

Rafael López-Pedraza

A Homage ¹

By Enrique Pardo



Traducción al castellano – <http://www.pantheatre.com/pdf/1-rafael-lopez-pedraza-es.pdf>
Traduction en français en cours

Rafael López-Pedraza, friend, mentor, and inspirational figure of Pantheatre passed away in Caracas on January 9, 2011. Linda Wise and I were at the time directing in Santiago de Chile, where I actually presented Rafael's *Hermes and his Children*², one of Pantheatre's founding books, to the circle of artists of what has become *Pantheatre Chile*. Upon returning to Paris, I was looking for a Spanish copy of the book on Internet, when I stumbled upon the dreaded word: "obituary" – in fact, a loving address by Margarita Méndez³, one of Rafael's main collaborators in Venezuela. I knew his health was frail but still it felt like the sudden collapse of a vast fraction of my cultural and friendship landscape. In French one says: "tout un pan du paysage s'est écroulé"... A *pan* (section) of the landscape slid underground, underworld.

In the late seventies, during the "dark ages" of the Malérargues community⁴ – those penniless and isolated years following Roy Hart's death⁵ - I used to put money aside for a yearly escapade to London where I would spend one or two full days at Compendium Books, a bookshop in Camden Town, to keep up with the English-speaking artistic and philosophical world. I had a precise budget so I would make a pile of books – easily 30 or 40 – and gradually work out my purchase priorities. In 1979, a book stayed on top of the pile. It was: *Hermes and his Children*. I 'flashed' so strongly on this book that I went through its bibliography and footnotes, and started there and then buying its reference books. James Hillman's *Pan and the Nightmare*⁶ was amongst them! I travelled back with the seeds of Pantheatre in my suitcase! Synchronistically, when I returned to Malérargues, my close collaborator and friend, the late Liza Mayer, had bought me Hillman's *The Dream and the Underworld*.

¹ These memories and reflections in homage to Rafael Lopez Pedraza, whom I allow myself to call simply Rafael, were my first emotional responses upon learning of his passing, written in one intense jet. I then added footnotes so that my colleagues and students, and those not familiar with the history of Pantheatre, could follow up some of the references. Most of these are in Pantheatre's website: www.pantheatre.com.

² *Hermes and his Children* / In English : http://www.daimon.ch/catalog/index.php?cPath=15_38&sort=2a. En español: Fata Morgana Editorial, Mexico, <http://www.fatamorgana.com.mx/>. Unfortunately just out of print in French – Editions Imago.

³ Margarita Méndez, on: <http://iaap.org/frontpage/announcements/rafael-lopez-pedraza-obituary-2011.html>.

⁴ For presentations of Malérargues, the Roy Hart Centre, see: <http://www.pantheatre.com/gb/1-roy-hart-gb.html>

⁵ Roy Hart, 1924 – 1975. See <http://www.pantheatre.com/gb/1-roy-hart-gb.html>

⁶ James Hillman, like Rafael Lopez Pedraza, visited Malérargues in the mid eighties. With Charles Boer and Paul Kugler he suggested and encouraged Pantheatre's *Myth and Theatre Festival* at which he lectured several years. James Hillman accepted to be Pantheatre, and the Festival's honorary president. See <http://www.pantheatre.com/gb/2-MT-gb.html>

I started immediately working on Rafael's book. My first fantasy was way too ambitious: a performance literally on Hermes and on his children: Pan, Hermaphrodite and Priapus. I focused on Pan, put together the solo performance "Calling for Pan", and started Pantheatre. I wrote to Rafael via Spring Publications, told him about my enthusiasm for his book and of the fact that I was working on a performance inspired by it – including actual quotes. This must have been 1981. I remember jumping with joy when an envelope arrived from Venezuela with his name on the back! He offered to come for a visit on his way to the 1983 IAAP (International Association of Analytical Psychology) Jerusalem Jungian Congress⁷. A fortnight stop-over with his wife Valerie! Did we take our time then! Rafael put it this way: "you are poor millionaires..." At one point, talking about Pan and Pantheatre, he said something like: "Had you chosen Dionysus, I would have thought you were too crazy. Dionysus, one has to take in homeopathic doses!"

Then came the fantasies of who this man was, what he looked like, and, most of all, how old was he? If a man under forty had written such a book I would retire *ipso facto*! In his letters he came across with an exotic mix of intrepid youthfulness and sharp wisdom – he was after all venturing on a fortnight visit to a theatre community out in the middle of nowhere in the French countryside. He later explained that my letter was one of the first responses from an artist to his book – and this at a moment when he was stating clearly the need for psychotherapy to dialogue with art – something he himself did magnificently throughout his life⁸. He said he had also taken note of his own fantasies about our meeting, especially given my Spanish name and being born in Peru. I was discovering the value of fantasies for Rafael, his way of considering and dialoguing with them.

We met at a Grand Hotel in Marseille. Having announced myself, there we were, standing at both ends of a long corridor. I was certainly full of the emotion of the occasion, and I was immediately reassured: he was well over forty! Against the light coming through his room door I could see a burly, dark, mature man - was he smoking a Cuban cigar? (It might be a fantasy of mine...) – a sprightly, deep-voiced Caribbean cacique-like figure – something of a shaman even! To him, I must have looked like a Scandinavian student – what? a youngish blond South American! Followed a great *abrazo* and his introducing me to Valerie. The hotel room was a mess: they had found the bed too soft, dragged the mattress off and slept in the middle of the room. I helped them tidy and pack, and we drove off to Malérargues.

We spent the fortnight talking, going for walks, cooking, driving around the South of France. I would take them to great restaurants. I had no money at the time, so Rafael and Valerie did the inviting – until he took me aside one day and told me I was triggering his "money complex" i.e. leaving him without a cent for the rest of the journey! So we measured exuberances. They stayed at a beautiful manor farmhouse near Malérargues, cared for by an actress friend, Pascale Ben. Rafael liked good food; he had befriended the young sons of the Ibanez family who ran the farm, and would walk around in order to choose the specific chicken or duck he wanted for lunch or dinner. Under his direction we would all run around the courtyard, shouting and laughing, until we caught the fated fowl, sometimes in the duck pond. Pascale Ben was a fantastic car driver - i.e. full of fantasy. She had an archaic post-war Citroen 2CV, the famous *Deux Chevaux*. Seeing Rafael drive off with Pascale was an unforgettable picture: with one hand he had to hold the door that did not close, with the other a straw hat because the 2CV had an open rooftop. He said something like: "Psyche brought me here, I have to accept."

⁷ See: http://www.daimon.ch/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=15_30&products_id=5617

⁸ Two examples. "Anselm Kiefer - After the Catastrophe", by Rafael Lopez-Pedraza. In 1998 I wrote: "An extraordinary book, especially in its reflection on the notion of "shadow"... This new book is a dialogue between the work of a now famous contemporary german painter, and a jungian approach to the notion of shadow. One need not like or agree with either, but the quality and depth of reflection of Lopez-Pedraza's is stunning. It is also Serious with the biggest capital "S" I can imagine - which I consider a salutary portent when about to embark on a 'cabaret' on shadow! ("Shadow Boxing", performed in Cambridge, April 98). I came across the book while in Rome, setting up the "Superstition" project - also an encouraging portent !" - Thames and Hudson – London 1996 - ISBN 0-500-01757-3.

I read in Margarita Mendez' obituary that in his last seminars, Rafael spoke of Titian's late painting: *The Flaying of Marsyas* – which I consider one of the greatest paintings in Western history. The pensive and rather depressed figure of King Midas on the right of the painting, contemplating the utter cruelty of Apollo's punishment on Marsyas, reminds me of... Rafael! See: <http://www.lilithgallery.com/library/greek/images/Titian-Marsyas-1576.jpg>

We showed him the work we were doing at the time: the Pantheatre laboratory work and the 'Roy Hart' voice work, including a vocal concert which later – and thanks to him – was titled “Music for Marsyas”. I also performed “Calling for Pan” for him. On most occasions, especially in laboratory ones, Rafael seemed a very restless and disordered spectator, scattered even, in his attendance and responses. The fact is that he himself could only take Dionysus in homeopathic doses - literally! His concentration and gaze were wonderfully sharp and intense, but sometimes he would interrupt, break in, even jump up and walk out. He would pace outside the studio, light a cigarette or even a cigar, then come back, pace around again. Sometimes he would ask for another ‘dose’ – but often, that was it: he had had enough and needed reflection. On occasions he would look at us with a look that asked: “Do you guys realize what you are up to?” He did put it to us, and I remember mentioning to him a concept Roy Hart had used as an ideal for acting, that of *conscious schizophrenia*. He stared at me and asked: “Enrique, have you ever danced with a schizophrenic?”

Maybe the fundamental lesson I drew from his manner and from his writings is the way in which he would weigh down and anchor analysis and speculation without ever dampening flights of fantasy – on the contrary. He once said to me: “criticism is usually a hysterical need”! He also said something like: “a therapist who asks questions is a bad therapist”, which I took as a lesson in how to invoke, convoke, provoke - bring out the voices – especially for theatre directors in dialogue with the creativity of actors-artists. Rafael’s cultural and psychological open-mindedness was astonishing to me and the main reason I took so strongly to his book. Some aspects of the Roy Hart legacy (not necessarily Roy Hart’s own stands) were very conservative, to the point of Puritanism. The ideals were normative, the model monotheistic. Rafael’s mindset, like archetypal psychology’s, was cultural and polytheistic. During his stay he read to us the paper he was going to deliver at the Jungian Jerusalem Congress: “On Cultural Anxiety”⁹ – addressing the clash between the two mythologies that have shaped the Western psyche: the Jerusalem mythologies, especially the Judeo-Christian one, and Greek mythology.

Rafael has made me and my colleagues, and our students, work seriously on the crucial notion of tolerance - in ethics and in psychology, certainly, but also in esthetics, underlining the psychological maturity required for the practice of criticism, and of artistic teaching and directing. I used to watch like a hawk his responses to artistic proposals or commentaries – i.e. what he liked and valued and what he did not – and why. For instance we both admired Fellini. Rafael had also met and admired Lindsay Kemp. His passages in *Hermes and his Children* on Fellini’s *Satyricon* helped me understand why – as did his astonishing perspectives on the odd, the extravagant, the freak aspects of Hermes and of his children. He said I belonged to the Latin-American baroque family – a parentage I gladly accepted, especially given his own presence in it! He introduced me to the great Cuban poet José Lezama-Lima. I use a motto Rafael pointed to me: “A horcajadas al borde de la cazuela barroca – hasta la muerte”. (Sitting astride on the edge of the baroque cauldron - until death.) Today I ask performers, myself included, to fall into the baroque cauldron – and return – and tell what they saw.

While in Chile, just recently, I received a book of Rafael’s I had not read: *Eros y Psique / La mutua herida de amor vía hacia la plenitud*¹⁰. (Eros and Psyche / The mutual wound of love - a way towards plenitude). The figure of Psyche was undoubtedly Rafael’s main muse. Certainly professionally: he was the ultimate “shrink”, as the Americans put it – a sagacious, impulsive and at the same time amazingly patient and keen shaman-artist of psychotherapy. But also in his *anima* values, in his tastes, moods and reveries. I could almost see the figure of Psyche appear in the smoke of his cigars! Different but related to Freud’s cigars or to Jung’s pipe. The story of Eros and Psyche in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* is probably the main mythical reference in Jungian studies. James Hillman presents it as *The Myth of Analysis*¹¹ – nothing less! What makes following Rafael in these stories so special is the care with which he considers the figure of Psyche. In the very first setting of the story where this young woman appears, whose beauty radiates to the point that rumours start spreading that she is

⁹ See http://www.daimon.ch/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=5605

¹⁰ from Fata Morgana Editorial, Mexico, <http://www.fatamorgana.com.mx/>

¹¹ *The Myth of Analysis: Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology* (1983) James Hillman.

Aphrodite incarnate, Rafael marks a halt to state the obvious. And he puts it in a way that I think only his cunning *duende* could do: there is confusion! Brilliantly simple! “There is confusion in those who admire Psyche”! Of course, the implications of this “confusion” are vast and immensely complex for our culture, because it involves Aphrodite and sexuality. Rafael dares step into the confusing maze of sex and soul, and he speaks his mind. His journey, his descent, is the model for the artistic plunge I ask for into the baroque cauldron: the courage to face confusion rather than seek (too soon) the reassurance of fusion.

I did not see Rafael again after his visit to Malérargues. We corresponded for some years. When I asked him if I could visit him in Caracas, he replied very warmly that it was not a good idea, that his life was too structured then to even dream of exchanges like in Malérargues. Our paths did not cross either on the relatively rare occasions when he travelled to Europe or to the USA. *Hermes and his Children* is of course compulsory reading for the artists who train with Pantheatre: its wealth of images, its cultural thinking, the precedence it gives to Psyche’s vision and logic. I notice how taken young artists are today with his writings. For me, he confirmed the very value of image-making and of Psyche’s curiosity. He urged artistic risk while responding to it with a thoroughly discriminating and, yes, *critical* tolerance. May his spirit continue to visit our enterprises as it has since those bucolic days in 1983. Our images will always carry grateful tributes to his memory.

Enrique Pardo, Paris, February 3rd, 2011.

Articulos en español en internet:

La psicología del sectarismo en tiempos de ansiedad, por Rafael López Pedraza.

<http://www.kalathos.com/abr2001/psicologia/lopez/lopez.htm>

ANSIEDAD CULTURAL, Por Rafael López-Pedraza. <http://homepage.mac.com/eeskenazi/ansiedad.html>