locked in punishment cells and nobody ever hears anything about it."

"By the time she finished, she was in tears. She walked out and left the school. That night one of her classmates phoned her:"

»—Tere, ¡en la que te has metido! Mañana te van a celebrar juicio y te van a meter un año en una granja.

»Tere no dijo nada en casa. Al otro día fue al colegio y en vez de entrar a clase, siguió directamente al despacho de la directora...

—Que, afortunadamente, es comunista del año treinta —interrumpió mi padre.

Le dijo: «Ayer ha pasado esto en clase, y yo he hecho y dicho esto y esto. Se lo vengo a informar, para que nadie le haga cuentos. Por la noche me llamó una amiga para decirme que hoy, cuando llegue al aula, me van a hacer un juicio popular y me van a mandar un año a una granja. Yo quiero que usted sepa que si mi padre lleva seis años preso —y no en una granja, sino en La Cabaña— haciendo trabajo forzado, recibiendo golpes, sin visita ni correspondencia, y lo ha sabido resistir como un hombre, y va a seguir resistiendo los años que le faltan yo, que soy su hija, no voy a ser menos.»

La directora dijo:

—No, Tere, ven acá; eso no es así. Espérate. —Subió con ella al aula y le echó una perorata a la maestra y a la clase entera.

—Por otra parte —dijo mi padre—, ya cumplió doce años, tiene que ir a recoger café a Oriente. Si no, no puede seguir estudiando.

—Pide la visa y saca a los muchachos, Irene. No queda otro remedio.

—Podríamos esperar hasta septiembre...

—No. Métele mano ahora, en caliente.

Mi padre asintió.

—¿No te lo dije? ¡Si no lo conoceré yo! Bueno, voy a buscar a los niños, que están afuera con tu madre.

Irene aprovechó para hablar a solas conmigo.

—Yo estoy dispuesta a irme, pero tú tienes que acabar de ponerte el uniforme azul. A los cuadrados les van a hacer revisión de causa.

"Tere, you're in a real mess!" "Tomorrow they're going to put you through a people's trial and sentence you to a year in a forced labour camp."

"Tere didn't tell us about it", said my wife. "The next day she went to school. Instead of going to her class, she marched straight into the office to see the principal..."

"...who, fortunately, was not one of those extremists newly converted to Communism, but was rather a 1930's Communist," Father cut in.

"Tere told her," Irene continued, "Listen, something happened yesterday. I want you to know what I did and what I said. I wanted to tell you this myself before someone started telling you stories. A friend of mine phoned me last night to warn me that they're planning a people's trial in school today and they're going to send me to a forced-labour camp for a year. I want you to know that my father has been in prison for six years, and not just in a forced-labour camp, but in La Cabaña, doing hard labour. They beat him everyday and don't allow visitors or mail; but he takes it like a man, and will take it for as long as he has to. I'm his daughter, and I can take it too."

"Now, Tere, don't talk that way!" the principal told her. "Nothing's going to happen to you." She went with Tere to the classroom and told the teacher and the rest of the students to leave her alone."

"Don't forget!" Father interrupted, "Tere has just turned twelve, she'll be sent to the mountains of Oriente to pick coffee beans for six weeks every year. She has no choice, if she wants to go to high school."

"Get a visa and send the kids to the States, Irene. There's no other way."

"Can't we wait until September?"

"No. Right now, this can't wait."

Father nodded in agreement:

"Didn't I tell you? I know my son very well! Son, I'd better go and tell your mother to bring the kids in. They're outside with her."

Irene used that time to talk with me alone.

"I'm willing to leave Cuba, but I want you to agree to wear the blue uniform. They're going to review the sentences of those who do."

—Ya lo dijiste: a los cuadrados. Yo no soy cuadrado.

—Pues tendrás que serlo. Tú tienes una responsabilidad con tus hijos.

—Y la he cumplido siempre.

—Di más bien que la hemos cumplido los demás por ti.

—Mi primer deber es darle el ejemplo a mis hijos.

—Mejor sería no haberlos tenido. Yo me voy, si tú me prometes seguirnos. No puedo arreglármelas sola con tres niños. No tengo familia allá. No sé inglés suficiente. ¿De qué voy a trabajar? ¿De camarera, de criada, de qué?

—¿Qué criada de mil culpas? ¡Tú tienes dos títulos!

—Pero nunca presumí de ser Mariana Grajales (3).

—Ni yo de ser manso. Te lo advertí cuando nos casamos.

—¡Lo único que yo quiero es mi casa, mi marido, mis hijos, un poco de paz!

—Tú, como siempre, con el «mi» por delante. ¡Y la patria, y el honor, la libertad, la justicia y todo lo demás, al diablo!

—Sí, ¡al diablo! ¡Al diablo! ¡Hace seis años que tus deberes y tu patria y tu honor me tiene a mí viuda y a mis hijos sin padre! ¡Ya es bastante! ¿No te parece? ¡Yo no me voy a un exilio sola, con tres niños, a no ser que tú me prometas tener dos dedos de frente, aceptar los hechos y seguirme! Si no, me quedo, ¡y que sea lo que Dios quiera!

—No me amenaces, que conmigo no van las amenazas.

En esto entraron los niños con mamá y me abrazaron. Estuve un rato conversando con ellos; más bien grabando en mi mente cada gesto, cada palabra suya.

(3) Madre de Antonio y José Maceo, libertadores cubanos.

"I haven't broken yet, and I won't break now."

"You have to put the uniform on", pleaded Irene, "you have obligations towards your children."

"I have always honoured my responsibilities," I snapped.

"You should say it was your family and I who have honoured your obligations. I'm willing to leave Cuba if you promise to follow us. I can't earn a living on my own with three children. I don't have any family in the States and my English isn't good enough. What would I do? Work as a maid or a waitress or what?"

"You won't have to work as a maid! You have two University degrees!"

"But I'm not made of steel! I'm not a hero!"

"And I'm not a sheep who follows orders. I told you that before we got married."

"All I want is my home, my husband, my children, and some peace!"

"Me, me, me! All you ever think about is yourself. Don't you ever think about our country, our people's honour, freedom, and justice? Don't you give a damn?"

"No! I don't give a damn about that. Six years ago your sense of duty, your country and your honour made a widow of me and orphans of our children. Don't you think enough is enough? I'm not leaving Cuba with three kids unless you promise you'll come to your senses, face reality and join me! If you don't, I won't leave and then, God help us all!"

"Don't threaten me! You know threats don't work on me."

At that moment, Mother came in with the kids and we all hugged. I talked to the kids for awhile, trying to memorize their every word and their every gesture.

Cuando terminó la visita, Irene se me abrazó y me dijo:

—Jose, ¡te lo suplico!

—Sí, sí —le dije. Ya no podía más. Me dolía el pecho.

Salieron. Salí yo. Cuando miré hacia el extremo del pasillo vi a papá apoyándose en la muleta para llevar a mi madre del brazo. Betty iba al lado de ellos.

Cuando volví a verla, tenía quince años.

As they were about to leave, Irene hugged me and implored:

"José, please, I beg you!"

"Yes, yes, yes!", I told her. I couldn't stand it any more. My heart was aching.

They left. I watched as they went down the long corridor, Father leaning one arm on a crutch, the other wrapped around my mother.

Betty, my nine-year old, turned around for one parting glance. I wouldn't see her again until she was fifteen.

Pasó el año 69. Tere, mi hija, me escribía puntualmente. Que Raulito decía pisilleta por servilleta. Reyes gagos por Reyes Magos. Que lo había cogido oliendo una billetera mía de cuero que usaba su madre. Que salían al cine los domingos por la mañana, porque era más barato. Que en los supermercados había jamón y aceitunas y queso crema. Que su mamá llegaba muy cansada de la factoría. Que el abrigo de invierno lo había conseguido magnífico en un lugar que se llamaba Army and Navy. Que la maestra le había llamado la atención porque le dijo Jesús a una compañerita, cuando estornudó, porque para los americanos exclamar ¡Jesús! es malo. Que en el refugio les daban carne enlatada, leche en polvo y harina. Había tratado de hacer la harina, pero no sabía que crecía tanto y «fue de lo más cómico, José, cuando mami llegó, yo había llenado de harina hasta los jarrones». «Compramos un sofá muy cómodo que huele a pipi. Aquí, no sé por qué, nos dicen "*spics*". Raulito se pone bravo y les contesta "*Your mother*", pero a los americanos no les importa.»

Quizás estas cartas me hubieran decidido a pedir revisión de causa. Habían hecho varias aun a presos que no se cuadraban. No digo que me hubieran puesto en libertad, pero si de doce años me rebajaban a nueve y tenía más de seis cumplidos, al menos estaría con mis hijos para ayudarlos a crecer y educarlos.

1969 came and went. My daughter, Tere, wrote to me regularly. She wrote that Raulito, my seven-year old, said "Creemas" instead of "Christmas", "eskull" instead of "school". That she had caught him sniffing an old wallet of mine that was now Irene's. That they went to the movies on Sunday mornings because it was a lot cheaper. That they could buy ham, cheese and even chocolate in the supermarket. That their mother always came home exhausted from the factory. That she had got an excellent winter coat at a place called 'Army and Navy'. That the teacher scolded her for saying 'Jesus', like you do in Spanish, when a classmate sneezed — she didn't know that for Americans saying 'Jesus' is bad. That the Refugee Center gave them canned meat, powdered milk and corn meal. That she had tried to cook the five pounds of cornmeal they gave them, so she would surprise her mother when she came home, but "the thing kept growing and growing till I had all the pots and pans and even the flower vases filled with cornmeal." That they had bought a very comfortable couch, but it smells of peepee. That she didn't know why the Americans called them 'spics'. That Raulito gets so mad when they do that he shouts back at them 'Your mother' but the Americans don't understand what he means.

My daughter's letters might have made me ask for a review of my case. This had been granted even to a few who hadn't been broken. I'm not saying they would have set me free, but, after all, if my sentence was reduced from 12 years, say, to 9 ... having already served six ... I'd be free in three. At least, I would be able to see my children and help raise them.

Casi estaba decidido, cuando empezó a discutirse la posibilidad de otra huelga. Me opuse, porque no me parecía apropiado el momento. A los comunistas no se les puede repetir nunca el mismo chiste. Por otra parte, aunque las condiciones de los presos distaban mucho de ser buenas, no llegaban a ser tan graves como las que motivaron la huelga de los 21 días.

Cuando se hizo la votación por galera, mi moción quedó derrotada. Entonces, por disciplina, por acatar el voto de la mayoría, porque era imprescindible dar una impresión de unidad absoluta, acepté.

A los 24 días de huelga, nos metieron la guarnición en la galera 13. Hicieron una requisa a patada limpia. A mí me sacaron en camilla. Los guardias se me tiraron encima a darme golpes y me dejaron inconsciente. Me dieron por muerto.

Cuando mi padre llamó para saber de mí le dijeron:

—Su hijo no está aquí. Vaya a buscarlo al necrocomio.

Papá estaba decidido a ir solo, pero mi hermana se negó a dejarlo.

—Yo voy con tío Manuel. Tú no estás para eso.

Fueron. No los dejaron entrar. Cari movió cielo y tierra, logró el permiso, registró gaveta por gaveta. Por suerte, en vano.

Un amigo mío, que trabajaba en la enfermería, me puso un suero a tiempo y logró revivirme. En cuanto pude, les envié un engome para tranquilizarlos.

La huelga seguía. Quizás la hubiéramos ganado, si no es por un h.p. que se prestó a salir al patio para anunciar que se había transado. Nos dieron agua con azúcar; a las dos horas, caldo; después, naranjas.

Cuando nos enteramos que todo había sido una traición, los hombres estaban demasiado débiles y desmoralizados para iniciarla de nuevo. Perdimos la huelga, y yo perdí a mi padre.

I was just on the verge of doing so when some prisoners started talking about going on another hunger strike. I was against it because I felt the time was not ripe. Besides, with the Communists, you can't get away with the same trick twice. Even though conditions in the prison weren't rosy, things weren't as bad as they'd been a few months earlier when we began the 21-day hunger strike.

We voted on it in each galera and my motion was defeated. I went along with the majority because I felt it was essential to have complete solidarity. So, out of a sense of loyalty, I went on yet another hunger strike.

The hunger strike was in its 24th day when they sent in the troops. The guards kicked their way into galera No. 13, supposedly for a search. They pushed and kicked us like wild men. They kicked me so brutally that I lost consciousness and they left me for dead. Eventually, they carried my body out on a stretcher.

When Father phoned the prison that evening to inquire about me, they told him:

"Your son is not here. Go to the morgue, maybe you'll find him there."

Father wanted to go alone, but my sister wouldn't let him. "You stay here, Dad," she said, "you're too weak for that; I'll go with Uncle Manuel."

They went to the morgue, but were not allowed in. My sister raised hell and they finally gave her permission to enter. She searched each and every drawer. Luckily, her search was in vain.

A friend of mine who worked in the infirmary immediately gave me an I.V. which saved my life. As soon as I was able, I managed to get a chiclet out to let my family know I was still alive.

The hunger strike went on for thirteen more days. Perhaps we might have won, but on the 37th day one son-of-a-bitch who couldn't take it any longer went into the courtyard and gave up. First, we were given sugared water, two hours later, some soup; and then, some oranges.

When we found out we had been betrayed, we were too weak and demoralized to continue the hunger strike. I will never forget November 6, 1968. We lost the strike and I lost my father.

pero en seguida vino Artilio con orden de trasladarme al Hospital Neurológico.

—Armenteros, te vamos a mandar al hospital para que te vean las piernas.

—¿Así?

[When I first went to La Cabaña, Artilio was a teenage private; he was now a lieutenant. The following day he told me he had been ordered to take me to the Neurological Hospital.]

"Armenteros, we're taking you to the hospital to have your legs checked."

"Dressed like this?" I asked.

—No; así no. No te podemos trasladar en calzoncillos. Vístete.

—¡Entonces sigo inválido, compadre!

Artilio, que al tiempo que cumplía órdenes quería librarse del sentimiento culpable que lo asediaba, buscó a dos compañeros míos.

—Ayúdenme. Armenteros se va a podrir aquí por terco. Ustedes lo visten, y yo lo traslado para el Hospital Neurológico.

Se me presentaron en la galera Héctor Laredo, un hombrón cariprieto, altísimo, de hablar pausado y cara de infeliz, y Felo Arias, que trabajó codo a codo conmigo en el clandestinaje, y es uno de los hombres más valientes que me he echado en cara. Lo que tiene en las venas es hielo en vez de sangre. Nos unía una amistad de años y peligros. Como ellos se morían en un palmo de tierra por mí, y yo por ellos, cuando me dijeron: «José Raúl, o te pones la ropa, ó te pones la ropa», los mandé al diablo, pero supe que no había alternativa.

—A las buenas o a las malas te vamos a vestir —me advirtieron—. Si tratas de quitarte la ropa, te amarramos a la camilla.

A la fuerza me pusieron el uniforme amarillo con las tres pes.

Al día siguiente me llevaron para el hospital en camilla, custodiado por dos escoltas con armas largas y un teniente.

Me situaron frente al Cuerpo de Guardia a esperar que me atendieran.

Por el corredor pasó, casi rozándome, una chiquilla de unos veinte años, vestida de enfermera, con minifalda. Se agachó a coger algo y lo que tenía puesto debajo era una bikini azul de nailon. Me dio risa.

—Niña —le dije—, por tu madre, quítate de ahí y no te agaches, que yo hace más de cuarenta meses que no veo a una mujer.

Me sonrió con malicia, se echó el pelo a la espal-

"No, not like that. We can't take you out just in undershorts. Put your uniform on."

"I'd rather be crippled than put that uniform on!" I replied.

Artilio had to follow orders, but he also wanted to appease his guilty conscience, so he approached two of my closest friends in the prison.

"I need your help. Armenteros is so stubborn he's going to rot in prison. If you can get the uniform on him, I'll take him to the hospital."

I was lying on my bunk when Hector Laredo and Felo Arias came up to me. Hector was a very tall dark man, good-natured and soft-spoken. Felo and I had worked shoulder to shoulder in the underground. He is one of the most courageous men I have ever met. He doesn't have blood running through his veins, he has icewater. Those two would have given their lives for me — just as I would have given mine for them.

In a gruff voice, Felo said "José Raúl, either you put that uniform on, or we'll put it on for you." I told them to go to Hell, but I knew I had no choice.

"Whether you like it or not, we're going to put that uniform on you", they said, "and don't try to take it off, or we'll tie you to the stretcher."

They grabbed me and dressed me in one of those khaki uniforms marked with the three P's.

The next day, I was taken to the hospital on a stretcher, escorted by a lieutenant and two guards carrying automatic rifles.

When we arrived at the hospital, I was lain on the floor of the Emergency Room to await my turn with the doctors.

A 20-year-old nurse wearing a mini-skirt came walking down the corridor. She stopped next to me to pick up something on the floor. When she bent over, I could see she was wearing blue nylon panties. I giggled boyishly.

"Miss," I pleaded, "For God's sake, don't bend over like that. It's been four years since I last saw a woman."

She smiled at me mischievously, pushed her hair back over her shoulders

da con un gesto de coquetería y se alejó contoneándose.

Al fin, llegó mi turno. Me cogieron entre dos médicos, varios ayudantes y una enfermera que estaría forcejeando con los cuarenta pero que conservaba —o se agenciaba con tinte— una abundante melena roja a la Rita Hayworth.

Me quitaron la ropa, me dejaron desnudo sobre la camilla y empezaron a comprobar reflejos. Con el martillete, en la rodilla, en el tobillo, en el cuello. Nada. Me hincaron con una aguja hipodérmica. Brotó sangre, pero no sentí dolor alguno.

Entonces, la enfermera del pelo rojo, que estaba frente a la camilla, se abrió la blusa y dejó al descubierto sus senos grandes de pezones duros y morados.

—A ver si le queda algún reflejo...

Me quedaba ése, por lo menos.

Al fin me dejaron solo. Una hora más tarde, entró un médico de cara larga y expresión de derrota. Fijó sus ojos en el espaldar de una silla metálica, como si obviara deliberadamente la avidez de los míos. Parecía no verme a mí, sino a los miles de casos que me antecedian y que le habían consumido el entusiasmo.

—Dígame, doctor —le dije, alerta, tratando de ganarme siquiera un adarme de su interés.

—Su caso es difícil.

—Lo sé. Pero aquí queda hombre. Usted lo ha visto —me referí burlescamente a mi humillación anterior. Pensé que podría ser de los que desprecian quejumbres. Además, aborrezco que me tengan lástima.

Siguió mirando al borde de la silla, como si le interesara construir otra igual y quisiera grabar en su mente todos los detalles. Por fin, habló con sintaxis de texto:

—El déficit alimenticio; es decir, la carencia de lípidos e hidratos de carbonos le han producido un

coquettishly and walked away, swaying her hips.

Finally, it was my turn. I was surrounded by several assistants, two doctors and a nurse pushing 40 who had her long hair died the same shade of red as Rita Hayworth's.

They lay me on a table and stripped me. When I was completely naked, they began to check my reflexes. They hammered my knee, my ankle, around my neck. No response. They stuck a needle in my leg. Blood came out, but I didn't feel anything.

Just then, the red-haired nurse in front of me opened her blouse and exposed her beautiful big breasts with their hard red nipples.

"Let's see if you have any reflexes left at all...."

That one I still had at least.

Finally, they left me alone. About an hour later, a doctor came in with an expression of defeat on his long face. I looked at him eagerly but he just stared at the back of a metal chair, deliberately trying to avoid my eyes. I felt he was not thinking about me, but about the thousands of similar cases he had seen before which had dampened his enthusiasm.

"Tell me, doctor," I said trying to have him show a little interest in me.

"Your case is very difficult."

"I know. But, as you've seen, there's still a man somewhere inside this crippled body — I was referring, mockingly, to my previous humiliation, thinking he might be the kind of man who despises grumbling. Besides, I hate the thought of anyone taking pity on me.

His eyes were riveted on the chair, as if he wanted to build another one like it and he was fixing in his mind every last detail. Finally, he spoke, but it was as if he were reading from a textbook.

"The prolonged nutritional deficiency, that is, the lack of lipids and

estado de consunción y fibrosis muscular, acompañada de una neuropatía periférica, que le imposibilita la locomoción.

—Tradúzcame eso, doctor. —Lo dije poniendo el énfasis sobre la primera sílaba.

El médico enfocó en mí sus ojos de anfibio.

—Médicamente considero difícil que usted vuelva a caminar.

—O sea, que me acostumbre —dije amargo.

—No. Quizás un milagro. Aunque, francamente, yo no creo en milagros. He visto morir demasiada gente necesaria.

Cancelé su filosofía.

—¿Cuál es el tratamiento?

—Alimentación hiperproteica y tratamiento de fisioterapia intensiva. Lo cual, en la cárcel...

—Donde sea. Yo camino. Yo le aseguro a usted que yo camino —dije exhibiendo una fortaleza más fingida que real.

—Si él dice que camina, póngale el cuño que camina. Cuando a éste se le mete una cosa entre tarro y tarro... —apostilló uno de los guardias, supongo que bienintencionadamente.

El médico se llevó la mano blanca y venosa al aro de los espejuelos y despreció su vulgaridad.

Me sacaron del cuarto de reconocimiento, me pusieron en una camilla alta y me tuvieron dos horas esperando a que viniera la ambulancia a buscarme. Sentía la garganta seca. De pronto, me acosaba la sed, el hambre y la desesperanza.

Acertó a pasar por allí una enfermera gorda, de cara madraza.

—Señorita —la llamé—, ¿usted podría conseguirme un poco de agua?

Tomó un frasco de boca ancha —en el hospital faltaban vasos— y me lo alcanzó. Como no podía incorporarme, me pasó el brazo por la espalda y me acercó el frasco a los labios. Ávidamente, sorbí el agua y la conmiseración de sus ojos.

carbohydrates over the years have led to a state of consumption and to muscular fibrosis, which are accompanied by a peripheral neuropathy which makes locomotion impossible."

"Can you please translate that for me, doc?"

The doctor fixed his bulging eyes on me and said, "From a medical point of view, I think your chances of ever walking again are very slim."

"So," I replied angrily, "what you're saying is that I should just give up and get used to the idea of being an invalid for the rest of my life."

"No. Miracles sometimes happen. But to be honest with you, I don't believe in miracles. I've seen too many good people die."

I couldn't take his pessimism.

"What treatment do I need?" I asked.

"A hyperproteic diet and intensive physiotherapy. Now, considering you're in prison..."

"Just forget where I am. I'll walk again! I tell you, I will walk again! — I wasn't only trying to convince him, but myself, as well.

One of the guards remarked, perhaps with good intentions, "Hey, listen doc, if this guy says he'll walk again, you'd better believe it; when he gets something into his head...."

The doctor readjusted his glasses with his veined, milky-white hand to conceal his annoyance at the guard's impertinence.

I was removed from the examining room and placed on a gurney to wait for the ambulance to arrive. Two hours went by. My throat was very dry. All at once, I was overcome by thirst, hunger and despair.

A fat nurse with a motherly face happened to be passing by. "Nurse," I called out, "can I have some water?"

There was a shortage of glasses in the hospital. She found a glass jar and brought me some water. I couldn't sit up by myself. She put her arm around my back and put the jar to my lips. Eagerly, I gulped down the water along with the sympathy in her eyes.

Era mi último diciembre en prisión. En mayo del año siguiente, cumplía mis doce años de encierro. Dediqué todas mis vigiliass, a partir de entonces, a organizar a los presos, a infundir esperanza y a trazar metas.

Reunidos en el patio, discutíamos en voz baja, como si conversáramos.

De acuerdo: la lucha armada estaba fuera de toda posibilidad; Cuba posee el segundo ejército de América. Pretender que se alce un pueblo hambriento y aterrorizado, imposible. Pero la otra lucha, la solapada de los periódicos clandestinos salidos de presidio, la de los discursos, panfletos, versos, millaradas de libros denunciadores, posible en el destierro, estaba más vigente que nunca. Había que afincarse a destruir las murallas de mentiras con que la falsa revolución atraía a los intelectuales de izquierda y a los desposeídos de todas las tierras. Crear una corriente interminable de verdades como puños que las horadaran. Tras la dictadura, un gobierno provisional, la constitución del cuarenta revisada, poder judicial autónomo, capitalismo moderno con participación de los obreros, dirigido por empresarios técnicos y especialistas; democracia directa, individualismo responsable. Y, sobre todo, recuperadas para siempre, salvadas para la civilización, la libertad de pensar, de creer, de expresarse. Garantizados para el futuro, todos los derechos humanos. De este presidio, ahora anónimo, mantenido y rebelde y de las

This was supposed to be my last December in prison. My 12-year sentence was to end the following May. From that moment on, I spent all my waking hours trying to organize the prisoners, instilling hope and setting goals.

In the yard we discussed our plans quietly as if we were just chatting.

"Granted: armed resistance is out of the question! The Cuban army is the second strongest army in the Americas. We can hardly expect a frightened starving population to rise up in arms. But that's not the only way to fight: we can send out clandestine leaflets telling of conditions in prison. Abroad, we can make speeches, publish poems and tons of books to denounce conditions in Cuba. We have to work hard to counter the stream of lies used by these false revolutionaries to woo leftist intellectuals and poor people in other countries. We have to fire a barrage of truths to fight the Communist Lie. Once the dictator is overthrown, we can have a provisional government, reinstate the Constitution of 1940, and have an independent judicial system. We can have modern capitalism, with the participation of labour; firms run by competent technicians and managers, direct democracy and responsible individualism. And, above all else, we'll get back our freedom of thought, belief and expression. In the future, all human rights will be guaranteed. We, the former rebel prisoners, who have kept alive our ideals in these forsaken prisons, together with the

generaciones jóvenes de dentro y fuera de la Isla, saldrían los encargados de preservarlos siempre.

Yo sentía el poder alentador de mis palabras, nunca más sinceras y rebeldes. Nunca antes tan negadoras de mi destino personal. Sólo de noche, en la quebradiza pantalla del poco sueño, abrazaba a mis hijos y a mi mujer, a Irene.

El 30 de abril de 1974, me mandó a buscar, del Cuerpo de Guardia, el jefe de presidio.

El Hacha me exigió:

—Ponte el uniforme amarillo. Plantado no te sueltan. Fuera eres más útil que aquí.

Acepté y fui a la entrevista con el uniforme amarillo.

Me recibió Nazáreo del Monte. Ahora, era un hombre que había dejado detrás todas las certidumbres y seguía, sombra de sí mismo, fingiendo tenerlas. No miraba de frente, porque no vieran en sus ojos el trazo de la duda.

—Armenteros, usted cumple su condena dentro de diez días.

—Dentro de nueve días, ocho horas y cuarenta y siete minutos —precisé.

Levantó la vista de los papeles y se quedó mirándome como si se preguntara qué acero me sostenía aún.

—No lo vamos a soltar.

—Yo extinguí mi condena.

—Pero está sujeto a un expediente de peligrosidad.

—Entonces, tráslademe adonde están los ex presos hasta que pase la preventiva del expediente. Dentro de diez días no soy un preso político. Tendrán que darme visita diaria y cuanto por ley me corresponde. Además, necesito ver a mi abogado.

Los ojos de del Monte proyectaron sarcasmo.

—Comandante, ¿usted participó en la otra lucha? —le pregunté.

—No. Era muy joven.

—En aquel tiempo, cuando se lograba que los tri-

new generation, born both here and abroad, will make sure that human rights are never betrayed in Cuba again."

My words had never been more stimulating, sincere, or rebellious. I had never worried less about my personal wellbeing. Only at night, during my fitful moments of sleep, did I allow myself to dream of hugging my children and my wife Irene.

On April 30, 1974 the Commanding Officer of the Prison sent for me.

Toro advised me:

"Better wear the khaki uniform. They'll never release you, a plantado. Remember you're more useful outside than here in prison."

I knew he was right. When they took me to the Guard House I was wearing the khaki uniform.

Major Nazareo del Monte was waiting for me behind his desk. The former fanatic had long ago lost his zeal and his self-assurance, but he still pretended that his convictions were as firm as ever. He never looked straight at people, so they couldn't see the doubt in his eyes.

"Armenteros, in ten days you will have served your sentence."

"In nine days, eight hours and forty-seven minutes, to be precise," I replied.

He looked up from his papers and stared at me wondering what kind of metal I was made of.

"We're not releasing you."

"I've already served my sentence."

"We've opened a 'dangerousness' case against you. You're accused of being a threat to the Revolution."

"In that case, transfer me to where you keep prisoners who have already served their sentences, until the 'preventive' phase of the 'dangerousness' case is over. Ten days from now I'll no longer be a political prisoner; you have to allow me visitors daily and whatever I'm entitled to by law. And, I want to talk to my lawyer."

The expression in Major del Monte's eyes was full of sarcasm.

"Major," I asked him, "did you fight against Batista?"

"No. I didn't. I was too young."

"Under Batista, whenever we got the courts to order the release of some

bunales pusieran en libertad a un hombre, íbamos al Príncipe o La Cabaña con la orden de libertad en la mano. Muchas veces, apenas salía por el rastrillo, volvían a encarcelarlo. Esto, en el mejor de los casos. Si al salir no se asilaba inmediatamente, a los pocos días aparecía destrozado, con una bomba a la cintura. Dígame, ¿qué diferencia hay entre ésta y aquella?

—Armenteros, yo soy militar. ¡Las órdenes se cumplen; no se discuten! —contestó exasperado y a la vez impotente.

—El palo donde amarraban a los esbirros para fusilarlos, está lleno de sangre de hombres que usaron ese mismo pretexto para justificar los horrores que se cometieron.

—No tenemos más nada que hablar. ¡Retírese!

—Usted no tendrá nada más que hablar, pero yo voy a estar hablando y escribiendo cartas hasta que me liberen o me maten.

Esa noche, creyendo que el momento era propicio para doblegarme, se me acercó Vitiligo:

—¿Usted ha pensado, Armenteros, cuánto pesaría a su favor, en el caso de que le celebren juicio, el hecho de aceptar la rehabilitación?

—¿Y usted ha pensado, teniente, que yo no me he pasado doce años en calzoncillos, sin comida, tapiado, inválido, para venir a rehabilitarme ahora?

Me miró sorprendido, aquilatándose.

Pasaron meses.

member of the underground locked up in El Príncipe or La Cabaña, we immediately took the court order to the prison, in person, to make sure they were properly released. Quite often, they were arrested again as soon as they were out on the streets. And those were the lucky ones. Scores of others unable to get asylum right away in a foreign embassy were found a few days later, their bodies blown to bits by a bomb tied around the waist. So, you tell me, what's the difference between Batista's regime and Castro's?"

"Armenteros, I'm a military man. I just follow orders, I don't question them, he replied in helpless exasperation.

"The same stake at which Batista's officers were shot is covered with the blood of many of your fellow officers who gave just that excuse to justify their actions."

"We have nothing more to discuss. You can go back now!"

"Maybe you don't have anything else to say, but I'll keep right on talking and writing letters until you either release me or kill me."

That night, I was approached by Vitiligo, the officer in charge of the rehabilitation program, who thought the time was ripe to break me.

"Armenteros, have you thought that the tribunal might show leniency if you accept the political rehabilitation program?"

"Lieutenant, do you honestly expect me to give up now after I've spent twelve years in underpants, after you practically starved me to death, after you kept me in a blackout cell, after you made an invalid of me?"

He couldn't believe his ears. Obviously, he didn't know me as well as he thought he did.

Six months passed before I heard anything about my new trial.

CHAPTER 4

IDENTIFICATION OF TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES IN PLANTADO

4.1 General considerations

As Nida has pointed out, "perhaps the most important aspect in finding satisfactory solutions to problems involving form and content is to become aware of the difficulties. Most problems remain unsolved because translators are not fully sensitive to them. In fact, awareness usually means that the problem is at least half-solved. (1981:59)

When analyzing the text for features indicative of potential problems, the translator has to be aware of the strong influence his own cultural background may play. When translating from his native language into a foreign language, the translator possesses an excellent knowledge of the SL and understands the cultural patterns of behaviour and the corresponding presuppositions in the original culture. This may help him analyze the function and significance of a number of special features of form and content, e.g., he may have a much better comprehension of neologisms and slang. However, working into a foreign language may also be a liability for the translator, who may not be able to recognize all translation difficulties, whether SL- or TL-dependent. For instance, the translator:

- might be so familiar with his own native language (the SL), that he is unable to recognize all SL colloquialisms and slang;
- might not be able to achieve adequate detachment from the cultural patterns of behaviour and the corresponding presuppositions in the SL, which may unconsciously lead him to assume TL readers will also know what he does;
- may not have all the information needed to understand the cultural background of the TL culture, which may make it difficult for him to find TL equivalents;
- might not be able to imagine how TL native speakers are going to respond to his choice of equivalents.

To compensate for any limitations due to my own cultural background, my analysis of Plantado for potentially problematic textual features was complemented by informal consultations both with some SL native speakers and native speakers of the TL. These consultations involved:

- analyzing the SL excerpts with other native speakers of the SL whose country of origin was different from mine. This led to the identification of several lexical and syntactical differences between the language of Plantado and

standard Spanish, which I might otherwise have missed, and helped me to recognize the impact of some SL expressions;

- explaining the contents of the novel — in the target language — to several TL native speakers having a very limited knowledge of the source language and culture. This was an invaluable means for detecting or confirming areas lacking cultural correspondence and points needing expansion or explanation.

- informal discussions with native speakers of English in which the translator presented several TL alternatives to render SL difficulties, in order to determine the relative acceptability of the various TL alternatives and determine the closest natural equivalent in the target language. This proved to be an effective way of testing the intelligibility of the TL text to the average reader.

- submitting draft translations of the various excerpts to average native English readers in order to ascertain the impact and appropriateness of formal features in the TL text.

These various consultations with native speakers of the TL gradually led me to see more and more features in the ST that required adjustment, expansion or comment in the TL, and helped me avoid unnatural expressions in the translation while still retaining the flavour of the original.

4.2 Textual analysis

The analysis of any text to be translated into another language generally leads to the detection of particular features which suggest that there may be certain underlying problems involved in reproducing its meaning in a target language.

Nida mentions eleven common textual features which cause difficulties for translators: 1) idioms; 2) figurative meanings; 3) any object that does not occur in the receptor culture; 4) any activity that would seem strange to persons in the receptor culture; 5) any implied presuppositions that may be contrary to those of the receptor culture; 6) expressions of psychological experience; 7) highly generic terms; 8) linguistic forms that are quite different from those in the target language; 9) sequences of events in nonhistorical order; 10) poetic structures; and 11) large units of discourse. (1981:64) To these eleven basic features, Nida adds seven more while discussing the types of translation problems justifying supplementary information: (1) important divergencies in original texts; (2) significantly different interpretations of the text; (3) historical events that may be misleading or meaningless to the TL reader; (4) illustrative events; (5) figurative expressions; (6) objects that may differ in form or function in the receptor culture; and (7) zero expressions. (1981:71)

Textual analysis on the basis of Nida's categorization of problematic features, combined with consultations with TL native speakers, led to the identification of some one hundred and thirty translation difficulties in the translated excerpts of Plantado, which were classified in two main groups, each containing three categories:

Group I, Cultural Problems, comprises the following three categories:

- a) Objects that do not occur, or that differ in form or function, in the receptor culture;
- b) Historical events, figures and institutions that may be unknown in the receptor culture;
- c) Activities that would seem strange to persons in the receptor culture and implied presuppositions that may be contrary to those of the receptor culture;

Group II, Problems involving figurative expressions, comprises the following three categories:

- d) Perera's metaphors and nicknames she invented;
- e) Prison slang (terms dealing with food, the different kinds of prisoners, various prison-related objects and facts);
- f) Cuban colloquialisms, vulgar expressions and idioms.

The remainder of this chapter is a list of all translation difficulties identified in the translated excerpts of Plantado, classified by group and category. A capsule was prepared for each translation problem. All capsules are numbered and follow a standardized format. The first line of each capsule (the headline) comprises three elements: the SL translation problem (printed in bold small capitals), followed by a literal translation in italics between square brackets — when appropriate — and the TL term or expression chosen to render it (printed in regular small capitals).

The capsules dealing with cultural problems provide a historical or cultural background to facilitate comprehension and may also include a discussion of pertinent features of the term or expression in question. In the case of capsules dealing with figures of speech, slang and colloquialisms, when the meaning of the English term chosen to render the Spanish term is not self-evident (as in the case of metaphors), a definition is provided in bold face characters. In some cases, alternative renderings have been provided between square brackets; these are either adjuncts to facilitate comprehension, or expressions used in the earlier draft English versions of the novel which were later abandoned.

The presentation of each group of problems is preceded by a short discussion in which the coverage of the categories contained therein is analyzed and, where applicable, the concepts involved are defined. An analysis of the translation of these problematic features is presented in Chapter 5.

GENERAL LIST OF TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

4.3 Cultural problems

Cultural problems in Plantado, some knowledge of which is necessary for proper comprehension of the novel, fall into three major categories

The category ‘objects that do not occur, or that differ in form or function, in the receptor culture’ includes references to special types of prisons and confinement arrangements found in Castro’s Cuba, and terms designating different classes of Cuban political prisoners, opponents of Castro and semi-religious Cuban beliefs.

The category ‘historical events, figures and institutions’ includes historical dates, names of Cuban historical figures, political parties, underground movements — working either against Batista or Castro — and revolutionary institutions. This category also includes allusions to historical events.

The category ‘activities that would seem strange to persons in the receptor culture and implied presuppositions that may be contrary to those of the receptor culture’ includes both activities or expressions the significance or meaning of which may be misunderstood by TL readers, and events or objects which should not be interpreted in terms of the receptor viewpoint. Each of the

elements that have been identified as cultural problems are presented with a brief background note below.

4.3.1 Objects that do not occur or that differ in form or function in the receptor culture

1) PROGRAMA DE REHABILITACIÓN POLÍTICA : POLITICAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The objective of Political Rehabilitation is to reduce the number of men within the prisons who continue to repudiate the government. The authorities promise the prisoners better treatment, frequent family visits, correspondence, prompt return to freedom, and reintegration into the new society. In exchange for this, the authorities demand that the prisoner renounce the attitude he has maintained theretofore. In order for the prisoner's file to be closed once and for all, the prisoner must collaborate with the Political Police, inform on his fellow prisoners, make a self-criticism, write an apology for previous 'counterrevolutionary' activity, and confess everything he hid during the interrogations.

2) PRISIÓN : PRISON

As used in the translation, prison refers to numerous maximum security detention centres throughout the island, either fortresses dating back to colonial times (La Cabaña, El Príncipe and El Morro in Havana being the best-known) or modern prisons built in the 20th century (i.e., the Model Prison on the Isle of Pines). In all provinces there are also G-2 (secret

police) prisons where detainees are kept totally incommunicado without a trial for up to several months while being interrogated.

3) **LA CABAÑA : LA CABAÑA**

The fortress of La Cabaña was built by the Spaniards almost two and a half centuries ago to protect the entrance to the port of Havana. When the English took the port in 1762, the first thing they did was to secure this fortress. Because of its location, it was said, "Whoever holds La Cabaña holds the key to the city". After Castro took power, it was converted into a political prison. Prisoners were held in galeras, large rooms below ground carved inside the ramparts, which had served the many purposes of a colonial fortress over the centuries: barracks, storerooms, ammunition magazines, and so on; these galeras were barred and used as large cells by Castro's regime. It was in La Cabaña's deep moats that most executions by firing squad were carried out.

4) **CARCEL DE BONIATO : BONIATO PRISON**

The most repressive of all the prisons and forced labour camps in Cuba. Located at the extreme eastern end of the island, Boniato prison is extremely isolated. It is built in a valley, surrounded by military encampments, far away from towns and highways. Boniato prison is made up of five large building complexes. Each complex has a long steel-mesh passageway connecting a series of eight perpendicular two-story buildings, four on each side, spaced several metres distance from one another down the passageway. During the late sixties and early seventies, Boniato prison was the installation of choice for holding prisoners completely incommunicado, where they were beaten and tortured, and had biological or psychological experiments performed on them in "blackout cells".

5) **PRISIÓN DE ISLA DE PINOS : ISLE OF PINES PRISON**

The so-called Model Prison on the Isle of Pines was the largest in Cuba before Castro. The Cuban dictator Gerardo Machado had it built in the 1930s. When somebody asked Machado why he had the prison built so large and hinted that it would never be filled, Machado answered, "Don't you worry. Somebody will come along who'll manage to fill it up." Fidel Castro proved him right.

The prison complex comprised six buildings: two enormous five-story high rectangular buildings and four huge, seven-story iron-and-concrete circular buildings, the Circulares, built to house 930 inmates each, into which 1,300 would be crammed. At their centre stood the dining hall, a two-story high building, also circular. It could handle five thousand men at one sitting; the kitchen and storerooms were in that building as well.

In 1961, after receiving intelligence reports that an invasion was likely to take place on the south coast of Cuba, Castro ordered TNT charges to be placed in all prison buildings, and gave prison authorities express orders to blow up the whole complex, where over 6000 political prisoners were being held, if an invading force approached the prison.

6) **GRANJAS [*farms*] : FORCED LABOUR CAMPS**

Concentration camps comprised of several barracks under strict military guard. They are surrounded by several tall barbed wire fences and are provided with guardposts with spotlights and machine guns. These camps are located in very strategic places from the point of view of forced labour, in areas where workers are most needed.

7) **FRENTE ABIERTO [*open front*] : FORCED LABOUR SITES**

Work sites to which prisoners are assigned for an indeterminate period. Although run by the military, these frentes abiertos are not surrounded by armed guards. Once a month, prisoners are granted a three-day pass. Most frentes abiertos are building sites where minimum-security prisoners assemble prefabricated concrete modules produced by prisoners on granjas. Much of what goes up in Cuba is built thanks to the work of both political and common prisoners.

8) **PRESOS POLÍTICOS : POLITICAL PRISONERS**

In the late 19th century, when Cuba was still under colonial rule, Spanish legislation governing prison life provided a clear distinction between common criminals and political prisoners. This distinction was later embodied in the Constitution of the Cuban republic. The law established that political prisoners were to be kept separate from common criminals, were not to be forced to do hard labour, and were allowed special privileges. Castro's regime refused to accept any such legal distinction. Most political prisoners under Castro were former revolutionaries from the 26th of July, the Directorio Revolucionario, the Communist Party, revolutionaries who risked their lives in the underground against Batista, former guerrillas who fought alongside Castro in the mountains, members of the Orthodox Party, followers of Antonio Guiteras, former union leaders, students, farmers, intellectuals.

9) **LOS AZULES [*the blues*] : THE BLUES**

Political prisoners who accepted the rehabilitation program were dressed in the blue uniform of common prisoners. In 1967, the authorities launched a plan to force all political prisoners to wear the blue uniform

— the same uniform worn by the common prisoners. The rationale of this undertaking was that Castro's regime recognized only one class of prisoners — common prisoners — and therefore all prisoners had to wear the designated uniform. The government's intention was to simply make the category of 'political prisoner' disappear, by having political prisoners taken for common criminals.

10) LOS AMARILLOS [*the yellows*] : THE KHAKIS

Political prisoners who rejected the Political Rehabilitation Plan were forced to wear khaki uniforms (the colour of the army uniforms before Castro). Political prisoners who rejected the rehabilitation program refused to accept the blue uniform because, if they did, they would disappear instantly into the mass of more than 100,000 common prisoners then being held in Cuban prisons and jails.

11) CALZONCILLOS [*underpants*] : THE UNDERPANTS

Prisoners who refused to wear any uniform — either the blue or the khaki — to protest against the atrocities in prison and who refused to collaborate with the authorities in any way. In La Cabaña, prisoners who refused to put on the blue uniform were stripped of all their belongings and were transferred to several widely separated galeras completely empty of furnishings, where they were reduced to wearing only undershorts. This occurred in the last days of July 1967. In their attempt to force these rebels to surrender, prison authorities denied them any visits and refused to provide them with any clothing for years. Faced with the stubborn opposition of a great many prisoners, the authorities weeded out their leaders, scattered them through all the prisons and forced labour camps in the country, and subjected them to the most abject forms of tortures.

12) *PLANTADOS [the ones who planted themselves]* : PLANTADOS

Political prisoners who would not join the Rehabilitation Program under any circumstances or after any sort of 'persuasion'. These rebels developed an inflexible determination to resist, convinced that they were a symbol of resistance for the entire country. Among the many means used to manipulate these diehards, the authorities would forbid all visitors for months on end and, in some cases, even years. When not held totally incommunicado, plantados were allowed only one letter every three months.

13) *GALERAS [galleries]* : GALERAS

In La Cabaña prison, prisoners were held in galeras, vaulted galleries shaped like tunnels, open at both ends. One end of each faced the moat that surrounded the fortress. That outward-facing end of the galeras was secured by two iron gratings of thick bars. The walls were about three feet thick, so the gratings, which were on the exterior and interior faces of the walls, were about a metre apart. There were two masonry observation posts, called garitas, at the top of the wall around the prison yard, from which guards with machine guns always kept the prison yard, the prisoners, and the iron bars of the cells under surveillance. On many occasions, galeras held more than three hundred prisoners each. When it was time to sleep, they could not all physically fit on the floor, and so had to take turns. They had to lie down literally cheek to cheek with their cellmates, while a few dozen stood up at the entrance gate awaiting their turn to sleep.

14) GAVETAS [*drawers*] : DRAWER CELLS

The most terrible cells that have ever existed in the history of the Cuban prison system. They were thus named for the very good reason that they were long (one and half metres) and narrow (about half a meter), and shaped like drawers. Those cells had only a hole in which to defecate. In 1968, in Boniato prison, plantados were stripped of their underwear, beaten senseless, and put into drawer cells to force them to put on the blue uniform.

15) TAPIADAS [*totally walled-in cells*] : BLACKOUT CELLS

Maximum solitary confinement cells in Boniato prison. Each blackout-cell hallway looked like a crypt, with twenty niches on each side. The cells were about three metres long by one and a half metres wide. In one corner there was a hole for a latrine, and above it, almost at ceiling level, a piece of bent tubing, the shower. There were two prisoners to a cell. In the early 1970's, prisoners in blackout cells were subjected to biological experiments devised by both Cuban and Eastern European scientists to study the effects of diet composition and calorie restriction, disorienting situations, wasting diseases, etc.

16) ALZADOS [*the ones who rose (in revolt)*] : ANTI-CASTRO REBELS

From 1960 on, many anti-Castro guerrillas operated in several provinces in Cuba, mostly in the Escambray mountains. To exterminate them, Castro set in motion a gigantic operation called la Limpia del Escambray [Escambray Cleanup], which involved more than sixty thousand troops. To hide the fact that there was such fierce resistance on the part of the people living in the countryside, the government called them "bandits", and a special force was created to deal with the insurgents. This force

was called the Batallones de Lucha Contra Bandidos [Bandit Control Battalions], better known by the Spanish initials, LCB.

17) PERMISO DE SALIDA [*exit permit*] : EXIT VISA

Anybody who asks for permission to leave the country is considered from that moment on a 'traitor to the Revolution.' If the would-be expatriates are working, the applicants are fired from their jobs and immediately transferred as far away from their home as possible. In the sixties and seventies, they were sent to the most remote parts of the country, to do agricultural work. There they would sometimes spend six or seven months on end without being able to see their family, since distances, lack of money and time made a trip home almost impossible. Both men and women would live in loathsome, foul-smelling barracks lacking adequate sanitary facilities. It was usual to spend two or even three years in these conditions and, even at the end of that period, some people were still not allowed to leave the country. When this situation was repeatedly denounced in the foreign press, the Cuban government changed the working conditions slightly for those people wanting to leave Cuba: they could sometimes remain close to their families if they took menial or dangerous jobs, such as road sweepers, grave diggers, alligator farm workers, etc., that nobody else would accept.

18) EXPEDIENTE DE PELIGROSIDAD [*'dangerousness' case*] : (THEY WILL OPEN)

A 'DANGEROUSNESS' CASE AGAINST YOU AND YOU'LL ROT IN PRISON

Under Castro, all Cuban males between the ages of 16 and 65 are forced by law to work for the government. It is illegal for men not to work, or to be self-employed. People who break this law are presumed to be 'dangerous' for the stability of the government, and can be arrested and

held in jail, without a trial, for an indeterminate length of time, while the authorities investigate whether the detainee has, in fact, committed any crimes while remaining idle.

19) **SANTERÍA** [*cult of saints*] : SANTERÍA

Cults devoted to certain African divinities formally identified with Catholic saints. The outstanding trait of the cults is the syncretism that has taken place over the years, in which African (mainly Yoruban) gods have been equated with Catholic figures. These cults are the religious heritage left by Negro slaves and have many similarities with the Afro-Brazilian cults, known as candomblé, macumba, and xango.

It has always been impossible to determine how many people participate in these cults, because before the revolution most participants were nominally Catholic, and since 1959 they receive no publicity. However, the importance of Afro-Cuban cults cannot be underestimated: they have made their presence felt in literature, dance, painting, etc., and, in fact, have shaped a great deal of Cuban folklore. These cults have always been more prevalent among Blacks and in rural areas. Despite their self-professed belief in Marxism-Leninism, many of Castro's closest advisors strongly believe in santería. Some analysts have pointed out the existence of a widespread belief within those circles that Castro himself is invincible because of the protection granted him by one of the deities.

Cult activities are usually held in the houses of the cult leaders, who care for the altar room where the symbols of the gods are kept and where food and drink is offered to them regularly. The gods are fêted on specific days during the year. Each member of the cult 'belongs' to one, or perhaps, two gods and must pay homage to him on his feast day. Each god has his own food, dress, ornaments, and colours, and the followers of

a particular god will dress in the costume of the god for the ceremony. The ceremony begins with the request to the devil to leave the group in peace. Once the devil is dispatched, drums and tambourines start playing the music of the particular African deity whose feast it is, while the participants dance in a circle and sing the song of that deity. As the music grows more frenzied, the dancing increases in speed. It goes on for many hours, and at intervals one or another of the participants will reach a state of exhaustion and hallucination and fall into a trance, known as falling "into the saint". Cult members believe that during this psychological state the deity takes possession of the body of the individual.

20) **ESPIRITISMO [*Spiritualism*] : SPIRITUALISM**

Another semi-religious phenomenon which became important in Cuba in the mid-20th century. It is essentially an urban phenomenon. Like the santería cultists, many of the spiritualists are nominally Catholics and see no difficulty in reconciling the two practices. The centres sometimes have a Catholic altar and always have religious inscriptions and designs on the walls. Sessions consist of the blessing of the water which, at the end of the meeting, is distributed to the sick; reading of the Gospel; prayer or confession of sins; and, possession of the bodies of mediums by the spirits of the dead, which is the climactic act of the cult. Cult members believe that, through the medium, the spirit answers questions from the group, suggests remedies for sickness, and gives counsel and consolation. The spirit, however, is not that of a distinct individual, but rather the spirit of one of the African gods or an Amerindian spirit. Spiritualism is very widespread among the lower and middle classes.

4.3.2 Historical events, figures and institutions

21) 10 DE OCTUBRE : OCTOBER 10TH

Anniversary of the outbreak of the first war of independence — The Ten Years' War (1868-1878). Long-simmering discontent with Spanish rule erupted into civil war between 1868 and 1878 with an estimated 200,000 casualties and extensive property damage. Spanish arms eventually crushed the revolt, and quickly suppressed a renewed effort in 1880.

22) 20 DE MAYO : MAY 20TH

The Cuban republic was inaugurated on May 20, 1902 under Estrada Palma. Spanish authority had ceased on January 1, 1899, and was followed by American 'military' rule from Jan.1, 1899 to May 20, 1902.

23) MARIANA GRAJALES

The stoic mother of a long line of black heroes of the 1895 War of Independence, who would see them die fighting colonial rule. The most remarkable of her sons was General Antonio Maceo, the most feared Cuban leader during the last Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898).

24) PRESIDENT MACHADO (1925-1933)

General Gerardo Machado was elected in 1925. During the first years of his administration, some progress was made toward greater Cuban participation in its own industries, notably the sugar companies owned by American firms. The central highway running the length of Cuba was begun and completed and tourism was fostered to supplement the economy. In May 1928, the constitution was altered to perpetuate Machado in office, and on November 1, 1928 Machado was re-elected.

Political opposition, allayed by an adroit distribution of patronage in 1928, grew against President Machado as the economic depression worsened. From 1930 to 1933, running battles between Machado and his opponents, centred at the University of Havana, became frequent occurrences. To silence criticism, his private gunmen beat, tortured, murdered, and generally terrorized people suspected of opposition to his rule. Repressive measures, instead of silencing opposition, incited an outbreak of violence. In August 1933, a general strike forced Machado to flee the country.

25) REVOLUCIÓN DEL 33 : REVOLUTION OF 1933

In 1933, the conduct of Cuban dictator Gerardo ('the Butcher') Machado grew more and more outrageous. He had looted the Cuban treasury of millions and, to silence criticism, his private gunmen beat, tortured, murdered, and generally terrorized people suspected of opposing his rule. Desperate Cubans, pointing out that the Platt Amendment gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba's domestic affairs, appealed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt to 'do something.' Opposed to intervention in principle, FDR nevertheless sent warships to Cuban waters and ordered the U.S. ambassador in Havana, Sumner Welles, to demand Machado's resignation and to arrange for new elections. The American ambassador was faced in 1933, not with the problem envisaged by the Platt amendment, that of a government threatened by popular violence, but rather with the problem of a people threatened by the violence of the government. His good offices were accepted, a general amnesty was declared and constitutional and political reforms were undertaken. In the event, no formal intervention by the United States took place, for in August 1933 a general strike sent Machado fleeing for his life while his agents were hunted to death.

A coalition of parties named Dr. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes as provisional President and set aside the Constitution of 1928. His term in office lasted just over twenty days, during which time Roosevelt made it clear that he was opposed to the Platt Amendment and intended never to invoke it again. On September 4, 1933 a group of noncommissioned officers led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, who had the backing of a radical group of Havana University students, ousted their senior officers, overthrew the Céspedes government, and set up a revolutionary Junta having as its head, Dr. Grau San Martín.

The revolution of 1933 brought to power a new group of political leaders, consisting of reform-minded nationalists who advocated government action to raise the cultural, social, and economic levels of the people. Critical of the United States and foreign business interests, these young revolutionaries assailed foreign influences in Cuban life as threats to the nation's honour, dignity, and economic well-being. The revolutionaries, however, quarrelled bitterly amongst themselves. The growing opposition to Machado coincided with the spread of radical ideas from the socialist movements in Europe, which appealed to the younger Cuban generation — the 1930 Generation. In varying degrees, leftist orientation ostensibly characterized all of the diverse militant groups that sprang up in those years. The University of Havana became a centre of ideological preaching and political involvement. From its classrooms came scores of student leaders with various, often conflicting, degrees of radicalism who would figure prominently in political events for the next three decades.

26) **PRESIDENT GRAU**

A prominent physician and member of the University of Havana faculty who became head of a revolutionary Junta installed in 1933. After four months of intermittent and bloody strife, during which time the United States refused recognition of any Cuban government, Dr. Grau, deserted by some of the students and faced with renewed strikes, was forced by Batista to resign on January 18, 1934.

Grau San Martín won the 1944 elections called by President Batista in compliance with the new 1940 constitution, which forbade the re-election of the chief executive. In external affairs, Grau San Martín stood for a more independent attitude towards the United States; at home, he pledged to put an end to the maladministration and corruption of the preceding regime. However, he found it impossible to stamp out the corruption that Batista had allowed to flourish in the army, police, and civil service. Although his regime was able to spend large amounts on education, public health, and workers' housing because of the country's growing prosperity, it was characterized by exceedingly widespread corruption, perhaps the worst known up to that time. Popular support for Grau San Martín crumbled when it became evident that he was following precedent by looting the Cuban treasury.

27) **PARTIDO AUTÉNTICO [*'Authentic' Party*] : AUTÉNTICO [PARTY]**

Political party created in the mid 1930's by former President Grau San Martín, who became President in 1944. He was succeeded by another Auténtico, Carlos Prío Socarrás, who had been Grau's minister of labour and had played a leading role in helping Auténtico members take control of the labour movement away from the Communists in 1947. Although Prío's administration was marked by corruption and by a considerable

degree of gangsterlike criminal activity, it was also characterized by absolute respect for the rights of political opponents and by important steps to strengthen the economy. The Prío regime also established the Bank of Agricultural and Industrial Development, as well as the Tribunal de Cuentas, equivalent to the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, in an attempt to limit government corruption.

28) GUITERISTAS : FOLLOWERS OF ANTONIO GUITERAS

Guiteras was a leftist leader who, as Minister in the four-month government of President Grau (1933), negotiated the abrogation of the Platt Amendment (a clause in the Cuban Constitution authorizing U.S. military intervention in Cuba), expropriation of the U.S.-owned electricity and telephone utilities, the eight-hour working day, and other social benefits.

29) CONSTITUCIÓN DE 1940 : CONSTITUTION OF 1940

By 1939, Batista had gained the support of many liberal and left-wing groups, including the Communists, whose backing he won in return for allowing them to reorganize the labour movement. At Batista's bidding, a constituent assembly was elected, and it wrote a Constitution that was one of the most democratic in the hemisphere.

The new Constitution of 1940 focused on both social and political issues. It sought to crystallize the social progress made in recent years (and some had been made) by a series of provisions abolishing discrimination on the basis of race or sex, providing for a minimum working week and holidays with pay, and establishing a state social insurance scheme. On the political side it provided for a system of semi-parliamentary government, the satisfactory working of which demanded a degree of responsibility

which the Cuban politicians as a whole did not possess. Under the Constitution of 1940, all Cuban citizens, men and women, had the right to vote and form political parties. Presidential elections were to be held every four years. The Constitution also stated that it was the duty of government to provide education, prevent unemployment, regulate working hours and conditions, and maintain programs of social insurance.

30) **PARTIDO ORTODOXO [*'Orthodox' Party*] : ORTODOXO [PARTY]**

Left-of-centre political party formed in 1947 by a breakaway group from the Auténtico party, who were discontented with the corruption of the two Auténtico administrations (1944-1952). The Ortodoxo party was led by Senator Eduardo (Eddy) Chibás; although he committed suicide in 1951 after a television program in which he denounced the corruption of the administration, his party continued to grow. All observers and pollsters agreed that the Ortodoxo party had a good chance of winning the 1952 elections, which developed into a contest between Ortodoxo candidate Roberto Agramonte and the Auténticos' Carlos Hevia. Fidel Castro was an Ortodoxo candidate for the House of Representatives in the 1952 elections, which were ultimately aborted by Batista's coup.

31) **MOVIMIENTO 26 DE JULIO : 26TH OF JULY MOVEMENT**

A political group formed by Fidel Castro in 1955. In 1953, Castro gathered about him some 170 young men, many of whom came from the lower-middle or even lower classes, but included some like himself of middle-class or provincial upper-class origin and, on July 26, 1953, he launched an attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago, the capital of the province of Oriente. Many of his followers were killed in the attack or later, but Castro himself was captured and imprisoned. He was

sentenced to fifteen years in the Model Prison on the Isle of Pines, south of Cuba. In May 1955, after serving seventeen months, he was granted an amnesty, permitted to leave the country for Mexico unmolested, and allowed to publish his announcement of armed revolution in the press. On his release, Castro organized a new group, to be known as the 26th of July Movement (in memory of the Moncada assault).

32) DIRECTORIO REVOLUCIONARIO ESTUDIANTEL : STUDENTS' REVOLUTIONARY DIRECTORATE

Organization formed among Havana University students. Its leader, José Antonio Echevarría was slain during a bloody and unsuccessful attack on the Presidential Palace, Batista's residence, in March 1957. In early 1958, the students' organization opened an armed front in the Escambray mountains, in central Cuba, under Faure Chomón and Rolando Cubelas. These guerrillas played an active role in the capture of main towns in the province of Las Villas in late 1958 — fighting side by side with two columns sent by Castro from his powerbase in eastern Oriente province.

33) 30 DE NOVIEMBRE : NOVEMBER 30TH MOVEMENT

Underground movement against Castro founded by several union leaders, former Castro supporters. The most prominent of these leaders was David Salvador, who went to jail under Batista because of his work for Castro. After the revolution he became the militantly pro-Castro and 'anti-Yankee' Secretary General of the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC). In November 1959, the 26th of July Movement swept the national congress of the trade unions, defeated the Communist slate, and confirmed David Salvador as secretary general. But Castro, appearing in person at the congress, demanded acceptance of the Communist program

of 'unity'. Castro prevailed upon Salvador to propose candidates who had been handpicked by Castro for the CTC directorate. However, Salvador continued his fight for a free labour movement. He abandoned his post as Secretary-General of the CTC in March 1960 and initiated a clandestine struggle against the regime. A year later he was arrested as he tried to escape from Cuba, and thrown back again into a Cuban jail — this time not Batista's, but Castro's.

34) **MOVIMIENTO REVOLUCIONARIO DEL PUEBLO (M.R.P.) : PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**

Underground movement against Castro founded by Manuel Ray Rivero in early 1960. Ray, one of the best-known leaders of the 26th of July Movement, organized the anti-Batista underground in Havana. He served as Castro's Minister of Public Works in 1959. He resigned from his post at the end of November 1959.

35) **COMITÉS DE DEFENSA DE LA REVOLUCIÓN (CDR) [*Committees for the Defense of the Revolution*] : VIGILANCE COMMITTEES**

Because of the rising internal opposition to his regime, Castro considered that full-time security organizations were not sufficient to control opponents. Therefore, on September 28, 1960, Castro announced the creation of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) as a system of the people's 'collective vigilance'. The CDR's were Castro's invention because nothing on such a scale exists even in the Soviet Union (there is a CDR for every urban block, in every plant and on every farm). Their immediate function is to keep the police and the State Security Department informed of strangers appearing in their neighbourhoods, of citizens voicing criticisms of the regime, and so on.

36) **G-2** [*G-2 branch*] : SECRET POLICE

Upon Castro's arrival to power, all existing armed forces and police institutions were disbanded and replaced by his 'Rebel Army'. The G-2 branch of that Army was entrusted with intelligence activities at a national level against both military and civilians. Beginning in early 1960, G-2 men received training from Soviet and East European secret services. In the 1970's, the G-2 changed its name to Departamento de Seguridad del Estado [State Security Department].

4.3.3 Activities that would seem strange to persons in the receptor culture and implied presuppositions that may be contrary to those of the receptor culture

37) **REYES** : EPIPHANY

REGALO DE REYES [*Epiphany present*] : CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Epiphany, or Twelfth-Day, celebrated on January 6th, commemorates the visit by the Magi to the infant Jesus. In Cuba, children received presents on January 6th, not on Christmas day.

38) **RECOGER CAFÉ EN ORIENTE** [*pick up coffee (beans) in Oriente (province)*] :

...[WHO] WILL BE SENT TO THE MOUNTAINS OF ORIENTE TO PICK COFFEE BEANS FOR SIX WEEKS EVERY YEAR. SHE HAS NO CHOICE IF SHE WANTS TO GO TO HIGH SCHOOL

Since the early 1960's, Cuban students at all levels (grades 7 and up) have been forced to do 'productive work' for periods of varying length during their school year. They receive no remuneration, but cannot refuse to

work if they want to continue in school. Work takes place where workers are most needed, usually on various types of plantations — although university students are often sent to work in factories. Since the early 1970's, all new high schools have been built in the countryside, away from major urban centres. This plan is called 'escuela al campo' ['Schools to the countryside']. In order to encourage families to send their children away to these new schools, parents are allowed to keep the children's food ration cards — as opposed to the families of prisoners, who must surrender the prisoners' ration cards. High school students are permitted a weekly 24-hour leave. Daily activities are split evenly between work in the fields and regular instruction. The small proportion of students who still attend urban schools are also required to work in the fields for periods of up to two months every year.

- 39) COMUNISTA DEL AÑO 30 [A 1930's Communist] : ...WHO, FORTUNATELY ENOUGH, WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE EXTREMISTS NEWLY CONVERTED TO COMMUNISM, BUT WAS RATHER A 1930'S COMMUNIST

The Communist 'old guard' did not feel the same pressure to prove their allegiance to Castro as did the latter supporters of his regime, who did not have the 'credentials' of the older generation of Communists. Beginning in late 1959, Castro instituted widespread purges against his former comrades-in-arms. To be safe from persecution, they had to ostensibly demonstrate their support for the Leader and the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

- 40) ¡POR TU MADRE! [*for your mother ('s sake)!]* : FOR GOD'S SAKE!
 Mothers play a very important cultural role in Catholic, Latin countries. This is reflected in language in many ways. The worst kind of personal

verbal offense is to have somebody 'call' your mother names. The opposite is also true: as shown in the above expression, the strongest way of requesting somebody's help, mercy, attention, etc. is by appealing to that person's feelings for his mother.

4.4 Problems involving figurative speech

In this overall category are found elements that, at first, seem very different from each other: Perera's figures of speech per se, nicknames she has invented, prison slang, Cuban colloquialisms, vulgarisms and slang. However, as the definitions below will show and as the examples presented reveal even more clearly, all these elements share a common feature, that of imagery.

4.4.1 Definitions

Metaphor

Strictu sensu, a metaphor is a figure of speech involving an implicit comparison between two things unlike in most respects but alike in the respect in which they are compared, as distinguished from a simile, an explicit comparison. However, what is supposed to be included under the term metaphor is at variance among authors. Corbett restricts the term metaphor to

just one of many tropes, deviations from the ordinary and principal signification of a word (metonymy, personification, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, etc.) (1971:479). Others conceive of metaphor as comprising kenning, conceit, personification, and synecdoche, and sometimes consider both allegory and symbol as extended metaphors. Even broader definitions are preferred by others such as Newmark, who defines metaphor as "any figurative expression" (1988:104).

For the sake of simplicity, in this thesis, a broad definition of metaphor has been adopted. In this context, 'metaphor' is meant to cover both metaphors proper and personifications in Perera's Plantado. However, similes, in which the point of similarity between the object and the image is made more explicit, are excluded.

Colloquialisms and slang

The Random House Unabridged Dictionary defines three types of speech or usages not on a formal level: colloquial "often mistakenly used with a connotation of disapproval [...]; it is merely a familiar style used in speaking rather than in writing"; conversational, "a style used in the oral exchange of ideas, opinions, etc.," and informal "the ordinary, everyday language of cultivated speakers." In the same dictionary, slang is defined as "very informal usage in vocabulary and idiom that is characteristically more metaphorical, playful, elliptical, vivid, and ephemeral than ordinary language." Webster's Third

International defines colloquialism as "an expression considered more appropriate to familiar conversation than to formal speech or to formal writing" and slang as "a non-standard vocabulary composed of words and senses characterized primarily by connotations of extreme informality and usually a currency not limited to a particular region and composed typically of coinages or arbitrarily changed words, clipped or shortened forms, extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech, or verbal novelties usually experiencing quick popularity and relatively rapid decline into disuse." Webster's quotes G. L. Kittredge to the effect that slang words frequently rise to the rank of colloquialisms.

The line between colloquialisms and slang is so hard to draw that The New College Standard Dictionary packages both in one term: popular. The Merriam editors have solved the dilemma by abandoning the label colloq. while continuing to identify slang. Though other dictionaries try to distinguish the two, slang is certainly colloquial in the sense that it is more common in the spoken language. The Oxford English Dictionary calls it "highly colloquial". The difference is an elusive flavour that is easier to taste than define. Thus, the two are often treated together in this thesis (cf. Chapter 5).

Nonetheless, some distinction has been retained between the two, with slang used specifically to cover a class of recently coined words or phrases, which

have become popular among Cuban speakers of Spanish because of their aptness, picturesqueness, grotesqueness, or humorousness.

Idiom

Webster's Third International defines idiom as "an expression established in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either in grammatical construction [...] or in having a meaning that cannot be derived as a whole from the conjoined meanings of its elements [...]".

The Random House Unabridged Dictionary gives two definitions of idiom pertinent for the purposes of this analysis: (1) "an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constituent elements [...], or from the general grammatical rules of a language, and which is not a constituent of a larger expression of like characteristics" and (2) "a construction or expression of one language whose parts correspond to elements in another language but whose total structure or meaning is not matched in the same way in the second language."

In this thesis, idioms are considered to be familiar, deep-rooted, widely used, and easily understandable — for the native born — forms of expression peculiar to a language, which conform to no laws or principles, which may violate grammar or logic or both and still be acceptable.

4.4.2 Perera's metaphors and nicknames invented by the author

Metaphors

- 41) MI CORAZÓN HUÍA PRECIPITADAMENTE [*my heart was running away precipitately*] (p.9) : MY HEART WAS FIGHTING ITS WAY OUT OF MY CHEST
[My heart pounded; my heart was beating rapidly].

- 42) (mi esposa) DEL ÁRBOL QUIERE SÓLO LA SOMBRA [*(my wife) from the tree, she wants only the shade*] (p.9) : THAT'S JUST LIKE HER: FROM THE TREE, ALL SHE WANTS IS ITS SHADE.

- 43) (ni siquiera percibió el mensaje de mis) OJOS PRÓFUGOS [*fugitive eyes*] (p.9) : (SHE DID NOT EVEN NOTICE THAT) I WAS AVOIDING HER GLANCE
[She didn't even acknowledge the desperate look in my eyes.]

- 44) SUDOR COBARDE [*cowardly sweat*] (p.9) : I BROKE OUT IN A COLD SWEAT
[My hands were moist with fear]

- 45) PASEANTE DE ATARDECERES [*stroller of dusk*] : (p.10) (A SLIGHT MAN) WHO STROLLED THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AT DUSK
[...who always went for a stroll at dusk]

- 46) ...LA ÚLTIMA ATADURA QUE UNE BARCO Y MUELLE, UN ADIOS NO DICHO [*(For me it was like cutting) the last mooring that unites ship and pier, an unspoken goodbye*] (p.11) : THE LAST MOORING WHICH HAD HELD THE SHIP TO THE PIER HAD BEEN SILENTLY CUT WITHOUT A FAREWELL.

- 47) (un guardia flaco, de) OJOS FANÁTICOS [*fanatic eyes*] (p. 11) : (a thin guard with) DARK ZEALOT EYES.
[A guard with the eyes of a fanatic]
- 48) DESAMPARADA SOLEDAD [*helpless (defenceless) solitude*] (p.11) : (I realized that I had stepped into) A FORSAKEN SOLITUDE
[... I was overwhelmed by the panic of utter helplessness.]
- 49) MI PENSAMIENTO TAQUIGRÁFICO (escogía qué decir y qué olvidar) [*stenographic thinking*] (p.11) : MY STENOGRAPHIC THINKING SIFTED THROUGH OLD MEMORIES SORTING WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT TO FORGET.
[I was desperately thinking as fast as I could ...]
- 50) CANCELÉ LA MAREA DE PENSAMIENTOS CONFUSOS (...) Y FLJÉ RUMBOS [*I cancelled the tide of confused thoughts ... and set course*] (p. 9) : MY THINKING RODE THE TIDAL WAVE OF MY EMOTIONS AND SET COURSE
[I tried to put in order the myriad of thoughts that raced through my mind and I made a few quick decisions] [I had to control the turmoil of thoughts and emotions that ran through my mind].
- 51) PARCHES DE SUEÑO QUEBRADIZO [*fragile patches of sleep*] (p.12) : FRAGILE PATCHES OF SLEEP
[I lived in a constant state of vigil, interrupted only by short cat naps]
- 52) gente BLANDA, ANFIBIOSA [*soft, amphibian-like people*] (p.13) : BLAND, REPTILIAN SCUM

- 53) (Entré a una sala) CON DOS RECTÁNGULOS DE LUZ DE ATARDECER AL FRENTE
[(I entered a large room having) two rectangles of sunset light at the front]
 (p.13): (I ENTERED A LARGE ROOM) BATHED BY TWO RECTANGLES OF
 SUNSET LIGHT
 [I entered a large room lit by the afternoon sun streaming through two tall
 narrow windows].
- 54) (Miré) LA NOCHE: OTRO PORTÓN NEGRO, TAMBIÉN CERRADO *[I looked at the
 night: another huge black gate, also closed]* (p.19) : I LOOKED OUT INTO THE
 NIGHT: ANOTHER DARK AND FORBIDDING PORTAL
 [I looked out into the night: it was also dark and forbidding].
- 55) DOS OJOS FIEROS Y TAIMADOS ME CELEBRARON JUICIO SUMARÍSIMO CON
 VEREDICTO DE TRAIADOR *[two fiery and sly eyes judged me summarily with a
 verdict of treason]* (p.19) : HIS SLY CRUEL EYES JUDGED ME SUMMARILY:
 THE VERDICT WAS TREASON
- 56) (Por el pasillo venía) LA COPIA, MUCHAS VECES DESVAÍDA, de un compañero
 mío de bachillerato *[Down, along the corridor, came a copy, many times
 faded, of an old high school classmate]* (p.21) : (...) (He looked like)
 A DILAPIDATED COPY of a former high school classmate of mine.
- 57) OJOS HUÉRFANOS *[orphan eyes]* (p.43) : WAIF-LIKE EYES
 [Her helpless eyes]
- 58) (No podía resistir la ternura) ... ME HABÍAN SALIDO ESPINAS : *[I had grown
 thorns]* : I WAS ON PINS AND NEEDLES

- 59) BOLAS QUE HAY QUE LEVANTAR EL PIE PARA QUE PASEN [*balls (so big) that one has to lift one's foot to let them pass*] (p.117) : THE BUZZ OF RUMOURS WAS DEAFENING
BOLA [*ball*] is a colloquial term for **rumour**. It is usually used in expressions such as CORRER BOLAS : TO SPREAD RUMOURS.
- 60) (Un caldo oscuro con tres o cuatro) MACARRONES NÁUFRAGOS [*shipwrecked macaroni*] (p.117) : (murky water with a few) STRAY MACARONI
- 61) EL TIEMPO, AL QUE LA SOLEDAD PONÍA PIES DE PLOMO [*Time, whom solitude gives leaden feet*] (p.139) : TIME WENT BY WITH LEADEN FEET
- 62) LO QUE TIENE EN LAS VENAS ES HIELO EN VEZ DE SANGRE [*What he has in his veins is ice rather than blood*] (p.155) : HE DOESN'T HAVE BLOOD RUNNING THROUGH HIS VEINS, HE HAS ICE WATER
Expression refers to someone's **coolness, sangfroid**
- 63) (Un hombre que) HABÍA DEJADO ATRÁS TODAS LAS CERTIDUMBRES [*(a man who) had left behind all certitudes*] : THE FORMER FANATIC HAD LONG AGO LOST HIS ZEAL AND HIS SELF-ASSURANCE
[The personality of this character has been clearly established before this point; thus, the characterization is justified]
- 64) (Habló con) SINTAXIS DE TEXTO [*he spoke with textbook syntax*] (p.156) : HE SPOKE AS IF HE WERE READING FROM A TEXTBOOK.

- 65) (enfermera que estaría) FORCEJEANDO CON LOS CUARENTA [*a nurse who was struggling with forty*] (p.156): A NURSE WHO WAS PUSHING 40. Forcejear rather than standard frisar [*to border on, to be close to*] hints at the nurse's efforts to pass for a younger woman.
- 66) médico DE CARA LARGA Y EXPRESIÓN DE DERROTA [*a long-faced, defeat expression doctor*] (p.156) : (a doctor came in) WITH AN EXPRESSION OF DEFEAT ON HIS LONG FACE
- 67) (Como si preguntara) QUÉ ACERO ME SOSTENÍA [*as if asking*] what (kind of) steel was holding me up] (p.171) : (wondering) WHAT KIND OF METAL I WAS MADE OF

Nicknames invented by the author

- 68) CAGA-POQUITO [*the one who*] doesn't shit much] : TIGHT ASS
 Nickname of a prison guard who would steal mail, food, etc. from the prisoners. Nickname is an allusion to stinginess.
- 69) VASELINA [*Vaseline*] : SLIME BALL
 Smooth-talking prison guard who tried to convince plantados to surrender and accept the Political Rehabilitation Program.
 DAR VASELINA [*to apply vaseline*] : TO BUTTER UP.

70) EL HACHA [*the Lunge*] : TORO

One of the most colourfoul prisoners. He looked like a bull, and, when provoked, he would charge with "la furia de un hachazo" [with the fury of a lunge].

71) COMPUTA [*Comput(er)*] : THE COMPUTER

Untrustworthy old man who knew everything by heart about hundreds of prisoners.

4.4.3 Prison slang

72) LA BOBA [*the idiot, dunce, fool*] : SLOP

Prison food was so tasteless and unseasoned, so flat, so dull and unappetizing that nobody really wanted to try it a second time. Until the spring of 1961, every forty-five days, the prison sold certain articles to prisoners: spices, oil, salt, and cigarettes. Prisoners would recook the food and add salt, a little oil, and some spices to fix it up. After that date, prisoners were lucky if they got enough of this insipid food to stay alive.

73) GUANINA [*word probably of Taino origin*] : PIGSWILL

Guanina is a shrublike plant of the papilionaceous family (Cassia toro), common in all tropical and subtropical regions in the Americas. Its seeds are used as a coffee substitute.

74) CARNE RUSA [*Russian meat*] : RUSSIAN CANNED MEAT

Meat is one of the scarcest commodities in Castro's Cuba. During the 1950's, cattle herding had become the second most important agricultural

activity. Upon Castro's arrival to power, there were 5.5 million heads of cattle for a population of barely 6 million, but the cattle industry declined drastically during the early years of the revolution due to gross mismanagement. To compensate for the lack of animal protein, canned meat was imported from the USSR. Thirty years later, the combined ration of meat, pork, poultry and meat products is still only about one kilogram per person per month.

75) LA JABA [*bag*]: THE BAG

Food package brought to the prisoners by their relatives. Authorities would sometimes allow visitors to bring prisoners a package containing powdered milk, sugar, and gofio, roasted wheat flour. Since relatives had to carry the packages themselves, and travel long distances, mostly by bus and on foot, they usually carried the food in a heavy cloth bag with handles. In the absence of nutritive prison food, the 'bag' supplied what few vitamins, and even calories, prisoners subsisted on.

76) GUACHIPUPA [unknown origin] : BRAKE FLUID

Guachipupa is a term applied to any drink which tastes awful. Another common Cuban term is 'líquido de frenos' [brake fluid].

77) REENGANCHE [*reenlistment; reenlistment bonus*] : [*food*] SECOND HELPING

Only on rare occasions were prisoners allowed to receive a second helping.

78) LA CASA DE LOS TRUCOS [*House of Tricks*] : THE JOKE SHOP

The prison kitchen. Term is an allusion to a popular joke shop in pre-Castro Havana specializing in all kinds of jokes.

- 79) AGUA CHIRLE [*tasteless water*] : SWAMP WATER
Awful coffee.

- 80) PLANTARSE [*to plant oneself*] : TO DIG ONE'S HEELS IN
Prisoners used this verb to convey the idea of **to stand firm, to refuse to compromise**. The word is apparently a derivative of PLANTE which means **strike, mutiny, agreed basis for resistance**.
PLANTADOS [*the ones who planted themselves*] : PLANTADOS
Hold out, rebel, diehard political prisoners who rejected the "Rehabilitation Program".
PLANTAR [*to plant*] : TO PASS UP
Plantar was also used by prisoners as a transitive verb meaning **to turn down, to refuse** (cf. 'plantar la visita' [*to plant the visit*] : to refuse to have visitors).

- 81) CUADRARSE [*(Mil.) to stand to attention*] : TO BREAK [TO BE BROKEN]
Prison neologism meaning **to acquiesce to the plan of 'political rehabilitation'**
CUADRADOS [*the ones who stood to attention*] : THE BROKEN
A derivative of the verb CUADRARSE meaning **political prisoners who agreed to undergo 'political rehabilitation'**.

- 82) CORDILLERA [*mountain range, cordillera*] : STRING OF PRISONERS
Prison neologism for a **long line of prisoners, escorted by heavily armed guards**.

- 83) CARNE FRESCA [*fresh meat*] : TENDERFEET
Prison neologism for **newly arrived prisoners**

- 84) **ESBIRRO** [*henchman; minion; killer*] : BATISTA'S MINION

Term refers to **soldiers who belonged to Batista's army**. Upon his arrival to power, Castro frequently used the terms esbirro and sicario [hired assassin] to refer to the former regime's soldiers.

- 85) **COTORRERA** [*female parrot; parrot cage*] : PARROT CAGE

In La Cabaña prison, galeras reserved for those prisoners who had informed against their former underground comrades-in-arms.

- 86) **MONO** [*monkey; ape*] : GORILLA

Generic term for **prison guards**

- 87) **BOCUCA** [*neologism*] : CANNIBAL

Prison guard who beats a prisoner savagely with a stick or similar instrument. Bocuca, a term apparently of African origin, was the name of the percussion musicians in a popular band which played Afro-Cuban music; these bongo players were famous for their frenzied performances.

- 88) **LOS ABUELITOS** [*the grandfathers*] : THE GRANDFATHERS

Officers in charge of 'political rehabilitation'. The first such officer was an elderly man.

- 89) **PERRA** [*bitches*] : BITCHES

Russian trucks with steel bodies divided into five sections for the transport of prisoners. Although bitches had a maximum capacity of eighteen men, twenty or twenty-two prisoners were usually jammed into each one.

- 90) **ENGOME** [*neologism*] : CHICLET

Engomes were short letters smuggled out of prison, written on a tiny piece of paper, folded and wrapped in a small piece of nylon sealed with the heat of a match. Engomes usually measured less than 2 cm.

- 91) **WILAYA** [*neologism*] : WILAYA

Word common in La Cabaña prison to denote **two contiguous "stacks" of four bunk beds each**, separated by some 70 cm. Wilaya is an Arab term used in Algeria for an intermediate local authority between the central government and the commune (i.e., province, or département). The presence of such a term in prison parlance attests to the widespread intervention of Castro in African affairs, going back to the Algerian revolution in the early 1960's.

- 92) **CHELES** [*neologism*] : ODDS AND ENDS

The scant personal belongings of prisoners.

- 93) **AVIÓN** [*airplane*] : WING

Term (probably coined by analogy with plane wings) meaning **bed that folds up**. The frame was made of tubing to which a piece of canvas or burlap was sewn. Beds were held to the wall by two steel eyebolts sunk into the concrete, and hung by two chains attached higher up, so they were cantilevered. They could be folded up during the day, and were opened out only when they were going to be used. Having one of those canvas "airplanes" in good condition was the height of luxury for a prisoner.

- 94) **TOLA** [*neologism*] : SOLID METAL DOOR IN BLACKOUT CELLS

95) PERSEGUIDORA [*pursuing (car)*] : PATROL CAR

Standard Spanish term is coche patrulla. Upon his arrival to power, Castro immediately disbanded the existing police and armed forces, and replaced them with his guerrillas. In his efforts to distance himself from traditional institutions, many established terms gave way to new terminology, and the term perseguidora was immediately replaced by patrullero.

96) REQUISA [*inspection; requisition; search*] : STRIP SEARCH

97) MOJONERA [*place full of turds*] : THE TURD DITCHES

On the Isle of Pines, human excrement from the prisons flowed through deep ditches on its way to the sea. The most recalcitrant prisoners were forced at gunpoint to jump into the ditches full of shit.

98) PAREDÓN [*thick wall*] : PLACE OF EXECUTION.

¡AL PAREDÓN! [*to the wall!*] : TO THE FIRING SQUAD!

99) A PLANAZO LIMPIO [*to hit repeatedly with the flat of a machete*] : TO HIT OUT LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER WITH MACHETES

In Cuba, the flat of a sword is called, not plano as in most Spanish-speaking countries, but rather plan. Its derivative, planazo is a local equivalent of standard Spanish cintarazo or espadazo. Limpio [*clean*] used as an adverb in this expression denotes intensity. Soldiers hit the prisoners with machetes.

4.4.4 Cuban colloquialisms, vulgar expressions and idioms

Colloquialisms

- 100) se cansaron de REPARTIR LEÑA [*they got tired of distributing firewood (sticks)*]
: TO LASH OUT
[The prisoners were beaten mercilessly].
- 101) MÉTELE EL SOPAPO! [*give him a slap*] : SMACK HIM!
- 102) DEJAR ZONZO [*to make somebody groggy*] : TO BE PUNCH-DRUNK
Zonzo means **dunce, simpleton** in Standard spanish. This latter meaning is also common in Cuba in expressions such as ESTAR (SER) ZONZO
- 103) SONAR [*to sound*] : TO RAP, TO CLOBBER
- 104) un ESCAPARATE DE FUERTE [*strong as a wardrobe*] : STRONG AS AN OX
Standard Spanish expression is fuerte como un roble. ESCAPARATE, which means show window in Spain, and wardrobe in Latin America, is a common word in Cuba for tall, strong men.
- 105) GALLEGA [*from Galicia, a region in Spain north of Portugal*]: BABE
In this context, gallega is a term of affection. In most South American countries, gallego is a pejorative term for Spanish immigrants, but to a lesser extent in Cuba, the last Spanish colony.
- 106) PRESUMIR DE MARIANA GRAJALES [*to consider oneself to be Mariana Grajales*] : TO BE MADE OF STEEL; TO BE A HERO.

- 107) LA CHAPA [*metal sheet*] : LICENSE PLATES
Standard Spanish terms are placa and matrícula. In South America the term is chapa de matrícula (or: de patente).
- 108) PRENDERSE [*to catch fire; to mate (animals); to dress up*] : TO CLUTCH TO
In Cuba, when used as a reflexive, the meaning of this verb is close to that of the transitive verb [to grasp, seize, grip].
¡HAY QUE PRENDERSE! : TO BUCKLE DOWN; **to apply oneself with vigor**
- 109) AFINCARSE A + INF. [*to settle down, to establish oneself*] : TO DO ONE'S UTMOST
- 110) RESOLVER (algo) [*to solve; to resolve*] : TO OBTAIN, TO PROCURE
- 111) PERDERSE [*to get lost; to lose one's way*] : TO GET LOST
To disappear. ¡Piérdete! : Get lost!
- 112) METER DE FLY [*to hit someone so hard that he is lifted off the ground*] : TO SEND SOMEBODY FLYING. As in the U.S. baseball is the Cuban national sport. Baseball fans use the term 'fly' in Spanish for what is known in English as 'flyball'. Other baseball terms in Plantado: 'inning' (p.143), 'catcher' (p.144), ' jonrón ' [home run] (p.144). The English terms are commonly used.

Vulgar expressions

- 113) ¡COÑO! [*cunt*] : Used as an interjection, when it indicates anger it is usually rendered 'SHIT!', 'HELL!' or 'DAMN!'; when it indicates surprise, the usual translation is 'CHRIST!'; when addressing a person it may be rendered 'YOU IDIOT!'.
- 114) MENTAR LA MADRE [*to call someone's mother names*] : TO SWEAR AT SOMEBODY.
¡TU MADRE! [*your mother!*] : UP YOURS!, GET STUFFED!
- 115) HIJOPUTADA [*a derivative of hijo de puta (s.o.b.)*] : DIRTY TRICK.
- 116) DEGENERADO [*degenerate*] : BASTARD.

Idioms

- 117) ESTA GENTE PRIMERO DA EL PALO Y DESPUÉS AVERIGUA [*these people hit you first and find out later*] : THEY SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER
- 118) VERDE Y CON PUNTA, GUANÁBANA [*green and thorny?, a soursop! (custard apple)*] : ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON!
To put two and two together; to be as clear as crystal (as plain as a pikestaff) Guanábana, is a very delicate Caribbean fruit (Anona muricatas) called wanaban by the Taino indians who inhabited Cuba before the arrival of the Spaniards.

- 119) AQUELLO NO LO BRINCABA UN CHIVO [*not even a goat could jump over it*] :
TO BE A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL
The idea of something being very difficult could be rendered by many
other English stock expressions such as **tough nut to crack**;
- 120) ECHAR PALANTE (A ALGUIEN) (1) [*to throw somebody forward*] : TO BLOW
THE WHISTLE ON SOMEONE
To denounce, to inform on. Palante is a common contraction of "para
adelante" among uneducated Cubans. In Central America, the idiom is
echar a uno por delante [*to put (or pin) the blame on somebody*]. Not to
be confused with (121) below.
- 121) ECHAR PALANTE (2) [*push forward*] : NEVER SAY DIE
To persevere. (Standard Spanish is seguir adelante). On the basis of this
very common expression, in 1959, Fidel Castro's brother, Raúl, coined the
slogan "Palante y palante" [*Onward, ever onward!*] to indicate their
government would never reverse its efforts to destroy existing institutions.
- 122) AGÁRRATE DE LA BROCHA, QUE TE VOY A QUITAR LA ESCALERA [*hold on to the
brush, I'm going to take the ladder away from you*] : HOLD ON TO THE
BRUSH, I'M GOING TO PULL THE LADDER OUT FROM UNDER YOU
you'll have to fend for yourself. Allusion to one of many extremely
popular jokes in Cuba involving imaginary psychiatric patients and their
bizarre logic.
- 123) ¿CÓMO ES LA FIESTA ÉSTA? [*how is this party?*] : WHAT'S THE SCORE HERE?
[what is the routine here?; what is the game here?]

- 124) ¿QUÉ HAY DETRÁS DE ESTE POTAJE? [*What comes after the soup?*] : WHAT'S HE GOT UP HIS SLEEVE?
[Let's wait and see]
- 125) TRONCO DE YUCA [*cassava trunk*] : FATHEAD
Tronco means **blockhead, dolt, dimwit, dope** in standard Spanish. Tronco de yuca conveys the idea of 'slow-witted'
- 126) TOSTARSE [*to tan, to turn brown*] : TO CRACK UP
ESTAR TOSTADO [*sunburnt*] : to be crazy, to be off your rocker.
- 127) TENER BARRENILLO [*to have a bark-boring beetle*] : TO HAVE A BEE IN ONE'S BONNET
This expression is found only in Cuba and some parts of Mexico. It means **obsession, persistent preoccupation, doubt, or urge**.
- 128) MONTARSE EN EL COGOTE [*to have someone sit on the back of the neck*] : TO HAVE SOMEBODY ON YOUR BACK
To let somebody dominate you. [To walk all over someone]

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF TREATMENT OF TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN PLANTADO

5.1 General theoretical considerations

Once the translation problems in the ST have been identified and the translator has become alert to the difficulties involved in a number of special features of form and content, the message of the original still needs to be faithfully rendered in the TL.¹ But how can this be accomplished?

Writers on translation have long debated whether a good translation should favour the source or the target language of the text. For instance, Schleirmacher (1813) addressed the question of whether a translation should be subservient to the original or the original be subordinated to the translation, but left the translator free to lean either on the writer's or the reader's shoulder. In general, all the writers of the past have defined two or three methods of translation, sometimes only recommending one and disparaging the remainder.

Since the early nineteenth century, the usual emphasis has been increasingly on the reader despite some brilliant advocates of literal translation. In 1937, Ortega y Gasset defended the view that only when the reader is obliged to move within the linguistic habits of the author will there be worthy

¹ Following Nida (1969:105), content is understood in this thesis as "the conceptual intent of the message, together with the connotative values the source wishes to communicate; it is what the message is about", and form as "the external shape the message takes to effect its passage from the source's mind to the receptor's mind."

translation. As late as 1955, V. Nabokov strongly favoured a thoroughly documented rendering, accompanied by notes of every conceivable kind, convinced that "the clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase".

However, the views of the extreme literalists have been gradually replaced by the idea that translating is communicating. Many modern theories such as Nida's and Seleskovitch's stress that the naturalness of the translation and the ease with which it is understood should be comparable to the naturalness of the original and to the ease with which the recipients of the original document understood it. Nida and Taber (1969:105) as well as Beekman and Callow (1974:34) believe that, in transferring the message from one language to another, the content must be preserved at any cost and that an excessive effort to preserve the form often results in a serious loss or distortion of the message.

A more balanced view has been expressed by Newmark who proposes two equally valid approaches to translation, which he terms 'semantic' and 'communicative'. Newmark defines semantic translation as the attempt "to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" and communicative translation as the attempt "to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original." He further explains that "semantic translation remains within the original culture and assists the reader only in its connotations if they constitute the essential human (non-ethnic) message of the text". This contrasts with communicative translation

which "addresses itself solely to the second reader, who does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities, and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary." (1981: 38-39) According to Newmark, a semantic translation is usually more literal than a communicative translation. Semantic translation tends to be more complex, more awkward, more detailed and more concentrated, and pursues the thought-processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to overtranslate, to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning. Communicative translation, on the other hand, concentrates on the global message and the main force of the text rather than its precise meaning; it is, thus, usually smoother, simpler, clearer and more direct. It tends to undertranslate, i.e., to use more generic terms in difficult passages.

Unlike many other theorists, Newmark does not consider one approach superior to the other, nor does he feel that they are mutually exclusive. In fact, communicative and semantic translation may well coincide; there are often sections in a given text that must be translated communicatively, and others semantically (1981:40). The choice as to the right method of translation depends, according to Newmark, on the intrinsic importance of semantic units in the text. In the case of average informative texts, communicative translation is to be preferred. In the case of serious literature, where the specific language of the writer is as important as the content, the translator should lean towards semantic translation. However, even these generalizations are too sweeping. For, in the case of texts which convey a general rather than a culturally-bound message and where the matter is as important as the manner, communicative and

semantic translation may well coincide. The same holds true for culturally-bound texts if the source and receptor cultures are very similar. On the other hand, the more distant the source and receptor cultures, the greater the need for communicative translation and the more justification for omission or adaptation of features such as dialect and slang. As Nida has repeatedly shown, when there are wide divergences among cultures, TL readers can only accept the geographical and historical remoteness of the SL cultural background if that behaviour itself and all imagery connected with it is recast in terms of the TL culture. And, says Newmark, while one would normally expect to translate serious literature semantically, "one has to bear in mind that all art is, to a greater or lesser extent, allegorical, figurative, metaphorical and a parable, and therefore has a communicative purpose," which implies communicative translation (1981:45).

What Newmark has made clear is that there is no one perfect 'method of translation' even for one given text type or text. And discussion of my treatment of translation problems will show that different problem items have been handled very differently.

5.2 Overall problems in the translation of Plantado

My translation of Plantado is often 'communicative' since communicative translation is not only easier to understand but also often comes closer to communicating what the ST does. However, since this is a work providing a

wealth of historical information, which reflects its historical and cultural setting, a sustained effort has been made to preserve the local flavour. This combination has not been without its difficulties. To retain the unfamiliar items alluded to by the author may obscure the TL version. On the other hand, to substitute known items of the TL culture may misrepresent the cultural setting of the SL text. The translator's task has been further complicated by the particularities of the author's style, which has four major characteristics: (a) simplicity; (b) abundance of metaphoric language; (c) numerous instances of Cuban expressions; and (d) her unique use of adjectives.

Most critics who have analyzed Perera's style agree that it is clear and straightforward: affectation and grandiloquence have no place in her prose. For Aldaya, "the author's descriptive power does not lie on verbal excesses, but on a careful selection of essential elements. Perera's natural and concise style captures sensations and renders details and nuances with a minimum of elements." (1978:63)

Metaphors and similes, many of them unusual, abound in Perera's prose, which tends in parts to become rather poetic. Her pages are full of unexpected turns of phrase combining sometimes dissimilar elements, everyday and poetic, artfully chosen to create vivid visual and auditory images and convey movement. For G. Baquero, "Hilda Perera's great ability to capture reality in images turn many of her pages into a most valuable and accurate mirror [of her environment]." (1978:17)

Perera's novels are full of Cuban expressions. These are not appendages added to provide 'local colour', but integral elements of the situations portrayed in her novels. In all her works, Perera recreates the way Cubans of all levels actually talk. The abundance of diminutives in her prose reflect their widespread use in Cuba, and her witty turns of phrase recreate the characteristic Cuban sense of humour and mental agility.

Perera is very careful in her choice of adjectives, which are never idle adjuncts, but rather descriptive and precise tools which help her create numerous felicitous concrete expressions, and sometimes astonishing images. A remarkable balance between abstract and concrete adjectives, the choice of some adjectives in apparent opposition to the nouns they are attached to, and the personification of adjectives are all a part of Perera's style.

In keeping with the above, the translator has made a conscious effort to retain the figures of speech in Plantado (in some cases with expansion of the parts). When reproducing or recreating metaphors, the translator has never lost view of the basic characteristics of the author's style, i.e., preferring simple metaphors to ornate ones.

5.3 Translation of cultural features

As Nida has so clearly said, "the translator cannot be expected to so transpose the message linguistically and culturally that it will fit completely within the interpretive frame of the receptor culture. To do this would mean to rob the message of its distinctive time-space setting. [...] Rather the objective should be to so translate (and with the translation to provide such background data) as to prevent receptors from misunderstanding what the original receptors understood when they first received the message." (1981:29) This view has influenced the overall way I dealt with various cultural features.

5.3.1 Translation of names of persons, geographical names and names of institutions in Plantado

Proper names of all kinds, which help to situate the novel, have, in most cases, been retained without translation or adaptation. This applies to the names of Presidents (Machado, Grau, Batista, Castro), historical figures, and anti-Castro rebels found in Plantado, which have all been retained in their original form. The same is true of names of prisons, hospitals, streets, squares, institutions and political organizations and events — all strongly related to the SL culture — (cf. La Cabaña, El Príncipe, Auténtico, Ortodoxo [parties]), and to most geographical names.

In a few cases, where established English forms exist for Cuban names, they have been used to make reading easier: this is the case of Havana, and Isle of Pines (for Sp. Isla de Pinos). In some other cases, where the proper name is likely to be unknown to the reader, an appropriate generic word has been added to classify what it designates ("the district of El Cerro", "the town of Guanabacoa".)

Finally, the names of some political organizations and events have been translated, although literally (cf. Revolution of 1933, Constitution of 1940, 26th of July Movement, Student's Revolutionary Directorate, November 30th Movement, People's Revolutionary Movement, Political Rehabilitation Program). Only one proper name has been omitted in the translation — that of Mariana Grajales (cf. capsule # 106). This is because it is employed as a metaphor (see section 5.4.1.6 below).

5.3.2 Translation of concepts nonexistent in the receptor culture and the TL

When a specific concept of the SL is unknown in the TL, lexical equivalence is hard to establish. Beekman and Callow suggest three different procedures that may work in such cases (1976:194-196):

- (a) *Equivalence by modifying a generic word.* The translator may, as a starting point in arriving at an adequate equivalent, use a generic word, modified

with a description of the form of the unknown object, or a statement of its function. In some cases, both form and function should be specified to make clear to the readers of the TL what is being referred to. The generic word may be modified also by a comparison with something already known in the receptor culture, which refers to form and function implicitly.

- (b) *Equivalence using a loan word.* New loan words in the translation must be introduced prudently, for they often carry little or no meaning to the readers of the TL. The translator can help to make them more understandable either by including a glossary of terms at the end of the book or by adding classifiers or concise descriptions to the loan word in the actual text.
- (c) *Equivalence by cultural substitution.* When equivalence using a generic term or a loan word is impossible or impractical the translator may resort to the use of equivalence by cultural substitution, substituting a real-world referent from the TL for an unknown referent of the SL, both of the referents having the same function. Where only the function served by the particular form in the SL is in focus, the translator may substitute a form from the TL culture whose function is identical or nearly so to the function associated with the SL form.

These three procedures, along with literal translation, have been used in dealing with concepts found in Plantado, which are nonexistent in the receptor culture and language.

5.3.2.1 Examples of equivalence by modifying a generic word

- 6) GRANJAS [*farms*] : FORCED LABOUR CAMPS
- 7) FRENTA ABIERTO [*open front*] : FORCED LABOUR SITES
- 15) TAPIADAS [*totally walled-in cells*] : BLACKOUT CELLS
- 16) ALZADOS [*the ones who rose (in revolt)*] : ANTI-CASTRO REBELS
- 28) GUITERISTAS : FOLLOWERS OF ANTONIO GUITERAS

5.3.2.2 Examples of equivalence using a loan word

- 12) PLANTADOS [*the ones who planted themselves*]: PLANTADOS:
- 13) GALERAS [*galleries*] : GALERAS
- 19) SANTERÍA [*cult of saints*] : SANTERÍA

Usually, the context in which these loan words appear makes their meaning clear enough so that it is unnecessary to add any additional information in the text itself or in footnotes.

5.3.2.3 Examples of equivalence by cultural substitution.

- 35) COMITÉS DE DEFENSA DE LA REVOLUCIÓN (CDR) [*Committees for the Defense of the Revolution*] : VIGILANCE COMMITTEES

This cultural substitution was preferred to a literal translation to highlight the main function of one of Castro's most effective means of curbing opposition.

- 36) G-2 [*G-2 branch*] : SECRET POLICE

Upon Castro's arrival in power, all existing armed forces and police institutions were disbanded and replaced by his 'Rebel Army'. The G-2 branch of that Army was entrusted with intelligence activities at a national level against both military and civilians. Beginning in early 1960, G-2 men received training from Soviet and East European secret services. The redoubtable G-2 has been translated 'Secret Police' since its functions are not restricted to that of an army intelligence service.

- 37) REYES : EPIPHANY

REGALO DE REYES [*Epiphany present*] : CHRISTMAS PRESENT

The cultural substitution seems justified to convey the irony in the SL text (being subjected to yet another infamy on a day usually associated with joy).

5.3.2.4 Examples of equivalence using literal translation

- 9) LOS AZULES [*the blues*] : THE BLUES
- 10) LOS AMARILLOS [*the yellows*] : THE KHAKIS
- 11) CALZONCILLOS [*underpants*] : THE UNDERPANTS
- 14) GAVETAS [*drawers*] : DRAWER CELLS
- 17) PERMISO DE SALIDA [*exit permit*] : EXIT VISA

5.3.2.4.1 Examples of equivalence using literal translation + explanation

Since a literal translation is sometimes ambiguous or obscure, a short explanatory addition may be required to clarify the message. In the following three cases of activities which don't exist in the receptor culture, literal translation is accompanied by additional information provided within the text itself.

- 38) RECOGER CAFÉ EN ORIENTE [*pick up coffee (beans) in Oriente (province)*]
: (WHO) WILL BE SENT TO THE MOUNTAINS OF ORIENTE TO PICK COFFEE BEANS FOR SIX WEEKS EVERY YEAR. SHE HAS NO CHOICE IF SHE WANTS TO GO TO HIGH SCHOOL

Compulsory work for minors is against the law in the receptor culture. The translator has added information within the text to help TL readers understand the distress of parents and students faced with Castro's 'educational' ideas.

- 39) COMUNISTA DEL AÑO 30 [*A 1930's Communist*] : WHO, FORTUNATELY ENOUGH, WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE EXTREMISTS NEWLY CONVERTED TO COMMUNISM, BUT WAS RATHER A 1930'S COMMUNIST

The translator has provided additional information within the text to try to solve an apparent contradiction: the hero's father is glad that the school principal was a 1930's Communist. Old-guard communists felt less insecure and, therefore, did not have to go to great lengths to prove their allegiance to the new regime.

- 18) EXPEDIENTE DE PELIGROSIDAD [*'dangerousness' case*] : (THEY WILL OPEN) A 'DANGEROUSNESS' CASE AGAINST YOU AND YOU'LL ROT IN PRISON

In many countries, when sentencing a criminal, the courts take into account the company they keep and their general way of life. However, except in a very few dictatorial systems such as in Cuba, refusing to hold a job is not considered to be a crime, nor is anybody sent to jail before committing a crime — supposedly, to prevent the person from becoming a criminal. Because of these two main characteristics of this concept, it seems justified to translate it literally, coupled with additional information within the text.

5.3.3 Provision of supplementary information

As the last series of examples shows, cultural elements cannot always be adequately rendered by literal translation or by a loan word. In several cases, additional information is required by the reader. How and when should such information be provided? In the text itself? In footnotes? In an introduction?

Newmark believes that "where possible, the additional information should be inserted within the text, since this does not interrupt the reader's flow of attention." (1981:91) However, he does admit that such insertions blur the distinction between the text and the translator's contribution. Nida indicates clearly what 'insertions' a translator is entitled to make: "one may make explicit in the text only what is linguistically implicit in the immediate context of the problematic passage". This usually limits the translator to elements such as classifiers (e.g. 'the district of El Cerro').

When information indispensable to the understanding of the message is not specifically implicit in the passage itself — because such information may only be part of the general cultural background shared by the participants in the source language — the translator should place it either in notes or in a glossary.³

³ In the case of notes that are important to explain historical and cultural differences with respect to specific events, Nida recommends they be placed at the bottom of the same page as the passage to which they refer, rather than gathered together in an appendix. (1981:77)

Depending on their complexity, notes that deal with supplementary information necessary for the proper comprehension of the text may be classified in two categories:

- (a) *identificational notes*, which are basically short definitions destined to help the reader to understand the main characteristics or features of an item. Examples of identificational notes include capsules 86-89 found in Chapter 4.
- (b) *explanatory notes* dealing with cultural and historical differences. These notes usually include an indication of the significance or meaning of the object or event, in terms of the existing presuppositions and value system; a denial of the validity of interpreting the event or object in terms of the receptor viewpoint; and the identification of some equivalent event or object in the receptor culture (1981:80). Examples of notes which are of an explanatory nature include capsules 1-35 found in Chapter 4.

Information about recurring terms could be gathered together in summary fashion in a *glossary*. A properly prepared glossary should include most, if not all, the words that the average TL reader is likely to want to look up. According to Nida, a glossary should contain notes that are necessary to identify or explain frequently recurring objects or events, explanation of the meaning of zero terms, technical vocabulary, or unusual practices. He also suggests that a glossary provide adequate explanation for every newly borrowed term or phrase, and for

culturally strange objects which have been retained because of their symbolic value (1981:76). In the case of Plantado, such a glossary could include capsules 1, 6-16, 27-28, 30-36 found in Chapter 4.

Introductions can also be used to provide general background information about the source text. Nida suggests that introductions contain information about the author, the place and time of writing, the intended audience, the principal themes of the book, the significance of the book, in terms of its original setting; and the relevance of the message of the book for the present-day reader. Newmark recommends that translators do not hesitate to write a preface and notes to discuss the usage and meanings of the author's terms, particularly where accuracy is sacrificed for economy in the translation, or where there is ambiguity in the text. The first two chapters of this thesis fulfil the role of an introduction providing information on the author, the significance of Plantado within Perera's novels, the main characteristics of this novel as compared to other works on the subject, and an overview of the political situation in Cuba in the years surrounding the action.

5.4 Translation problems involving figures of speech, prison slang and colloquialisms

It was pointed out in Chapter 4 that, despite apparent differences, there is a common 'metaphorical' bond between metaphors per se, slang and colloquialisms. This bond becomes even more obvious in this chapter, as can be seen by the fact that the same set of translation procedures can be used for treating each of these elements.

5.4.1 Translation of metaphors

It is generally recognized that metaphors are hard to translate. As Snell-Hornby has pointed out, "the essential problem posed by metaphor in translation is that different cultures, hence different languages, conceptualize and create symbols in varying ways, and therefore the sense of the metaphor is frequently culture-specific." (1988:57) According to M. Dagut, the translatability of any given SL metaphor "depends on (1) the particular cultural experiences and semantic associations exploited by it, and (2) the extent to which these can, or cannot, be reproduced non-anomalously in TL, depending on the degree of 'overlap' in each particular case." (1976:32)

In their analysis of why certain types of metaphors may fail to communicate a metaphorical sense in the TL, Beekman and Callow point out that the misunderstandings may arise in relation to any of the three parts of the figure — the image, the topic, and the point of similarity. When the image is unknown, the metaphor conveys no meaning at all to the readers of the TL. If the topic is implicit, the image may not be recognized as an image at all. Finally, when the point of similarity is implicit, misunderstanding may occur when the image is already being used metaphorically in the TL or the image used in the SL has several meanings; it can also be due simply to the fact that any of the components of meaning of the image may serve as the point of similarity (1976:137-141).

No matter what the problems involved, there is nevertheless general agreement on the principle that all original or live or thematically important metaphors should be retained in the TL if at all possible.

Newmark suggests seven main procedures for translating metaphor, and presents them in order of preference as follows: (1) reproducing the same image in the TL; (2) replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image; (3) translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image; (4) translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense; (5) conversion of metaphor to sense; (6) deletion; (7) reproducing same metaphor combined with sense. (1981:88-91) It should be noted that (5) and (6) involve elimination of the figurative

expression and thus should be considered apart from the others. However, all these procedures provide a useful guide to the translator.

In the translation of figurative language in Plantado, every effort has been made not to delete any SL metaphor or simile. When a metaphor could not be reproduced as such, a simile was tried. Only when these procedures still failed to communicate the right meaning has the translator resorted to nonfigurative form, making explicit some part of the implicit information carried by the figure.

In all, six procedures have been used: (a) reproducing the same image in the TL; (b) replacing the SL image with a TL image created by the translator; (c) replacing the SL image with a standard TL image; (d) translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image; (e) reproducing the same metaphor combined with sense; and (f) conversion of metaphor to sense.

5.4.1.1 Reproducing the same image in the TL

This procedure has been adopted for metaphors considered to be vital to the source text or contributing to the general understanding of the TL text. Some metaphors in which only the image is explicit in the original have been rendered in the TL in more or less the same way. In other cases the translator has expanded one or more of the parts of the metaphor, so as to make the

meaning of the figure clearer in the TL. The most important metaphors so reproduced in the translated excerpts are the following:

- 46) ...LA ÚLTIMA ATADURA QUE UNE BARCO Y MUELLE, UN ADIOS NO DICHO [*For me it was like cutting) the last mooring that unites ship and pier, an unspoken goodbye*] (p.11) : THE LAST MOORING WHICH HAD HELD THE SHIP TO THE PIER HAD BEEN SILENTLY CUT WITHOUT A FAREWELL.
- 47) (un guardia flaco, de) OJOS FANÁTICOS [*fanatic eyes*] (p.11) : (a thin guard with) DARK ZEALOT EYES.
[A guard with the eyes of a fanatic].
- 48) DESAMPARADA SOLEDAD [*helpless (defenceless) solitude*] (p.11) : (I realized that I had stepped into) A FORSAKEN SOLITUDE
[I was overwhelmed by the panic of utter helplessness]
- 49) MI PENSAMIENTO TAQUIGRÁFICO (escogía qué decir y qué olvidar) [*stenographic thinking*] (p.11) : MY STENOGRAPHIC THINKING SIFTED THROUGH OLD MEMORIES SORTING WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT TO FORGET.
[I was desperately thinking as fast as I could].
- 51) PARCHES DE SUEÑO QUEBRADIZO [*fragile patches of sleep*] (p.12) : FRAGILE PATCHES OF SLEEP .
[I lived in a constant state of vigil, interrupted only by short cat naps].
- 52) gente BLANDA, ANFIBIOSA [*soft, amphibian-like people*] (p.13) : BLAND, REPTILIAN SCUM

- 53) (Entré a una sala) CON DOS RECTÁNGULOS DE LUZ DE ATARDECER AL FRENTE
[(I entered a large room having) two rectangles of sunset light at the front]
 (p.13) : (I entered a large room) BATHED BY TWO RECTANGLES OF SUNSET
 LIGHT
 [I entered a large room lit by the afternoon sun streaming through two tall
 narrow windows]
- 54) Miré LA NOCHE: OTRO PORTÓN NEGRO, TAMBIÉN CERRADO */I looked at the
 night: another huge black gate, also closed]* (p.19) : I LOOKED OUT INTO THE
 NIGHT: ANOTHER DARK AND FORBIDDING PORTAL
 [I looked out into the night: it was also dark and forbidding]
- 55) DOS OJOS FIEROS Y TAIMADOS ME CELEBRARON JUICIO SUMARÍSIMO CON
 VEREDICTO DE TRAIDOR *[two fiery and sly eyes judged me summarily with a
 verdict of treason]* (p.19) : HIS SLY CRUEL EYES JUDGED ME SUMMARILY:
 THE VERDICT WAS TREASON
 [The officer glared at me with contempt in his eyes and with one quick
 glance I knew he had tried, convicted and sentenced me for treason].
- 60) (Un caldo oscuro con tres o cuatro) MACARRONES NÁUFRAGOS */shipwrecked
 macaroni]* (p.117) : (murky water with a few) STRAY MACARONI
- 67) (Como si preguntara) QUÉ ACERO ME SOSTENÍA */[as if asking) what (kind
 of) steel was holding me up]* (p.171) : (wondering) WHAT KIND OF METAL
 WAS I MADE OF

5.4.1.2 SL image replaced with a TL image created by the translator

This procedure has been adopted for SL images considered stylistically important but which involve language-specific idiosyncrasies. Adaptation has been attempted to preserve both the general sense and the aesthetic appeal of the SL image.

41) MI CORAZÓN HUÍA PRECIPITADAMENTE [*my heart was running away precipitately*] (p.9) : MY HEART WAS FIGHTING ITS WAY OUT OF MY CHEST. [My heart pounded; my heart was beating rapidly; my heart was pounding like the beat of a thousand drums].

50) CANCELÉ LA MAREA DE PENSAMIENTOS CONFUSOS (...) Y FLIJÉ RUMBOS [*I cancelled the tide of confused thoughts ... and set course*] (p.9) : MY THINKING RODE THE TIDAL WAVE OF MY EMOTIONS AND HELD ITS COURSE. [I tried to put in order the myriad of thoughts that raced through my mind and I made a few quick decisions] [I had to control the turmoil of thoughts and emotions that ran through my mind].

59) BOLAS QUE HAY QUE LEVANTAR EL PIE PARA QUE PASEN [*balls (so big) that one has to lift one's foot to let them pass*] (p.117) : THE BUZZ OF RUMOURS WAS DEAFENING

In this case, the image has been changed from visual to auditory.

5.4.1.3 SL image replaced with a standard TL image.

SL images have been replaced with stock TL images which have the same meaning as the SL metaphor whenever the translator felt that the SL image was not vital to the text and there was some question about what the original SL figure actually meant.

- 44) SUDOR COBARDE [*cowardly sweat*] (p.9) : I BROKE OUT IN A COLD SWEAT

- 58) (No podía resistir la ternura), ME HABÍAN SALIDO ESPINAS [*I had grown thorns*] (p.126) : I WAS ON PINS AND NEEDLES

- 61) EL TIEMPO, AL QUE LA SOLEDAD PONÍA PIES DE PLOMO [*Time, to whom solitude gives leaden feet*] (p.139) : TIME WENT BY WITH LEADEN FEET

- 65) (Enfermera que estaría) FORCEJEANDO CON LOS CUARENTA [*a nurse who was struggling with forty*] (p.156) : A NURSE WHO WAS PUSHING 40.
Forcejea rather than standard frisar [*to border on, to be close to*] hints at the nurse's efforts to pass for a younger woman.

5.4.1.4 Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image.

This procedure has been used mostly for complex original metaphors whenever the translator felt that a more restrained rendering was more appropriate in the TL.

- 56) (Por el pasillo venía) LA COPIA, MUCHAS VECES DESVAÍDA, de un compañero mío de bachillerato [*Down, along the corridor, came a copy, many times faded, of an old high school classmate*] (p.21) : HE LOOKED LIKE A DILAPIDATED COPY of a former high school classmate of mine.
- 57) OJOS HUÉRFANOS [*orphan eyes*] (p.43) : WAIF-LIKE EYES.
- 64) (Habló con) SINTAXIS DE TEXTO [*he spoke with textbook syntax*] (p.156) : HE SPOKE AS IF HE WERE READING FROM A TEXTBOOK.

5.4.1.5 Same metaphor combined with sense

This compromise procedure has been used in one case where the translator suspected that the transfer of the metaphor alone would not be understood by most readers.

- 42) (mi esposa) DEL ÁRBOL QUIERE SÓLO LA SOMBRA [*(my wife) from the tree, she wants only the shade*] (p.9) : THAT'S JUST LIKE HER: FROM THE TREE, ALL SHE WANTS IS ITS SHADE

Former TL versions of this metaphor proved to be difficult for several English speakers approached by the translator. The difficulty may well reside in the fact that the metaphor is an allusion to a proverb that is very popular in rural areas of Cuba : EL QUE A BUEN ÁRBOL SE ARRIMA, BUENA SOMBRA LO COBIJA [*if you choose the right tree, you'll have plenty of shade to sit in*]. Thus, a combination of metaphor plus sense was felt justified.

5.4.1.6 Conversion of metaphor to sense.

This procedure has been used for metaphors that do not seem vital in the text whenever the SL image would have resulted in a confusing TL image.

- 45) PASEANTE DE ATARDECERES [*stroller of dusk*] (p.10) : (a slight man) WHO STROLLED THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AT DUSK
- 63) (Un hombre que) HABÍA DEJADO ATRÁS TODAS LAS CERTIDUMBRES [*a man who had left behind all certainties*] : THE FORMER FANATIC HAD LONG AGO LOST HIS ZEAL AND HIS SELF-ASSURANCE
- 66) MÉDICO DE CARA LARGA Y EXPRESIÓN DE DERROTA [*a long-faced, defeat expression doctor*] (p.156) : A DOCTOR CAME IN WITH AN EXPRESSION OF DEFEAT ON HIS LONG FACE

5.4.2 Translation of prison slang and colloquialisms

As Numberg (1978) has pointed out, "the vast majority of slang and colloquial words are either metaphorical, or have some marked phonaesthetic or formal peculiarities."⁴ Civilized cultures and their languages retain many remnants of animism, largely on the unconscious level. In Western language, the metaphor owes its power to echoes of sympathetic magic, and slang utilizes

⁴ Quoted in Newmark, Approaches to Translation, p.94.

certain attributes of the metaphor to evoke images too close for comfort to 'reality'. Slang, then, owes much of its power to shock to the superimposition of images that are incongruous with images (or values) of others, usually members of the dominant culture.

Most of the slang expressions in Perera's novel have become part and parcel of Cuban Spanish over the last few years, and have attained the level of colloquialisms, mostly because there were no words in the standard language expressing exactly the same meaning. Therefore, the translator feels justified in discussing both slang and colloquialisms under the same heading.

In the case of slang and colloquialisms central to the novel, transcription or literal translation has been resorted to whenever no TL equivalent term would have done justice to terms having no direct TL equivalent. Both transcribed and literally translated terms have been printed in the translated text in *italics* to isolate those words from normal speech and to warn the reader that they can only be understood in context in the TL.

For colloquialisms and prison slang not considered central to the novel, an effort has been made to find appropriate equivalents in the TL, along the same lines as those used to translate Perera's original figures of speech. This kind of colloquialism or prison slang has been replaced either by a TL equivalent created by the translator or by an expression already existing in the TL which has similar frequency. A few terms have been converted to a descriptive phrase.

The decision to adapt an image or to use a TL stock expression has sometimes involved changing the image, with an inevitable change in meaning and usually in tone. Hopefully, this is more than compensated for by the improved readability and greater impact of the English version.

5.4.2.1 Transcribed terms

Transcription, which gives the English version a certain local colour, has been adopted in the case of four words. For each of these words, the TL provides only a very approximate equivalent? In the English text, all of these words are followed, either immediately or soon thereafter, by glosses of varying lengths to make the meaning comprehensible.

- 13) GALERA [*galleries*] : GALERAS

This term is defined the first time it appears in the ST.

- 12) PLANTADOS [*the ones who planted themselves*] : PLANTADOS

This term is usually coupled in the translated text with one of three equivalents: rebels, holdouts, diehards

- 91) WILAYA [*neologism*] : WILAYA

The first time this term appears, it is defined in the source text. Some textual adjustments (verb 'lay', noun 'bed') are used in the English version in the few other instances it appears.

5.4.2.2 Literal translations

A few terms having no direct TL equivalent have been translated literally to make a greater impact on the TL reader. They are followed by a brief definition already provided in the ST or added in the translation. Except for (11), all of these terms have a very low frequency in the novel.

11) CALZONCILLOS [*underpants, shorts*] : THE UNDERPANTS.

85) COTORRERA [*female parrot; parrot cage*] : PARROT CAGE

88) LOS ABUELITOS [*the grandfathers*] : THE GRANDFATHERS

Rather than explaining the metaphor or paraphrasing the sense (e.g. 'officer in charge or reeducation'), this term has been translated literally, to convey both the irony implied and its etymology (i.e., the first such officer in prison was an elderly man).

89) PERRA [*bitches*] : BITCHES

Neither the standard English term 'prison van' nor colloquial terms with very specific connotations, such as 'paddy wagon' can convey the cramped conditions of a Soviet-made army truck converted for the transport of prisoners.

97) MOJONERA [*place full of turds*] : THE TURD DITCHES

Even if there exists in English a specialized term for ditches used to move excrement and sewage down sloping surfaces, it would certainly not convey the idea of it being used as a place of punishment for the most recalcitrant prisoners.

- 122) AGÁRRATE DE LA BROCHA, QUE TE VOY A QUITAR LA ESCALERA [*hold on to the brush, I'm going to take the ladder away from you*] : HOLD ON TO THE BRUSH, I'M GOING TO PULL THE LADDER OUT FROM UNDER YOU

5.4.2.3 SL image replaced with a TL image created by the translator

This procedure is used for SL terms considered to be an integral part of the communication — because of their frequency or their connection with central elements of prison life — where there is no TL term with similar function.

- 69) VASELINA [*Vaseline*] : (invented nickname) SLIME BALL
- 70) EL HACIA [*the Lunge*] : TORO
- 72) LA BOBA [*the idiot, dunce, fool*] : SLOP
- 76) GUACHIPUPA [*unknown origin*] : BRAKE FLUID
- 78) LA CASA DE LOS TRUCOS [*House of Tricks*] : THE JOKE SHOP
- 79) AGUA CHIRLE [*tasteless water*] : SWAMP WATER
- 81) CUADRADOS [*the ones who stood to attention*] : THE BROKEN
CUADRARSE: [*(Mil.) to stand to attention*] : TO BREAK [TO BE BROKEN]
- 10) LOS AMARILLOS : [*the yellow ones*] : THE KHAKIS
- 87) BOCUCA [*neologism*] : CANNIBAL
Used to convey the brutality, contempt, and total disrespect for human rights on the part of the guards
- 93) AVIÓN [*airplane*] : (slang for bed in cells) : WING
- 96) ENGOME [*neologism*] : CHICLET

5.4.2.4 SL expressions replaced with standard TL expressions

This procedure is used for SL terms for which there are TL terms with an equivalent function, and where this kind of substitution does not seem to diminish the impact of the SL term.

- 73) GUANINA [*word probably of Taino origin*] : PIGSWILL
- 77) REENGANCHE [*reenlistment; reenlistment bonus*] : (food) SECOND HELPING
- 80) PLANTARSE [*to plant oneself*] : TO DIG ONE'S HEELS IN
 PLANTAR [*to plant*] : TO PASS UP
- 83) CARNE FRESCA [*fresh meat*] : TENDERFEET
- 84) ESBIRRO [*henchman; minion; killer*] : BATISTA'S MINION
- 86) MONO [*monkey; ape*] : GORILLA
- 92) CHELES [*neologism for 'personal belongings'*] : ODDS AND ENDS
- 95) PERSEGUIDORA [*pursuing (car)*] : PATROL CAR
- 96) REQUISA [*inspection; requisition; search*] : STRIP SEARCH
- 100) se cansaron de REPARTIR LEÑA [*they got tired of distributing firewood (sticks)*] : TO LASH OUT
- 101) MÉTELE EL SOPAPO! [*give him a slap!*] : SMACK HIM!
- 102) DEJAR ZONZO [*to make somebody groggy*] : TO BE PUNCH-DRUNK
- 103) SONAR [*to sound*] : TO RAP, TO Clobber
- 104) un ESCAPARATE de fuerte [*strong as a wardrobe*] : STRONG AS AN OX
- 105) GALLEGA [*from Galicia, a region in Spain north of Portugal*]: BABE
- 107) LA CHIAPA [*metal sheet*] : LICENSE PLATES
- 108) PRENDERSE [*to catch fire; to mate (animals); to dress up*] : TO CLUTCH TO
 ¡HAY QUE PRENDERSE! : TO BUCKLE DOWN
- 109) AFINCARSE A + inf. [*to settle down, to establish oneself*] : TO DO ONE'S
 UTMOST

5.4.2.5 Use of a descriptive phrase

Some terms have been rendered by a descriptive phrase when it was deemed necessary to compensate for the lack of correspondence between the SL and TL

- 82) CORDILLERA [*mountain range, cordillera*] : STRING OF PRISONERS
- 94) TOLA [*neologism*] : SOLID METAL DOOR IN BLACKOUT CELLS.
- 99) A PLANAZO LIMPIO [*to hit repeatedly with the flat of a machete*] : TO HIT OUT LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE WITH MACHETES.

5.4.3 Translation of Cuban idioms

Idioms have far more local cultural associations than do original metaphors, and they are, therefore, more difficult to transfer from the SL to the TL. As Nida has pointed out, "idioms are some of the most obvious candidates for semantic adjustment, for the very fact that they are idioms means it is unlikely that the same type of distinctive form will have the same meaning in another language." (1969:106)

Adjustments involved in the translation of SL idioms are usually of two kinds: from idioms to nonidioms, and from idioms to different idioms. In the

translation of Plantado, the decision was made to avoid reduction of idioms to sense or literal language because this would have involved loss or addition of components of sense. Likewise, literal translation of idioms was considered to be out of place, due to the resultant loss of emotive or pragmatic impact.

Therefore, an effort was made to find appropriate TL equivalents for all SL idioms so as to improve readability of the English version with little loss of 'impact'. The effort to replace SL idioms with established TL idioms having similar frequency sometimes required changing the images, sometimes with an ensuing loss of 'colour' and change in tone; thus, the TL idiom may be more informal or colloquial, or have a stronger emotional impact. The translator has tried to compensate for the loss of 'colour' in the TL text by judicious amplifications in the notes about culture-specific events, to be included in a glossary. A list of Cuban idioms with their English equivalents follows:

- 117) ESTA GENTE PRIMERO DA EL PALO Y DESPUÉS AVERIGUA [*these people hit you first and find out later*] : THEY SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER
- 118) VERDE Y CON PUNTA, GUANÁBANA [*green and thorny?, a soursop! (custard apple)*] : ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON!
- 119) AQUELLO NO LO BRINCABA UN CHIVO [*not even a goat could jump over it*] : TO BE A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

- 120) ECHAR PALANTE (A ALGUIEN) (1) *[to throw somebody forward]* : TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON SOMEONE
- 121) ECHAR PALANTE (2) *[push forward]* : NEVER SAY DIE
- 123) ¿CÓMO ES LA FIESTA ÉSTA? *[how is this party?]* : WHAT'S THE SCORE HERE?
- 124) ¿QUÉ HAY DETRÁS DE ESTE POTAJE? *[What comes after the soup?]* : WHAT'S HE GOT UP HIS SLEEVE?
- 125) TRONCO DE YUCA *[cassava trunk]* : FATHEAD
- 126) TOSTARSE *[to tan, to turn brown]* : TO CRACK UP
- 127) TENER BARRENILLO *[to have a bark-boring beetle]* : TO HAVE A BEE IN ONE'S BONNET
- 128) MONTARSE EN EL COGOTE *[to have someone sit on the back of the neck]* : TO HAVE SOMEBODY ON YOUR BACK

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The translation of Plantado has not only given me a high degree of personal satisfaction, but has also been a most rewarding professional experience in many respects.

The pursuit of appropriate equivalents for scores of terms and expressions nonexistent in the receptor language and the efforts at providing translations for objects lacking cultural correspondence has furthered my understanding of both the target language and the receptor culture. Moreover, my efforts to be faithful to Perera's style and to recreate her many original metaphors have developed my translation skills in a new field, that of literary translation.

The whole exercise of attempting to render an important piece of fiction into a language other than my native one has demonstrated that adequate results can be achieved if standard translation procedures are supplemented by informal consultations with native speakers of the target language during all phases, from the initial analysis of the source text through the transfer phase itself, to the final phase in which parallel draft versions are presented to interested TL readers. I initiated this type of consultation, common in Bible translation (Nida and Taber 1974:170-172), following contact with the author of Plantado.

A few years ago, Hilda Perera graciously went over an early draft of my English version of some excerpts of Plantado. At that time, the author remarked that she was both pleased with my efforts at keeping the local flavour of her novel and disappointed with the literary quality of that draft — especially the dialogue, which sounded stilted. She remarked that she had had the opposite reaction when an American-born professional literary translator had tried her hand at this novel. This translator produced a few pages of very good colloquial English prose and smooth-flowing dialogue, but almost devoid of Cuban local colour — which resulted in the author not having Plantado translated by that particular translator.

For some time, I was haunted by the realization of the difficulties involved in striking a balance between faithfulness to the cultural setting of the SL text and producing a ‘communicative’ translation capable of capturing the readers’ attention. On the one hand, I felt that my first-hand knowledge of the cultural patterns of behaviour and the corresponding presuppositions in Cuban culture, as well as Cuban Spanish, was a definite asset, since I had a better understanding of the function and significance of a number of special features of form and content, especially neologisms and slang. On the other hand, my limitations — both linguistic and literary — represented a major hurdle towards achieving a translation which could compare to the naturalness of the original and to the ease with which the receptors of the source text understood it.

I finally thought of the possibility of obtaining input from average TL readers as a means to help solve the apparent contradiction between preserving the historical and cultural setting of the novel, which required retaining metaphors and expressions dear to the author — in many cases unfamiliar in the target language and which might have obscured the TL version — and achieving a version that is both more idiomatic and easier to understand for TL readers.

This ‘interactive’ approach has proved invaluable. Consultations helped me detect areas lacking cultural correspondence and points needing expansion or explanation, determine the relative acceptability of various TL alternatives, identify the closest natural equivalents in the target language, weed out unnatural expressions in the translation, and, in general, improve the intelligibility of the TL text for the average reader. On the basis of these consultations, I decided to use some loan words such as ‘plantado’ and ‘galera’ while translating literally ‘underpants’, ‘the khakis’ and a few other similar terms.

This ‘interactive approach’ also made it possible for me to vastly improve on the agility of my earlier English versions, as the following versions show:

<u>Final version</u>	<u>Earlier version</u>
"A few days ago, there was a political meeting at school. They denigrated political prisoners in front of the children. Tere listened quietly to everything they had to say. When they finished, she asked for permission to speak. She said:	"A few days ago, they held a political meeting at the school to denigrate political prisoners. Tere sat silently through all the speeches and, when they were over, she asked for permission to speak. She said to them:

"You don't know anything about political prisoners. I do because my father has been in prison for six years. I've seen him only three times since 1965. We haven't heard a word about him since last December. My father is a plantado, you know, a rebel. He refuses to wear the same uniform as the common prisoners. He also refuses the political rehabilitation program. In prison, he's lost over sixty pounds. He's been harassed, humiliated, and forced to work in the fields from sunrise to sunset. One day, he took off his shirt in front of us; his back was covered with wounds. I also saw the bayonet scars on his arms. I've seen prisoners with their heads wrapped in bandages, wounded prisoners, crippled prisoners. Many have been shot by firing squads after a mock trial. Many others have been killed while working in the fields, or locked in punishment cells and nobody ever hears anything about it."

"By the time she finished, she was in tears. She walked out and left the school..."

"None of you know anything about what it is to be a political prisoner, but I do, because my father has been in prison for the last six years. I've been able to see him three times since 1965, and we haven't had any news about him since last December. My father is a rebel: he has refused to wear the same uniform that the common prisoners wear; he has also refused to undergo the political rehabilitation process. Since going to prison he's lost over sixty pounds. He's been harassed, humiliated, and forced to work in the fields from sunrise to sunset. One day, he took off his shirt in front of us and I could see wounds all over his back. I've also seen the scars the bayonets made on his arms. I've seen prisoners with bandages around their heads, wounded prisoners, disabled prisoners. Many have been shot by the firing squads after a mock trial, but many others have been secretly killed while working in the fields, or locked in the punishment cells and all this has been kept secret."

By the end she was crying; she walked out of class and left school..."

The final version achieves a better balance between fidelity to the original and readability of the translation.

Translating Plantado has brought me great personal satisfaction despite the special problems brought about by the fact that I am not a native speaker of English nor am I a literary translator. What I have tried to show, both through my translation itself and through the commentary on my translation, is that acceptable results can be achieved if one is aware of one's limitations and is willing to take the necessary steps to overcome them.

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