

might well function in history in much the way that the people who live in it do, altering in form or even disappearing as the relationship between it and the context alters. It is no accident that Plato himself builds into his Republic the source of its degeneration.

A second issue is raised by Erasmus's economic model of human nature, which so strongly resembles the "possessive individualism" of Hobbes and Locke. Erasmus distinguishes his own "humanistic behaviorism" from the "utopian behaviorism" of B.F. Skinner. Both types presuppose the desirability of affecting human behavior (this makes virtually every political thinker who ever lived a behaviorist), but humanistic behaviorism holds that the incentives meant to influence behavior should be directed to the projects of individuals, not to another more inclusive goal. The incentives, of course, are based on self-seeking and -serving impulses, for which Erasmus provides no more evidence than does such a Utopian individualist as Adam Smith. Here the acquisitive-aggressive-possessive theory of human nature in fact shapes the evidence meant to support it. Erasmus's history of the kibbutz, for example, considers only its economic and military functions and ignores the strong ideological and, in some ways, disinterested emphases on socialism and working the land. The Republic is represented primarily as an economic establishment—with the implication that Plato's metaphysical interest in the Good is an incidental feature. Hardly acknowledging what this commits him to theoretically, Erasmus simply assumes a conception of human nature in which the individual (like the body he inhabits) "possesses" fixed and given boundaries. Whatever the individual does can be reduced again to that source. Other writers have made the same argument, of course (about as many, perhaps, as have denied it). Whatever the tradition behind it, however, the claim is clearly only the beginning of the argument—not, as Erasmus would have us believe, its conclusion.

## Poetry and Politics/ Poesia y Política by Heberto Padilla

(Georgetown University Cuban Series: 136 pp.; \$3.00 [paper])

José Corrales  
and Enrique Encinosa

On March 20, 1971, Heberto Padilla, a prize-winning and popular Cuban dissident poet, was arrested by the security police of Fidel Castro's regime. A month later Padilla was brought to the office of Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists to appear in front of newspapermen and other fellow intellectuals. Without a pause Padilla read a confession in which he admitted to "slandering the Revolution."

Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Alberto Moravia, Susan Sontag, and many other internationally celebrated intellectuals sympathetic to Castro's revolution protested the Stalin-era treatment of Cuba's best-known poet, charging in an open letter to Castro that Padilla's abject confession "could only have been obtained by methods which are the negation of legality and revolutionary justice."

It was perhaps this kind of protest that saved Padilla. Nevertheless the poet became a "nonperson" in Cuban intellectual circles. Ever since his release in 1971 he has had to earn his living as a translator.

The Padilla affair was not an isolated incident. His "confession" was followed by new purges and harassments of other intellectuals not previously blacklisted, including, among others, José Lezama Lima and Antón Arrufat. Belkis Cuza, Padilla's wife and a poet herself, also had her works banned. "Enemies of the people," "decadents" and "parasites" are among the new distinctions applied by the Cuban press to these poets and writers.

*Poetry and Politics* contains forty-two of Padilla's works, all in facing Spanish and English translations. The

Georgetown Cuban Series publication contains some of Padilla's most controversial poetry, as well as his "confession," titled "One Can Be a Poet in Cuba."

Padilla's political poetry is full of despair. His best-known poem, "In Hard Times," begins: "They requested his time/so that he joins the Time of History," but as the poem continues we see that the mysterious "they" also requested his eyes, his lips, and his legs. His heart, shoulders and chest were also requested, and of course "they" asked for his tongue. At the end, nothing is left of the poet. This disembowled body is told to "please move on," symbolizing not only many Cuban writers living in Cuba but perhaps all Cubans.

Padilla rarely tired of predicting his inevitable arrest, just as he rarely failed to read the poem that predicted his 1971 nightmare: "Tell the truth/tell at least your truth/then let anything happen:/let them tear your cherished page./let them stone your door down/let the people/crowd before your body/as if you were a prodigy or a corpse."

The case of Padilla is internationally known, but it is not an isolated one in a country whose most famous intellectuals and artists have been purged, banned from publishing, and where most of them have been arrested at least once by the security police. But of course writers are not going to stop writing, and new heroes of Cuban dissident literature grow even as Padilla's voice is suppressed. Several defiant dissident poems smuggled from Cuba, most of them written by men in prison, have been circulating widely in Cuban communities in the U.S. and Latin America. This underground literature is expanding, and by now large numbers of Cuban exiles are, in some way or another, familiar with poets such as Miguel Sales and Angel Cuadra, who are still in prison.

That Cuban poets are still writing in spite of censorship and repression is a hopeful fact. That totalitarian regimes still suppress freedom of thought is a terrible fact, one that free men should not tolerate.

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### CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN P. SISK is Professor of English at Gonzaga University. BEREL LANG is a member of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Colorado, Boulder. JOSE CORRALES wrote drama reviews in Havana for *Bohemia*, a weekly literary magazine, and for *La Gaceta de Cuba*, news-

paper of the Union of Writers and Artists. ENRIQUE ENCINOSA has been editor of *Abdala*, a Cuban social democratic newspaper, for the last three years, and writes often about Cuban dissidents. Both men have poems and plays among their credits.