

© 2018

Melissa Lynn Widdis

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LAW(LESSNESS) AND (DIS)ORDER: CRIME FICTION OF THE HISPANIC  
CARIBBEAN

By

MELISSA LYNN WIDDIS

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Spanish

Written under the direction of

Camilla Stevens

And approved by

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October, 2018

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Law(lessness) and (Dis)order: Crime Fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean

By MELISSA LYNN WIDDIS

Dissertation Director:  
Camilla Stevens

This dissertation examines how Hispanic Caribbean crime and detective fiction spanning the end of the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century pushes against classical conventions, modifies them to fit their social context, and some cases uproots the tenets of the genre altogether. I argue that crime fiction is indicative of the moral, social, and political values of a culture and its people, for it shows what crimes are acceptable and unacceptable through the representation of the processes of investigation and justice. In Chapter One I frame my reading of Virgilio Díaz Grullón's "Crónica Policial," Ana Lydia Vega's "Pasión de historia," Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's *Sol de medianoche*, and Leonardo Padura Fuentes's *Pasado Perfecto* and *Máscaras* with models of classical detective fiction and theories of metafiction and postmodernism to show how they invert the mode of metafiction traditionally seen in the detective story and provoke the reader to question the relationship between fiction and reality. Chapter Two investigates the relationship between the Hispanic Caribbean detective and urban space in *Sol de medianoche*, *Desamores* (Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón), and *Las puertas de la noche* (Amir Valle Ojeda) and argues that they display an amalgamation of Baudelaire's flâneur and de Certeau's "practitioner" regarding their interaction with urban spaces. Like the flâneur, the detectives are active observers of their surroundings, but they are also

actively engaged in their urban environments and give life and significance to their communities through their travels, observations, and resulting narratives. Similarly, the detectives featured in the third chapter are deeply entrenched in their milieu, which affects their cultural attitudes and professional investigations. I turn to theories of post-colonialism in my analysis of *Candela* by Rey Emmanuel Andújar and *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* by Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo to reveal the detective as representing and negotiating the liminal space between oppressor and oppressed, thereby transcending the boundaries between authority and community and in so doing highlighting the dynamics of race, class, and social differences in the Hispanic Caribbean. In the final chapter I read *Seva* by Luis López Nieves, *El crimen verde* by Emilia Pereyra, and *El hombre triángulo* by Rey Emmanuel Andújar as works of crime and detective fiction even though they deviate radically from the normative structure of the genre by lacking either a detective or a crime. By putting these texts into dialogue, I illuminate how narratives utilize crime to portray the social realities of their time and place, as well as how they adapt and transform the detective genre, enabling the reader to understand the distinctive cultural complexities of the Hispanic Caribbean.

## **Acknowledgements**

The road to completing this dissertation has been rather lengthy and filled with personal and professional obstacles. Despite the setbacks, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their continued and persistent support over the last several years. I am deeply grateful to my dissertation director, Camilla Stevens, for her inspiration, guidance, understanding, encouragement, and for believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself. Words cannot express my gratitude to her for her unending support and for continually advocating for me. I am grateful to Marcy Schwartz for her critical readings and insightful questions and comments that helped me to develop my own voice and deepen my analysis in this project. I thank Tom Stephens for his constant encouragement and positive feedback, especially when I was feeling discouraged. Without these remarkable mentors, I would not have been able to achieve this goal. I thank Elena Valdez for being a sounding-board and motivator during our studies together and for her reading and feedback on this project during the final stretch. I also thank my undergraduate professors at Colby College for instilling in me a love of Spanish and Latin American literature: to Jorge Olivares for inspiring the topic of this project in his senior seminar; and to Marisela Funes Jones and Meriwynn Grothe Mansori for inspiring me, without even knowing it, to pursue graduate studies in Spanish Literature and Culture.

Although it has been awhile since I have spent time with my fellow graduate students of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, I fondly remember many classes, conversations, conferences, and social events that helped me to not feel so alone during my graduate studie. Molly Palmer, Ben Arenger, Elena Valdez, and Candace Plunkett, among others, provided support and camaraderie when I felt particularly alone.

As I have spent the majority of my time over the last five years teaching at Christian Brothers Academy, I am deeply grateful to my friends and colleagues that have supported and encouraged me through the process of completing this dissertation. In particular, I would not have survived the last five years of teaching and writing had it not been for the friendship and intellectual, professional, and personal support of Jonathan Broehl and Gisela Cordero-Cinko. Moreover, I appreciate the daily support and inspiration I have received from my CBA students over the last few years. My Spanish 4 Honors students of 2017-2018 provided the perfect audience to discuss my ideas and always offered their enthusiastic encouragement for me to finish this project. I am thrilled to graduate this year and celebrate this milestone along with them.

Finally, I am forever grateful to the people in my life who support me endlessly in all of my endeavors, personally and professionally. My dear friends Laura Flippin, Emily Day, Caitlin Glover, and Marion Candrea were always there to provide encouragement, glasses of wine, and distractions when necessary. I am especially thankful to my fiancé Bill Frake for his unending and enthusiastic support and encouragement. He spent endless hours listening to me form my thoughts, reading draft upon draft of this project, consoling me through the tears, and telling me that he believed I could finish this. If not for his love and support, I would have never been able to complete this project. Finally, to my family: my parents, Jim and Susan Widdis, and my brother Stephen, without whom I would not be the person I am today.

## Table of Contents

Abstract of the Dissertation.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Crime Fiction in Latin America.....	9
Classical, Golden Age, and Hard-boiled Detective Fiction.....	16
Crime fiction in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.....	19
Chapter 1: The Frustrated Writer-Detective as Creator.....	31
“Crónica Policial”: The Journalist as Failed Detective.....	40
“Pasión de historia”: Writer Becomes Subject/Victim of Her Own Story .....	44
<i>Sol de medianoche</i> : Reverse <i>Bildungsroman</i> .....	50
<i>Mario Conde</i> Series: Detective as Frustrated Writer .....	56
Conclusions .....	62
Chapter 2: Urban Caribbean Detective: Flâneur or “Practitioner,” Consumer or Producer of Urban Space? .....	64
Isabelo Andújar: Detective as Curator of “ <i>Puertorriqueñidad</i> ” .....	76
Manolo Pérez Cáceres: Failed Detective and “Beach flâneur” .....	84
Alain Bec: Detective as Exposer of Cuban Social Reality.....	93
Conclusions .....	102
Chapter 3: The Post-Colonial Detective in/as Liminal Space .....	104
The Post-colonial Detective and the Representation of Race.....	113

Literary Development of the “Central, Sympathetic, Detective Figure” .....	118
The Personal Life of the Detective .....	120
The Detective’s Relationship to the Community.....	122
The Detective’s Relationship to the Victim .....	130
Conclusions .....	132
Chapter 4: Detective-less Crimes and Crime-less Detectives .....	134
<i>El crimen verde</i> : Absent Detectives .....	140
<i>Seva</i> : The State as Criminal .....	155
<i>El hombre triángulo</i> : The Detective’s Struggle for Self-discovery and Acceptance .....	163
Conclusions .....	174
Conclusion .....	177
Works Cited.....	185

## Introduction

“The classical detective usually has little real personal interest in the crime he is investigating. Instead, he is a detached, gentlemanly amateur.”

– John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*

“Si en la ficción clásica era un aficionado o un aristócrata que en sus ratos de ocio resolvía casos de jardineros desleales o mayordomos sospechosos, en la novela negra es ... un hombre que se mete en la acción que la protagoniza realmente ...” –Mempo Giardinelli, *El género negro*

Crime dramas are more relevant than ever; they populate the shelves of bookstores and have proliferated on the small and big screens alike. Every season, new crime dramas are released, both on cable television and via streaming providers such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. Every summer, there are new crime “beach reads” on display at brick-and-mortar bookstores and online booksellers. This ever-increasing production of the detective and crime genre across artistic media speaks to Mempo Giardinelli’s assertion, in his monograph on the *novela negra*, that the genre is a privileged medium through which to represent and critically assess today’s social reality. The detective genre provides stories of crimes that inform the reader of the social values and expectations of a particular culture and what behaviors and transgressions that culture deems to be unacceptable. Therefore, across cultures and throughout the ages, detective and crime fiction has been a widely studied and critiqued genre.

The foundation of what we now consider to be detective literature includes the writings of Edgar Allan Poe and the British adaptations of the classical detective model. Later, along with the classical detective model, the American re-appropriation of the genre in the form of the hard-boiled novel by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler inspires Hispanic crime fiction authors, primarily from Spain, Mexico, and the Southern

Cone. However, with the exception of a few studies of canonical Cuban oeuvres pertaining to the genre, little work has been done to situate and understand the literary production and contributions to the genre by authors of the Hispanic Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> To begin to fill this gap in the scholarship on the genre, this project examines Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican works of crime fiction, and their relationship to contemporary conceptions of and discourses surrounding law, order, and justice, or the lack thereof, within the aforementioned social context.

My fascination with crime fiction and several years spent studying, visiting, and living in the Dominican Republic inspired me to explore the historical and cultural processes in the Hispanic Caribbean that have affected, and are reflected in, the crime fiction produced in the region. Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic comprise only a small part of the diverse and complex region of the Caribbean. As a result of the multiplicity of indigenous cultures combined with their colonization by Great Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United States, the region is home to many different races, cultures, and languages. Additionally, the introduction of African slaves, primarily to work on the sugar plantations, contributed to modern Caribbean culture in a multitude of ways: racially, linguistically, musically, gastronomically, psychologically, and politically, to name just a few.

The varying degree to which Caribbean nations have achieved their independence, as well as the United States' proximity and involvement in the region, also contribute to

---

<sup>1</sup> Cuba has shown a greater level of literary production in the field of the detective story due to Fidel Castro's promotion of the genre as a moralizing means to discourage criminal activity.

the region's distinctiveness. Although Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic share a common language and the legacies of Spanish colonialism and the African slave trade, there are cultural and geopolitical differences that separate these three islands. I was interested in exploring how both these commonalities and differences affect, and manifest themselves, in the crime fiction produced by authors of this region. Given the lack of scholarship on crime fiction in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, I took the opportunity to explore this absence and compare and contrast it with Cuban crime fiction and its critical scholarship. In doing so, I seek to establish the cultural and social connections, as well as differences, that are exhibited in the texts that comprise the corpus of this project.

Of the many divergences between the classical detective story and the Hispanic Caribbean detective stories that are most illustrative of the genre, there is one difference that most defines this project: the contrasting characterizations of the detective-protagonists. The male protagonists of the classical detective story, such as Poe's C. Auguste Dupin, provided the prototype for the stereotypical literary detective figure that would become the foundation of the detective genre. These figures represent the sterile, intellectual, and rational characteristics of the investigation process in these stories and novels, that, to the modern reader, also seem marked by their antirealist qualities. In this context, I borrow the word "antirealist" from Leonardo Padura Fuentes, who frequently employs it to characterize classical detective fiction. I understand his use of the term to describe the genre's apparent ignorance of social reality and resulting one-dimensional characters and implausibility of plot.

The protagonists of the modern Latin American and, more specifically, Hispanic Caribbean crime novel are vulnerable and fallible characters with whom the reader can identify; they represent the hyperrealism that the genre has taken on within the context of modern life in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Here, I borrow “hyperrealism” from the field of visual arts, in which the term refers to paintings and sculptures that resemble high-resolution photography. By extension, I argue that the crime fiction produced in the Hispanic Caribbean represents photo-like documentation of the communities and social conditions that they describe. The characterizations of the detectives themselves in these contrasting subgenres, the classical detective story and modern Hispanic Caribbean crime fiction, provide a lens through which we can view the cultural values that were most prominent at the time.

The detective and crime genre, as well as the scholarly study of it, has achieved a great deal of popularity in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba; however, there is still relatively little creative production and academic study of this literary genre in the rest of Latin America and, specifically, the rest of the Hispanic Caribbean. Neither Puerto Rico nor the Dominican Republic has produced much in the crime fiction genre; concomitantly, there is virtually no scholarly analysis of the novels and stories that do exist. This project questions why this void endures, then fills it, and finally proposes culturally relevant applications of the detective fiction genre. The primary questions my project seeks to answer are: What are the distinctive qualities of detective fiction in the Hispanic Caribbean? Has the region produced crime narratives that reflect unifying characteristics? How is the genre reflective of the social reality of the postcolonial and neocolonial Hispanic Caribbean? How does it differ from, or, more directly, subvert the traditional

formula of detective fiction? In answering these questions, this dissertation seeks to understand the specificity, and, conversely, the commonalities, of crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean through an analysis of the figure of the detective. What is it about the history, culture, and social conditions of the Dominican Republic that has caused the country to produce fewer detective novels than Puerto Rico and Cuba? Why do Hispanic Caribbean authors typically shy away from the detective story, and when they do approach the genre, why are their stories so radically different from the traditional European and North American models?

Perhaps an even deeper and more relevant philosophical question is: Why is the academic study of detective and crime fiction useful? What insights do we gain by submitting popular, lowbrow fiction to literary and cultural analysis? Stephen Wilkinson, a prominent scholar in the study of Cuban literature, sees merit in seeking to understand a culture's values through its popular literature. He writes: "Raymond Williams (1961) regards the study of popular fiction to be central in trying to recreate what he calls the 'the structure of feeling', that is, approximating the feelings and experiences of a particular time and place. Studying the narratives enjoyed by a large proportion of the population can therefore inform our understanding of that society" (Wilkinson 14). Similarly, I approach my reading and analysis of the texts included in this project as a means through which to understand the values, priorities, and social problems of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

In line with well-known twentieth-century literary and cultural critics such as Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Stuart Hall, and Kobena Mercer, Wilkinson views

popular forms of literature and art as being intertwined with the culture's values and social relations. He suggests that the critical task

becomes one of understanding how such forms function in relation to each other and the rest of society. Therefore, as well as looking at the meanings that are possible within the narratives, it becomes necessary to examine the technical conditions that such forms presuppose, the economic relations that regulate their production, and the institutional context that governs the modes of their social deployment and reception. (15)

Informed by Wilkinson's viewpoints, I interpret the novels and stories included in the project as lenses through which to view relationships between citizens and law enforcement, the relationship amongst citizens themselves, and the problematic relationships officers of the law themselves have with the job they are tasked with carrying out. In addition, I explore how the texts examined in this thesis utilize crime to portray the social realities of their time and place, as well as how they adapt and transform the detective genre, enabling the reader to understand the distinctive cultural complexities of this geopolitical region.

The birth and evolution of the detective and crime genre is one that has seen considerable amounts of scholarly study in Great Britain and the United States. Dating back to the publication of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter," the growth of the detective and crime story has paralleled the process of industrialization in the developed world. In his study *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (1976), John G. Cawelti outlines the four major conventions that classical detective stories, which he refers to as "ratiocinative" stories,

follow.<sup>2</sup> First, the classical detective story begins with an unsolved crime, typically a murder or crime associated with political intrigue, which is eventually resolved by the end of the story (Cawelti 81). The crime must be one that seems unsolvable; however, the detective proves his skills of analysis and deduction with his resolution of the crime. Second, the action of the story centers upon the detective's investigation and solution of the crime. In a ratiocinative detective story, a third party generally serves as the narrator rather than the detective himself, as it is crucial that the narrator (and therefore the reader) has knowledge of the detective's actions but does not have access to his or her mental process.<sup>3</sup> A notable third-party narrator lies in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character Dr. Watson. The storytelling strategy of using a third-party narrator allows the writer to "more easily misdirect the reader's attention and thereby keep him from prematurely solving the crime" (Cawelti 83). Only at the conclusion of the story, with the announcement of the solution, does the reader gain access to the reasoning process behind the solution of the crime.

The third convention outlined by Cawelti includes the characters of the story and their functions in relationship to each other. He writes: "As Poe defined it, the classical detective story required four main roles: (*a*) the victim; (*b*) the criminal; (*c*) the detective; and (*d*) those threatened by the crime but incapable of solving it" (91). The characterization of both the victim and the criminal is extremely important. Neither must

---

<sup>2</sup> A term first used by Poe to refer to his stories, and later employed by Cawelti, Dove, Thompson, among others, to describe a detective story in which the detective solves the crime through a process of logical reasoning.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, the genre has featured male detective protagonists, increasingly there are representations of female sleuths, of which Agatha Christie's Miss Marple is arguably the most well-known. Even so, the genre is still heavily male dominated, particularly in Latin America, which explains the gender imbalance in the texts that comprise the corpus of this project.

be sympathetic enough to inspire the emotional interest of either the detective or the reader, so as to keep the focus of the narrative on the detective himself and his intellectual process of investigating and solving the crime. The detective himself must be detached, cerebral, and intuitive; able to “read the hidden motives of men” (Cawelti 94). The last group of characters typically includes average citizens who find their social order disturbed by the crime committed, as “the special drama of crime in the classical detective story lies in the way it threatens the serene domestic circles of bourgeois life with anarchy and chaos” (Cawelti 96). It is the responsibility of the detective to intervene with extraordinary deductive skills to restore the social order.

The fourth and final convention of the classical detective story, detailed by Cawelti and established by Poe, is the setting. It is important to note that in Poe’s iconic stories, the main action of the plot takes place in two isolated locations: the crime scene, typically a “locked room,” and the detective’s retreat-like office or apartment. The reader has very little exposure to the world surrounding these two locations. As Cawelti states,

We are always aware of the threatening chaos of the outside world, but it erupts only rarely into the story, usually at the most suspenseful times...the contrast between the locked room or the lonely house and the outside world constitutes a symbolic representation of the relation between order and chaos, between surface rationality and hidden depths of guilt. (97)

The detective is able to retreat to his peaceful office, rationally ponder the details of the crime, and ultimately solve the puzzle. He is then able to restore the social order of the outside world, demonstrating his ability to bring the chaos under his control.

The texts included in this project overturn, subvert, and transform these four conventions, each in their own way. In several of the texts, the first convention is broken because the crime and perpetrator are known from the outset of the narration or because

the crime remains unsolved at the end of the story. Breaking this convention shifts the reader's attention away from the investigative process, making room for other issues such as racial or economic inequalities to be central rather than the resolution of an enigma. Many of the stories in this project violate the second convention since they are narrated in the first person from the perspective of the detective and provide the reader with insight into the detective's personal life and psychology, which is unimportant in the classical detective story. Several stories in this corpus lack criminals, victims, and/or detectives, shifting the central focus of the narration and overturning the third convention. Finally, in defiance of the fourth convention, on most occasions in the stories I will analyze, the detective is unable to restore any sort of social order as is generally found in the classical detective story. Instead, in these stories, the chaos frequently brings the detective under its control rather than the reverse.

### **Crime Fiction in Latin America**

As a product of the period of industrialization, the classical detective story was, in essence, a reflection of the values and societal problems of that era. However, it cannot be said that those stories portrayed a realistic view of daily life during that time period. In his study on the topic, Leonardo Padura Fuentes states: "Ahora bien, lo que parece más significativo es cómo, desde su mismo nacimiento, la literatura de ficción criminal, aun siendo hija de esa circunstancia específica que entraña la modernidad industrial y el culto a la razón, se acerque más al antirrealismo que al realismo fotográfico" (121-22). The devotion to logic found among the protagonists of these classical detective stories displays a very different aspect of newly-industrialized society than the daily struggles of everyday people of the time, and that is mainly what made them popular among a people

whose everyday experience was frequently tumultuous due to economic uncertainty and a new system of organizing labor.

Padura Fuentes subscribes to a widely-accepted theory for the late arrival of the genre to Hispanic literature as a result of the also-late arrival of industrialization: “como típico producto de la modernidad industrial, la novela policíaca llegaría a los países de lengua castellana tan tarde como la misma sociedad industrial que la forjó” (125).

Although Padura Fuentes’s theory is relevant, I argue that, in addition, the antirealism (or escapism) of this genre never quite took hold in the Hispanic Caribbean, since, for readers, these types of stories were very foreign to their daily experience. At the same time, for the Hispanic Caribbean, violence and violent crime have been such a salient part of the historical and contemporary experience of the region that even the less sterile and more realistic crime novels and stories would provide little escapism. Therefore, as the novels and stories in this study show, the crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean differs greatly from the early works of the genre in that the stories do, in fact, present a hyperrealist representation of the realities in which they are produced, unlike their predecessors. Mempo Giardinelli addresses this difference in his study of the genre entitled *El género negro* when he cites Donald A. Yates’s observation that: “‘ficción policial es un lujo verosímilmente destinado a gustar a un public lector relativamente sofisticado. Escencialmente se trata de un tipo de literatura que evita contacto directo con la realidad’. Una idea que, hoy, nos parece anacrónica” (qtd. by Giardinelli 63). For the contemporary Latin American reader, it is difficult to relate to the stories written in the classical detective style. In the years following Yates’s study, the genre has evolved in Latin America from its antirealism roots established by the early pioneers such as Poe

and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to a hyperrealist reflection of the social ills of modern Latin America.

Giardinelli proposes other reasons for the weak presence and late arrival of the genre to Latin America, including an absence of a formal police force resulting in a lack of respect for law and order. He specifically mentions Scotland Yard and the FBI as highly esteemed law enforcement organizations that provided a basis for which to create crime and detective fiction in contrast to the vacuum of respectable crime enforcement in Latin America. Furthermore, he suggests that this lack of a formal governing body gave rise to a different kind of crime fiction in the region: “Pero sucedió que las nuevas generaciones de autores se dieron cuenta del poder cuestionador de la moderna novelística negra” (Giardinelli 66). In other words, instead of a crime novel that reflects and perpetuates the status quo of an established and respected formal police force and legal system, younger Latin American writers began to employ the genre to question and problematize the social status quo of corrupt and ineffective law enforcement.

Mexican journalist Carlos Monsiváis suggests a related reason for the lack of detective stories in Latin America: “many Latin Americans suffer too much mayhem in real life to be attracted by mystery stories...if the general populace is persistently subjected to violence and deceit by authority...the transgressive aspect of the traditional detective story becomes unrealistic and irrelevant” (qtd. in Braham 5). The instability resulting from an insufficiently effective and respected police force, as Giardinelli discussed, provides the conditions in which this “mayhem” occurs, creates a violent society, and erodes respect for authority within the culture. These conditions that foster increased violence suggest that the escapist value of crime fiction is not relevant to many

Latin Americans, since what they need to escape from is violence and crime, rather than the mundane, aristocratic lives of the audience of the classical and Golden Age detective story. In this project, I further explore the reasons for the lack of crime fiction in Latin America and how these reasons are relevant to the Hispanic Caribbean.

Due to the dearth of crime and detective fiction produced in the Hispanic Caribbean, little scholarly analysis of the genre in this region has been produced. There is, however, a long history of research on detective fiction in other areas of Latin America, primarily in Mexico and the Southern Cone. Thus, it is important to contrast the conditions that fostered this scholarship to understand and explore the relative absence of research on crime and detective fiction in the Hispanic Caribbean, particularly in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Several scholars of the genre, including Persephone Braham in her study *Crimes Against the State, Crimes Against Persons: Detective Fiction in Cuba and Mexico* (2004) have provided an overview of the history of the genre in Latin America, which I will only briefly summarize here, to highlight the varying trajectories of the genre in different parts of the Spanish-speaking world.

The crime genre first emerged in the Spanish-speaking world in Argentina (early 1940s), Mexico (early 1970s), and Spain (early 1970s). In Argentina, the genre was popularized by Jorge Luis Borges, who first published translations of several American and British detective stories (Braham 2). Later, Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares published their own series of detective stories; *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* (1942), under the pseudonym of Honorio Bustos Domecq. These were inspired by Borges's fascination with the British detective stories, G. K. Chesterton's work in particular, and took the form of intellectual games and feature a cerebral detective, don

Isidro Parodi, who, as his name suggests, is a parody of the classical model of detective in the vein of Sherlock Holmes and Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. With this series, don Isidro Parodi became the first fictional Latin American detective (Braham 2). Ironically, Parodi is a detective who is incarcerated, and people come to visit him with information about various crimes that he solves using pure deductive reasoning. These prominent, and early, champions of the detective story in Latin America, along with Enrique Anderson-Imbert, were particularly concerned with the self-conscious aspects of the classical detective story. Their stories emphasize the process of literary creation in a way that reminds the reader of their artifice, often to suggest a parodical or satirical understanding of the text.

The genre made its way to Mexico, Cuba, and Spain a few decades later, emerging and flourishing during the early 1970s, which also coincided with the end of the Franco regime in Spain (Braham 3). According to Braham, "Spanish's most successful and original detective fiction is a post-Franco phenomenon that draws on the American hard-boiled tradition" (3). Braham's synthesis is not surprising, given the social upheaval produced during the Franco dictatorship and the subsequent transition to democracy. The hard-boiled tradition emerged in the United States in the 1920s and early 1930s, during and after Prohibition and a period that experienced a rise in organized crime, violence, and corruption, similar to the social context produced during and after the Franco regime in Spain. In fact, Braham generalizes: "Innovation in the detective story has coincided with political upheaval from its beginnings: Poe's detective stories, set in Paris, with European revolutionary movements of 1848; Chesterton's early Father Brown stories (1911, 1914) with the beginning of World War I; Biorges's (sic) *Don Isidro Parodi* (1942) with World War II and Argentina's difficult neutrality; and the

Spanish *novela negra* with the post-Franco transition” (68). Although she does not include the hard-boiled novel in that summary, it also emerged at a time of social upheaval in the United States. In this project, I will extend Braham’s hypothesis to include the neglected traditions of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and explore the political and social turmoil that accompany the production of the chosen texts.

Crime fiction has been most prolific in Cuba, and therefore much scholarship of the genre in the Hispanic Caribbean comes from there. While this may seem surprising due to Cuba’s political history, it is, in fact, Cuba’s socialist history that gave rise to the proliferation of the genre. During the Revolution, all cultural and literary production was nationalized and regulated by the state, and crime fiction became a tool to teach people what was legally acceptable and unacceptable within society. It is not within the scope of this project to trace the history of the Cuban detective novel because there are several full-length studies that are dedicated to this topic, but it serves the purposes of my thesis to provide a brief summary of its trajectory from the socialist detective novel to the more contemporary novels included here. According to Braham, “Far from the suspicion that genre literature usually provokes in academics, the popular aspect of detective fiction was precisely the element that legitimized it in the socialist intellectual culture of the 1970s. Political, academic, and literary communities alike adopted it as a symbol of equality and identification with the masses” (21). Literary intellectualism was regarded as antirevolutionary and was often conflated with homosexuality, while crudeness and ignorance often seen in popular culture were associated with a valued conception of manliness (22). Thus, the popular and lowbrow nature of detective fiction was an acceptable mode of literary production during the 1970s in Cuba and quickly became a

forum to consolidate the values that the Revolution deemed important and the transgressions deemed to be unacceptable. Not surprisingly, then: “The new genre traced the root causes of criminal behavior to pre- and counterrevolutionary values and attitudes” (Braham 30). An examination of the portrayal of criminal activity in the socialist Cuban detective novel provides the reader with an understanding of the moral and legal priorities of the Revolution during the 1970s.

Toward the late 1980s, coinciding with the beginning of the Special Period, authors like Leonardo Padura Fuentes tired of the prescriptive and artificial nature of the socialist detective novel and felt increasingly constrained by ideological requirements, as opposed to quality (Braham 32-33).<sup>4</sup> Critical of the quality of Cuban detective fiction, Padura Fuentes developed a new type of detective novel that moved away from the “one-dimensional characters, lack of suspense, and paucity of literary art” that he perceived in the socialist detective novel and moved towards “a more critical, and at times even subversive, literature” (Braham 33). As we will see in the analysis of Padura Fuentes’s Mario Conde series later in this project, “While Padura’s *neopoliciaco* retains many features of the original socialist detective novel, it is a much less dogmatic genre that questions the achievements of the Revolution by disrupting the stable, hegemonic notion of ‘objective reality’ proposed by socialist literary theorists in the 1970s” (Braham 33). Padura’s novels, although critical, were not so subversive as to cause substantial enough political problems for Padura to be exiled from Cuba and they created an opening for other writers to enter the sphere of socially critical detective novels. Amir Valle Ojeda

---

<sup>4</sup> Primarily as a result of the Cuban economic crisis caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro declared a “Special Period in Time of Peace.” This period was characterized by pervasive poverty, hunger, lack of resources, and lack of housing.

explains in an interview that he believes that in Padura's novels the characters and their psychological development receive the primary focus over the essential themes of the novels. According to Valle Ojeda, this allows Padura to present a "crítica mucho menos peliaguda para la isla" (*Hipertexto* 155). However, other critics, including Yvon Grenier, have speculated that Padura's international recognition has provided him a position of relative immunity among Cuban writers from the Castro regime. Padura's international recognition has increased even more in recent years since his Mario Conde tetralogy has been released as a Netflix Original series entitled "Four Seasons in Havana."

Despite their comprehensive overviews of the history of Cuban detective fiction, neither Braham nor Wilkinson discuss the works of Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo or Amir Valle Ojeda, both of whom have also published series of detective novels. Luis Perez-Simon's article, "Crónica de un tiempo anunciado: La novela negra de Amir Valle y Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo" fills this gap in scholarship and connects these two contemporary authors to Padura's legacy. Padura's *neopoliciaco* novels that departed from the ideological constraints of the socialist detective novel set the groundwork for Lunar Cardedo and Valle Ojeda as Mario Conde served as the inspiration for detective protagonists Alain Bec (Valle Ojeda) and Leo Martín (Lunar Cardedo). Unlike Padura Fuentes, Amir Valle Ojeda has been in exile since 2005, due in part to his detective series, which will be discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

### **Classical, Golden Age, and Hard-boiled Detective Fiction**

Throughout this study, I will refer to different types of detective fiction that have evolved over the history of the genre. To do so, I will first outline the main categories that precede the Hispanic *novela negra*, also referred to as the *novela policiaca*, in

chronological order: the classical detective story, Golden Age detective fiction, and the American hard-boiled novel. The genre traces its inception to the classical detective fiction, most clearly seen in the works of Edgar Allen Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, characterized by the impartial and objective detective in the vein of C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes. Such detectives solve the crimes with which they are presented through a series of intellectual movements, similar to that of a chess game, and often from the comforts of their homes or offices. These are the stories that most closely follow the conventions outlined by Cawelti.

From classical detective fiction, the genre evolved into what is considered Golden Age detective fiction, produced roughly around the 1920s and 1930s, mostly by British authors, although there are several American authors whose writing followed a similar style. The works of authors such as Agatha Christie, Ronald Knox, G.K. Chesterton, Ellery Queen, etc., typify Golden Age detective fiction. During this period, these authors devoted attention to the “rules” that governed the genre: rules that pertained to the detective, the crime, the criminal, the story itself, and even the mood (Symons 94-96). One of the most notable characteristics, and one that differs most markedly from Latin American crime fiction, is the aseptic nature of the narrative and the absence of historical and social markers. These stories and novels ignore emotion in that emotion does not factor into the motives for murder; it was against the conventions of the genre for the reader to see the characters of the story in a multidimensional way (Symons 95).

Moreover, Julian Symons notes:

The period in which they were written was one in which the number of unemployed in Britain rose to three million and remained near that mark for a decade, in which boom in America was succeeded by slump and slump by depression, in which dictatorships rose to power. It was a period that ended in a

long-expected war. These things were ignored in almost all the detective stories of the Golden Age. (96)

This aspect of the Golden Age detective stories stands in starkest contrast to the texts that I study in this project, as the stories and novels that will be examined in this dissertation are populated by multidimensional characters, fraught with emotion, and deeply and inexorably rooted in their historical and social contexts.

Toward the middle to end of this Golden Age period (late 1920s to early 1930s), particularly in the United States, authors began to break with the rules and style of the Golden Age detective stories as they introduced a new detective: the American private eye. These detectives began appearing in the “pulp” magazines. Symons describes these new detective stories as “the blue-collar workers’ version of the crime story, and their popularity reflected the rise of the gangster in American society with the coming of Prohibition in 1920 and its accompanying civic and police corruption” (123). These stories broke with the Golden Age tendencies of sterility and intellectual games and instead featured descriptive violence and three-dimensional characters that were not immune to emotion.

Eventually, authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler began to expand these stories and publish the novels that are now considered hard-boiled. The hard-boiled genre is characterized by its unromanticized and often gritty portrayal of urban spaces, violence, and sex. Departing from the antirealism of the classical and Golden Age detective stories, these works frequently portray the social reality of modern urban settings and feature detectives that are susceptible to moral deficiencies, although ultimately remain infallible. As I will show, the novels and stories discussed in this thesis

draw most closely from the realism of the American hard-boiled novel and adapt the genre to reflect and represent the realities of crime and justice in the Hispanic Caribbean.

### **Crime fiction in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic**

In Chapter One, “The Frustrated Writer-Detective as Creator,” I focus on the general relationship between crime fiction and art, and the more specific relationship between detective and writer. Since its inception, detective fiction has been a model for metafiction, as the detective “reads” the clues “written” by the criminal. In her theoretical work on the subject of metafiction, Patricia Waugh asserts: “In metafiction the detective-story plot is useful for exploring readerly expectation because it provides that readerly satisfaction which attached to the predictable” (82). As previously mentioned, the prominent champions of the detective story in Latin America, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Enrique Anderson-Imbert, and Adolfo Bioy Casares, were particularly interested and concerned with the self-conscious aspects of the classical detective story. These writers further developed these characteristics explicitly and parodically in their own stories, such as Borges’s “La muerte y la brújula” (1942) and Anderson-Imbert’s “El general hace un lindo cadáver” (1956), which exemplify the chess-like intellectual movements of the detective and the parodic play on literary and political references. For example, in “La muerte y la brújula” (1942), Borges explores the relationship of the criminal, Red Scharlach, as the artist who weaves and creates, and the detective, Erik Lönnrot, as the reader. In this case, the author and reader become accomplices in the production of the labyrinth that ultimately causes the detective to become the last murder victim. Borges also includes a clever nod to the classical detective by naming his criminal “Scharlach,” a reference to Sherlock Holmes; however, in this case, the intellectual and reasoning

mastermind is the criminal rather than the detective, an inversion or subversion of the classical conventions. In the classical story, the criminal never outwits the detective, but here Lönnrot falls victim to Scharlach at the conclusion of the tale.

By contrast, Anderson-Imbert's "El general hace un lindo cadáver" is about a man who, after many years of reading police novels, develops a psychological disorder and decides to commit the perfect crime, an intertextual reference to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in which the protagonist develops a similar psychological problem due to reading too many novels about chivalry. However, due to the political corruption that is prevalent in his country, this man fails in his attempt because local officials largely ignore his crime. While superficially this story can be classified as a detective story, an allegorical analysis of its metafictional aspects reveals a satirical commentary on the creative process: just as the protagonist, Alfonso Quiroga, creates his perfect crime, so does the narrator create his perfect detective story.<sup>5</sup> Once again, the crime is never investigated and therefore order is never restored, contradictory to the classical conventions. Through this distortion of the genre, Anderson-Imbert presents a commentary on the Peronist political regime of Argentina at the time. Both "La muerte y la brújula" and "El general hace un lindo cadáver" exemplify the chess-like intellectual movements of the detective and the parodic play on literary and political references. As such, they present the reader with one-dimensional characters and at the expense of reflecting the realities of day-to-day urban life, these stories focus on literary artifice.

In light of the shift in focus from the playful "game" of the *relato policial* of the aforementioned authors to the realist portrayal of gritty urban life of the *novela negra*, the

---

<sup>5</sup> The character name Alfonso Quiroga represents another playful intertextual reference to Cervantes's protagonist, Alonso Quijano.

texts I discuss in Chapter One portray the relationship between crime and art differently than one might anticipate. Both the short stories “Crónica policial” (1982) by the Dominican author Virgilio Díaz Grullón and “Pasión de historia” (1987) by the Puerto Rican author Ana Lydia Vega feature the relationship between writer/narrator and crime story. In the case of the former, the narrator-journalist discovers that he cannot in fact write the crime report he has been assigned as neither he nor any of the investigators he interviews can determine who committed the crime. In the case of “Pasión de historia,” life begins to imitate art for the protagonist as she struggles to fictionally recount the tale of a woman murdered by her scorned lover. In both stories, the authors’ self-conscious meditations on the crime fiction genre reflect the state of law enforcement and the process of law and order in contemporary Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico respectively. In contrast, *Sol de medianoche* (1995) by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá (Puerto Rico) and the novels in the “Mario Conde” series by Leonardo Padura Fuentes (Cuba) reflect a more personal and individualized relationship between the creative process of the writer and the analytical process of the detective. Waugh suggests that in detective fiction, “[e]ven characters, for the most part, are merely functions of the plot. Like metafiction, it foregrounds questions of identity” (82). However, I would like to suggest a converse relationship between character and plot in the novels discussed here. In these texts, both narrator-detectives are themselves frustrated writers. Ultimately the protagonists’ struggle with their personal creative processes drives the progression of the plot, making their character development central to understanding the use of metafiction in these novels.

Chapter Two, “Urban Caribbean Detective: Flâneur or ‘Practitioner,’ Consumer or Producer of Urban Space?,” focuses on how the detective navigates through and interacts with various public spaces in the city; for example, the street, the café, the bar, and the library. In this chapter, I discuss how the detective moves through these physical locations and how he in turn affects or does not affect these localities. Is he a passive observer or does he in some way alter these spaces? Given the very nature of crime fiction, it is neither new nor unexpected to discuss the urban backdrop of this particular genre. Additionally, the detective of classical fiction has traditionally been compared to or thought of as a flâneur in the Baudelairian sense of the word – that is, a solitary individual, usually of elite status, who strolls city streets, observing detachedly. Not surprisingly, according to Walter Benjamin, this seemingly passive observer becomes the perfect model for the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century detectives. Benjamin asserts: “If the flâneur is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it accredits his idleness. He only seems to be indolent, for behind this indolence there is a watchfulness of an observer who does not take his eyes off a miscreant” (40-41). However, this model would imply that the detective is still a detached, if vigilant, observer, more akin to the classical detectives à la C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes, while the detectives featured in the novels examined in this chapter take a more active role in their relationship to the city.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau proposes an alternate model of the individual’s interaction with the city. De Certeau’s “practitioner” of the city creates the city, writing it as if it were a text, connecting disperse points with the routes they travel daily: “Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places

together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these ‘real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city’” (97). In applying de Certeau’s model to the detective novel, I argue that the novels discussed in Chapter Two exhibit a greater interaction between the detective and the city in which he investigates. Through the detectives’ active engagement with the city, the urban landscape informs the authors’ social commentary. In this chapter, I examine how detectives in *Sol de medianoche* by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *Desamores* (2001) by Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón (Puerto Rico), and *Las puertas de la noche* (2002) by Amir Valle Ojeda (Cuba), exhibit characteristics of both the flâneur and the “practitioner,” observing objectively while at the same time “writing” the city with the routes their investigations take, in essence developing the city itself from a mere backdrop into a witness in their investigations and ultimately into a character in these novels.

The third chapter, “The Post-Colonial Detective in/as Liminal Space,” specifically takes into consideration how the post-colonial condition of Cuba and the Dominican Republic and the neo-colonial status of Puerto Rico inform the figure of the detective and his relationship to his work and community. In the introduction to his edited volume, *The Post-Colonial Detective*, Ed Christian defines the post-colonial detective as a character who, while not always the creation of a post-colonial author, does reside in a post-colonial region. They are typically marginalized or peripheral figures, which impacts the effectiveness of their work as detectives. Post-colonial detectives are always written as sympathetic protagonists to whom the reader can personally relate, and their authors attempt to explore through their characterization how these detectives’ cultural attitudes and positions within society affect their ability to investigate crime (Christian 2). The

novels I analyze in this chapter each feature the figure of the detective who inhabits a marginal or subaltern position. At the same time, these characters also occupy a position of relative authority and power afforded them by their occupation. The convergence of these oppositional positions within one character shapes not only the development of that character but also the way in which his community receives him, and ultimately the reader's perception of law and order in that context. In this chapter, I look at the figure of the detective in *Candela* (2007) by Rey Emmanuel Andújar (Dominican Republic) and *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* (2005) by Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo (Cuba). I will examine how these particular characters negotiate what Homi Bhabha refers to as the liminal space between the colonizer and the colonized.

In his foundational theoretical work *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi asserts that often the colonized attempts to become like the colonizer in an effort to be accepted by him. Memmi remarks that this is most noticeable among those to whom the colonizer grants authority, such as police officers, who were recruited from the ranks of the colonized society (16). He proceeds to assert that when this occurs, the newfound authority figures among the colonized form a new category of citizens who ultimately sacrifice their colonized culture and values in order to serve the colonizer and protect his interests. These citizens ultimately adopt the ideology of the colonizer and are thus unable to escape the condition of being colonized. Memmi's model posits an erasure of the colonized's cultural specificity. However, I argue that the detective-protagonists analyzed here represent, instead, a model of a cultural encounter resulting in hybridity. This notion is explored by Homi Bhabha in what he calls "the beyond," or "in-between moments." He argues that the blending of the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized

creates an overlap between cultures that members of both groups must navigate, causing them to fall within a liminal space (2). Christian calls attention to Bhabha's arguments and applies them to post-colonial detective fiction, arguing that the detective-protagonists are thrust into the liminal space that Bhabha describes. Therefore, the detective represents both the colonizer and the colonized, ironically a member of both the oppressor and the oppressed (Christian 11). In *Candela* and *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the detective-protagonists negotiate this struggle, serving not only as mediators between oppressed and oppressor, but also representing this collision between the two. Although the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* posit that the "destructive cultural encounter [of colonialism] is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms" (35), I do not fully support this assertion; instead, I argue that the novels by Andújar and Lunar Cardedo present detective figures that negotiate the spaces and mediate the conflict caused by the encounters between oppressed and oppressor.

In examining the post-colonial detective and his negotiation of cultural differences and the resulting moments of liminality, I will also take into consideration the question of race and how this identity category is manifested in the novels studied here. Several critics (Maureen Reddy, Stephen Soitos, Adrienne Johnson Gosselin, among others) have studied the way in which the American hard-boiled novel has encoded and perpetuated normative models of race and masculinity. Leaving aside issues of gender and sexuality for the moment, these critics have asserted that crime fiction has generally codified whiteness as "heroic" in the figure of the detective and blackness as "sinister" or evil in the figure of the criminal. In this chapter, I will also examine the representation of race in the previously mentioned novels to show that while this issue is still salient in the

crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean with its different, and more complex, history of racialized baggage, it manifests itself in much more nuanced ways than the dichotomy mentioned above. Unlike the previously mentioned black/white binary, these texts' racial discourses are exemplary of the "no-man's land where the permanent battle for the Caribbean Self's fragmented identity is fought," as described by Antonio Benítez-Rojo (201). That is, even racially, the detective is neither "of the Self nor of the Other," (201) but rather once again represents another "in-between moment" produced in the cultural history of the Hispanic Caribbean.

In the final chapter, "Detective-less Crimes and Crime-less Detectives," I look at four works that deviate most radically from the normative structure of crime and detective fiction—that is, novels that lack either a detective or a crime. On the one hand, Latin American authors have parodied hegemonic narrative traditions as a means of "writing back" to the Empire, and the Hispanic Caribbean writers of crime fiction are no different. According to Linda Hutcheon, "postmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent paradoxes and provisionality and, of course, to their critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past" (23). At the same time, it would be simplistic to assert that all crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean is a mere parody of its more renowned American and British predecessors. Leonardo Padura Fuentes, among, if not the most successful author of crime fiction in the Caribbean, comments: "Lo que parece indudable es que sí tiene en su origen una insatisfacción hacia todas las propuestas antirrealistas y las copias burdas o las parodias fáciles que se habían extendido hasta la literatura policíaca de principio de

los sesenta” (*Modernidad* 140). In concurrence with Padura Fuentes, I argue that while parody as defined by Hutcheon is a recurring narrative strategy employed in the novels discussed in this chapter, to not look beyond the parody would also severely limit our understanding of their full potential as literary texts as well as social commentaries.

Therefore, in this chapter, I examine these novels not only as they relate to their North American and European predecessors, but also propose that they put forward a culturally specific model of contemporary Hispanic Caribbean crime fiction.

In the classical detective story, the plot revolves around the detective’s investigation and the solution of the crime. During this investigation, the reader learns little of the detective’s personal life or ideologies. Similarly, the detective remains personally detached from the investigation, resulting in a dehumanization of the victim. Additionally, according to John Cawelti, the detective must be on the right track towards solving the crime from the start, although this solution must seem unattainable. While the American hard-boiled novel deviates from this model, I argue that the many authors of the Hispanic Caribbean *novela negra* consciously invert the classical model, providing the reader with a more intimate relationship to the detective as well as the crime. In doing so, the novels examined in this chapter reflect their detective protagonists’ socio-historic and geopolitical contexts, particularly the notable increase in poverty, inequality, and corruption in the contemporary Hispanic Caribbean, and the resulting increase in crime and violence perpetrated by the individual as well as the state.

In this last chapter, I consider two novels in which the detective is absent and another novel in which the detective does not investigate a crime; rather, the latter novel focuses exclusively on the personal life and psychology of the detective. Concerning the

former, in her study of the concept of crime in a broad sense in Argentinean culture and fiction, Josefina Ludmer asserts that crime itself is a useful critical tool given that “desde el comienzo mismo de la literatura, el delito aparece como uno de los instrumentos más utilizados para definir y fundar una cultura...” (12-13). She goes on to argue: “El ‘delito’, que es una frontera móvil, histórica y cambiante (los delitos cambian con el tiempo), no sólo nos puede servir para diferenciar, separar y excluir, sino también para relacionar el estado, la política, la sociedad, los sujetos, la cultura y la literatura” (14). In that vein, an analysis of crime in the following novels provides a lens through which to understand the manifestation of this relationship posited by Ludmer in the context of the Hispanic Caribbean. In both *Seva: Historia de la primera invasión norteamericana de la Isla de Puerto Rico, ocurrida en mayo de 1898* (2000) by Luis López Nieves (Puerto Rico) and *El crimen verde* (1994) by Emilia Pereyra (Dominican Republic), a crime is committed and discussed, but there is little to no investigative involvement by government officials or police officers. The absence of the detective, and therefore the absence of the investigative process as stipulated by Cawelti, would preclude these novels from being considered detective novels. However, these crime novels provide useful critical social reflections on the perpetration of crime and deception by the state (*Seva*) and the inefficacy of the state in upholding law and order (*El crimen verde*).

Rey Emmanuel Andújar’s *El hombre triángulo* (2005), in contrast, does not feature a particular crime. Rather, the novel portrays the personal life of a detective who bears even less resemblance to the classical detective figures of C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes than do the hard-boiled characters of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. *El hombre triángulo* follows the protagonist, who happens to be a detective, as he

wrestles with his past as well as his identity, and ultimately subverts the traditional stereotypes of the white, heterosexual, hyper-masculine hero previously discussed in reference to the third chapter of this project. In doing so, this novel put conventional models of the classical detective in dialogue with culturally relevant representations of their contemporary counterparts in order to propose a new reading of a traditional literary persona particular to the Hispanic Caribbean.

If we view the novels throughout this dissertation strictly through the conventions of classical and Golden Age detective stories as outlined in this introduction, many, if not most, of the novels in this study cannot be considered “successful” detective novels. For a variety of reasons, these novels do not follow the conventions of typical detective fiction; however, this subversion of traditional patterns is in itself is a revealing commentary on the societies that produced these texts. My corpus for this project includes four texts each from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic that span the end of the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. These novels and stories push against classical conventions, they appropriate the guidelines and modify them to fit their social context, and some simply uproot the tenets altogether. By putting these texts into dialogue, we gain an understanding of the historical, cultural, and social commonalities and differences that produced these works of fiction.

Ultimately, this project seeks to understand the surge in production of the crime novel in the Hispanic Caribbean as a critical response to increasing urbanization and its increase in poverty, violence, and crime. To this end, it examines the postmodern and post-colonial strategies used in the texts in order to produce this social critique. Finally, this project examines the figure of the detective as he navigates the social context of

lawlessness and disorder that has become prevalent in the contemporary Hispanic Caribbean. The “detectives” that navigate the lawless and disordered Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican towns and cities include, among others; Carola, a Puerto Rican teacher and aspiring novelist who is fascinated by the murder of a local woman; Alain Bec, a Cuban lieutenant who is married, has a son, and enjoys reading detective fiction; and Imanol Petafunte, a Dominican lieutenant who grew up in an impoverished neighborhood and displays obvious disdain for the upper class prime suspect he interrogates. These protagonists, along with the others that populate these stories and novels, in their differing characterizations from the famous literary figures of C. Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, et al., present us with a nuanced understanding of cultural underpinnings of the societies they inhabit.

## **Chapter 1: The Frustrated Writer-Detective as Creator**

While all metafictional literature self-consciously reflects on its own creative process, detective fiction, by its very nature and formula, has provided the ideal structure to emphasize its metafictional qualities. The detective “reads” the clues “written” by the criminal as the reader reads the clues written by the author. As Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá asserts in his study of Paul Auster’s detective fiction, “Toda ficción detectivesca tiene como metáfora el rompecabezas” (139). This metaphor of piecing together the fragments of a puzzle through critical thinking reflects the detective’s intellectual process of solving the crime as well as not only the narrator’s process of weaving together the details to create the account of said crime, but also the reader’s process of putting the details together as he progresses through the narrative. Thus, the detective story begins as a fragmented accumulation of details and questions. In the classical detective stories, the initial enigma is resolved at the end of the story, all of the puzzle pieces fit together, and this process towards resolution drives the plot of the narrative. The detective is able to restore whatever social order was disturbed at the outset of the story and leaves the reader satisfied in his or her knowledge that good has triumphed over evil.

Within the four conventions of the classical detective story outlined in the introduction, metafiction has been particularly prevalent, although its manifestation and resulting implications have transformed over the course of the historical evolution of the genre. In her theoretical work on the subject of metafiction, Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). Given that classical detective fiction

demonstrates very little concern for social reality, it is evident that the genre highlights its own fictional nature. Waugh concurs with John G. Cawelti regarding the popularity of formula genre novels: “they [literary formulas] provide collective pleasure and release of tension through the comforting total affirmation of accepted stereotypes” (81-82).

However, Waugh finds it important to emphasize: “What is interesting about their use in metafiction is that, when they are parodied, the release affect of such forms is to do with *disturbance* rather than *affirmation*” (82). Although readers are drawn to genre fiction due to the comfort that adherence to a familiar formula provides, even in the case of the classical detective story in which the reader is left to feel at peace at the conclusion, metafiction poses additional questions that interrupt that peace. Waugh goes on to describe the use of metafiction specifically in the detective story: “In metafiction the detective-story plot is useful for exploring readerly expectation because it provides that readerly satisfaction which attaches to the predictable” (82). The formulaic nature of the classical detective story lends itself to the use of metafiction because the reader can foresee how the story will unfold.

Moreover, the subversion or inversion of the detective formula in the metafictional texts analyzed in this chapter provokes additional inquiries. Not only does metafiction in Caribbean detective fiction inspire the reader to question the relationship between fiction and reality, but also to question the reality in which the fiction is produced. Additionally, unlike the one-dimensional characters typical of the classical detective story, the character development of multidimensional narrator-detectives is essential to the plot of the stories and novels analyzed in this chapter. Ultimately, these detective stories remain unresolved and these characters cannot achieve satisfaction in

their roles as writers. The failure to achieve literary and personal resolution is simultaneously a call to arms to address social and political corruption and injustice and a cynical resignation to the unlikelihood of real change.

Hispanic Caribbean authors use postmodern literary strategies to appropriate and innovate the formula of the classical detective story in order to present hyperrealist images of their context and respond to social questions, both generally, as postmodern writers; and specifically, as Hispanic Caribbean writers. In my analysis of “Crónica policial” (1982) by Virgilio Díaz Grullón, “Pasión de historia” (1987) by Ana Lydia Vega, *Sol de medianoche* (1995) by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, and *Máscaras* (1997) and *Pasado perfecto* (2000) by Leonardo Padura Fuentes, I will consider the metaphorical relationship between the detective figure and (failed) author. I demonstrate how this relationship responds to the social context in which these texts were produced, representing the impotence to affect social change. Tzvetan Todorov, one of the earlier critics to consider the literary merit of the detective fiction, asserts that “the masterpiece of popular literature is precisely the book which best fits its genre. Detective fiction has its norms; to ‘develop’ them is also to disappoint them: to ‘improve upon’ detective fiction is to write ‘literature,’ not detective fiction” (43). However, in this chapter, I examine those very works that Todorov would deny are detective fiction to show how the authors purposefully subvert and transcend the conventions of the genre. I assert that they do so to transmit social, political, and metaphysical commentaries and to provoke the reader to question the status quo rather than to remain satisfied and complacent, as is the case when social order is restored at the conclusion of the classical detective story. I argue that the lack of resolution in the detective stories in this chapter, and to a greater

extent in the crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean, both implore for social change and cynically recognize the unlikelihood of that social change.

Todorov asserts that detective fiction contains, by nature, a certain duality that promotes the use of metafiction. That is, they “contain[s] not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation” (44). In most classical detective novels, the first story has ended long before the second story has begun. The second story features the detective as he recreates the first story through investigations, interviews, and analysis. This duality as well as the reconstructing of a story to tell another story lends itself naturally to the self-conscious nature of metafiction:

This second story, the story of the investigation, thereby enjoys a particular status. It is no accident that it is often told by a friend of the detective, who explicitly acknowledges that he is writing a book; the second story consists, in fact, in explaining how this very book came to be written. The first story ignores the book completely, that is, it never confesses its literary nature...on the other hand, the second story is not only supposed to take the reality of the book into account, but it is precisely the story of that very book. (45)

Essentially, the narrative of the second story must recreate the story of the crime, as it is not able to transmit directly the details, events, and conversations surrounding the initial incident. Therefore, the narrator becomes the “author” of the second story.<sup>6</sup> The existence of the “second story” allows the writer to self-consciously explore the process of its own creation. Just as the detective story itself reflects the historical context in which it was produced, the resulting metafiction mirrors the larger psychological and social issues of the period.

---

<sup>6</sup> While the narrator is typically the detective, in two of the texts analyzed in this chapter, “Crónica policial” and “Pasión de historia,” a journalist and novelist, respectively, take on the investigative role and become detective-like figures.

Similar to Waugh, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat defines metafiction as “a narrative that contains both fiction and a gloss upon fiction, both literature and criticism...All works of metafiction possess this double nature. They exist, as it were on two different levels and are thus susceptible to two readings” (30-31). However, he goes on to argue that through metafiction, writers leave very little open to the opinion of the reader in the delivery of their particular commentary. In this sense, he compares metafiction to the instructions on a medication bottle. Pérez-Firmat asserts, “a metafiction exists not to be actively read, criticized, construed but—like a medication—to be passively absorbed or experienced” (31). In other words, the author attempts to control the reader’s engagement with the text through his or her commentary veiled as fiction. By contrast, I argue that the metafictions we will see in this chapter are more ambiguous than prescriptive metafiction described by Pérez-Firmat, allowing for more open interpretation by the reader.

Pérez-Firmat also specifies that, in general, there are two distinct types of metafiction: discursive and narrative. In discursive metafiction, the author offers an explicit commentary about literature and the creative process. This type of metafiction can be seen in Jorge Luis Borges’s “La muerte y la brújula.” According to Pérez-Firmat, discursive metafiction can be found in texts that take a theoretical approach to the nature of fiction and attempt to make logical arguments about the creative process (32). In “La muerte y la brújula,” Borges employs literary language to establish the relationships between the characters and the relationship between the author and reader. In contrast, Pérez-Firmat describes narrative metafiction as a situation in which “the gloss is indistinguishable from the narrative, and can be rendered visible only by means of an allegorical reading of the text” (32). Therefore, it is necessary to uncover the social,

political, or metaphysical commentary that is disguised as fiction. This is exemplified by Enrique Anderson-Imbert's "El general hace un lindo cadaver" and its allegorical political commentary on Peronism.

In light of the creative relationship of the detective/narrator to the crime story, nearly all crime fiction can be said to contain narrative metafiction, as previously noted in Todorov's study. However, the Hispanic Caribbean detective and crime stories and novels discussed in this chapter also contain discursive metafiction in which the narrator, who is also a writer, offers explicit commentary on the writing process. In addition, it is possible for both discursive and narrative metafiction to be present in one text, as is the case in Ana Lydia Vega's "Pasión de historia" and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's *Sol de medianoche*, as we will see in this chapter.

While the foundational stories of the detective and crime genre in Latin America, as mentioned in the introduction, begin to subvert the conventions of the genre, they do not deviate from the mold of fiction as artifice, or intellectual game. As a result of the changing socio-political climate in both North and South America, the writers of the hard-boiled novels, and later the *novela negra*, veered away from these conventions in order to reflect modern urban experience. Even as he delineates the conventions of the genre, Cawelti proposes that: "the classical formula is related to a distinctive historical period and reflects attitudes and interests that are no longer as widespread as they were" (80). The classical detective story was a product of the early period of industrialization in Europe. The hard-boiled novel, introduced in the 1920s and popularized in the mid- to late-twentieth century, deviated significantly from the classical formula, reflecting the changing social reality in a post-World War I United States during the period of

Prohibition and, later, the Great Depression. The hard-boiled novel features a more sympathetic, often first-person narrator. Later, the Mexican and Spanish *novela negra*, popularized in the 1970s, draws heavily on this type of character. The hard-boiled and *novela negra* detective is portrayed in the midst of the chaos, rather than maintaining a distance from the chaotic urban world by retreating to a study. In place of the neat and tidy structure of the ratiocinative story, the hard-boiled novel and *novela negra* mirror the messiness of modern urban life in the early twentieth century in North and South America. The conclusion of the crime novel is no longer about the restoration of social order; it is about the need for a change in social order. Instead of a resolution to the crime that provides the comfort that “everything is okay in the end,” these messy and unresolved crimes remove the readers from their comfort zones and implore the reader to consider the social causes of the instability implied by the lack of ultimate resolution.

The American hard-boiled novel and the Latin American *novela negra* move further and further away from the classical detective story toward the end of the twentieth century. In his study *Modernidad, posmodernidad y novela policial* (2000), Leonardo Padura Fuentes comments that the *novela negra* achieves “su vocación de fe por el realismo y su reto estético por la verosimilitud, con el propósito de superar los agotados procedimientos de la escuela detectivesca original, anitrealista e inverosímil, cargada de un idealismo social que ya no se sostenía” (124-25). To fully understand this transition from the implausible and unrealistic, albeit aesthetically and mentally intriguing plots of writers such as Borges and Anderson-Imbert to the *novela negra* of the Hispanic Caribbean, we must examine the change in use and function of metafiction within the text. This change reflects the different social and historical context in which these texts are

produced. By questioning the relationship between fiction and reality, particularly in the failed creative process of the protagonists seen in these stories, we can look at the powerlessness of the individual in the politically and legally corrupt structures of the Hispanic Caribbean.

As the *novela negra*, beginning in the 1970s, moves away from the “game” and “artifice” of the Borges-style detective story to reflect the darker and grittier aspects of social reality, the manifestation and function of metaliterary devices also evolve. As we will see in this chapter, rather than merely to draw attention to itself as artifice and comment on the literary process, the self-conscious *novela negra* employs metafiction as a means of provoking the reader to think about social, political, and metaphysical issues, particularly about political corruption in the Dominican Republic, national identity and the position of females in Puerto Rico, and the repression of creative expression and use of literature as a tool of social control in the Revolution in Cuba. The self-conscious *novela negra* attempts to compel the reader to think about broader social issues specifically by subverting the principal conventions of the classical detective story, as outlined in the introduction. Rodríguez Juliá directly addresses the *novela negra*’s efforts to provoke the reader by subverting the classical conventions of the genre in the following comment:

Pero qué hay de narraciones policiales que provocan el interés de los lectores mediante misterios que jamás se quedan aclarados, cuyas soluciones resultan esquivas, enigmáticas, imposibles de descifrar. Diríamos que estas novelas detectivescas son parodias del género, astutas falsificaciones ‘postmodernistas’, violaciones del canon literaria policial. (*Pasión literaria* 140)

In other words, by not presenting the reader with a nice, neatly wrapped package, these novels provoke the reader to entertain greater social, political and metaphysical questions, which we will see in the stories and novels analyzed in this chapter.

By contrasting narrative metafiction in classical detective stories with the combination of narrative and discursive metafiction, and the resulting importance of character development in the stories and novels that I analyze in this chapter, I highlight the deficiencies in political and social order and justice reflected in these texts. As Waugh states, “Pure detective fiction is extremely resistant to literary change, and therefore a very effective marker of change when used explicitly against itself” (82). In light of the shift in focus from the playful “game” of the *relato policial* of the aforementioned authors to the realist portrayal of gritty urban life of the *novela negra*, the texts I discuss in this chapter portray the relationship between crime and art differently than one might anticipate. Both the short stories “Crónica policial” (1966) by the Dominican author Virgilio Díaz Grullón and “Pasión de historia” (1987) by the Puerto Rican author Ana Lydia Vega feature the relationship between writer/narrator and crime story. In the case of the former, the narrator-journalist discovers that he cannot in fact write the crime report he has been assigned as neither he nor any of the investigators he interviews can determine who committed the crime. In the case of “Pasión de historia,” life begins to imitate art for the protagonist as she struggles to fictionally recount the tale of a woman murdered by her scorned lover. In both stories, the authors’ self-conscious meditations on the crime fiction genre reflect and interrogate the state of law enforcement and the process of law and order in the contemporary Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, respectively.

In contrast, *Sol de medianoche* (1999) by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá (Puerto Rico) and the novels in the “Mario Conde” series by Leonardo Padura Fuentes (Cuba) reflect a more personal and individualized relationship between the creative process of the writer and the analytical process of the detective. Waugh suggests that in detective fiction, “[e]ven characters, for the most part, are merely functions of the plot” (82). However, I would like to suggest a converse relationship between character and plot in the novels discussed here. In these texts, both narrator-detectives are themselves frustrated writers. In *Sol de medianoche*, the protagonist attempts to write his first novel, but becomes distracted by his obsession with past demons. By contrast, Mario Conde, although also a frustrated writer, is finally able to complete his creative process which parallels his resolution of the crime he is investigating. Ultimately the protagonists’ struggle with their personal creative processes drives the progression of the plot, making their character development central to understanding the use of metafiction in these novels.

### **“Crónica Policial”: The Journalist as Failed Detective**

Metafiction is frequently characterized by parody, a term defined by Linda Hutcheon as repetition with difference that reveals literary and/or social criticism (185). This definition of parody is particularly relevant to this study as the stories and novels discussed here appropriate the detective story and “repeat” the conventions of the genre without replicating the formula in order to communicate social criticism through fiction. In his humoristic and parodic short story, “Crónica policial,” Virgilio Díaz Grullón discusses the investigative process behind the police chronicle and self-consciously points out the difficulties implicit in police investigation in the Hispanic Caribbean, and

in this case, specifically in the Dominican Republic.<sup>7</sup> Díaz Grullón is considered one of the best short story authors from the Dominican Republic and has won several prizes including the “Premio Nacional de Cuento” for his book *Un día cualquiera* in 1958 and the “Premio Nacional de Literatura” in 1997. He is most recognized for his skillful psychological stories.

Originally published in 1966 as part of the collection entitled *Crónicas de Altocerro*, Díaz Grullón’s short story, “Crónica policial,” features a narrator-protagonist who works as a journalist, indicating the self-reflexive nature of the story from the beginning. Traditionally, the detective character is often accompanied by the figure of the journalist, just as the genre of the detective story coincides in part with the chronicle, another self-conscious genre.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of “Crónica policial,” the narrator arrives at the newspaper office and immediately his boss sends him to prepare a report regarding a recent death. The narrator heads out to the crime scene and when he arrives, the first thing he does, just as a detective would, is to interrogate the witnesses. The first witness that he questions is the deceased’s sister, who assures the reporter that her sister-in-law murdered her brother. Then the reporter questions the deceased’s wife, who is accompanied by her mother. When her mother realizes that the narrator is a journalist, she advises her daughter to remain silent: “No le digas nada. Son todos unos enredadores

---

<sup>7</sup> Díaz Grullón was born in 1924 in Santiago de los Caballeros. He studied law and earned his Doctorate of Law in 1946 from the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD), after which he held several public and private offices. He collaborated with various newspapers and magazines in the Dominican Republic and abroad. His stories have been translated into several languages and appear in various anthologies.

<sup>8</sup> The most notable Latin American example of the overlapping of the crime genre and the chronicle is Gabriel García Márquez’s *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981), which tells the story of the murder of Santiago Nasar in the form of a fictional journalistic reconstruction.

y unos embusteros. ¡Sabe Dios qué mentiras va a publicar después en el periódico!” (212).

This comment underscores a frequent literary theme: the veracity of non-fiction literature, and in particular, that of journalism. With this comment, the deceased’s mother-in-law expresses the opinion that all writing is subjective and potentially unreliable, including the information presented in journalistic publications. This self-conscious commentary on the veracity of journalistic publications invites the reader to question the ways in which “truth” has been covered up in the Dominican Republic during the Trujillo and Balaguer regimes.

Ultimately, despite the fact that wife explains that she has nothing to hide and that her husband has committed suicide due to economic hardship, the deceased’s sister implicates the sister-in-law, the mother implicates the sister, and the assistant district attorney implicates the mother, resulting in the journalist’s complete confusion. After his attempts to investigate the death of the victim, the narrator comes to an illuminating conclusion: he is unable to complete his assignment and write the report of the alleged murder (or is it suicide?). While this conclusion may seem defeatist, it in fact is illuminating as it subverts the genre conventions. There is no neat and tidy conclusion, which the genre depends upon as part of the tenets, so what is the purpose of investigating this death?

“Crónica policial” deviates from the precepts of the ratiocinative detective story in many self-conscious ways. As a start, the story is narrated in the first person, allowing the reader access to the narrator’s reasoning process. Ultimately, this access does not undermine the suspense of the story because in this case, the narrator does not have any more knowledge of the events that have unfolded than the reader. Secondly, the narrator

is a journalist rather than a detective, whom the reader expects to have less well-developed investigative skill than a professional or even amateur P.I. In fact, in this case, the narrator appears to lack any type of inferential or reasoning skills that would allow him intuitively to deduce the author of the crime. Finally, similarly to Rodríguez Juliá's commentary on parodic, postmodern *novelas negras*, the enigma presented at the onset of the story is never resolved. The reader is left to question what happened and why it is still unresolved, which self-consciously reflects the difficulties to both the writing process and the investigation process in the Hispanic Caribbean. Eventually, the narrator is unable to write his report and even decides to relinquish his position at the newspaper, essentially admitting the impossibility of winning the struggle to uncover the truth, and, moreover, to maintain order and control in modern Dominican society.

The characters' distrust of local journalists, the ineffectiveness of local law enforcement, and the narrator's inability to complete his writing assignment lead the reader to question the causes of a perceived deep distrust of government. According to Ana Liberato:

Political trust is historically determined and culture-specific. This is to say that culture, socialization, and history provide a context for specific attitudes of trust to develop and take root in particular contexts. In the Dominican context particular types of trust repertoires have developed base on the country's history of cultural and political authoritarianism." (234)

"Crónica Policial" was published only a few years after the Trujillato ended. Decades of authoritarianism and the resulting surveillance as a means of social control instilled in people a deep distrust of not just government, but of nearly everyone. Liberato asserts:

"People anticipate violations of their trust so they preemptively adopt a defensive attitude in order to protect themselves and avoid or overcome the perceived risks" (235). Even as

recently as 2004, “most Dominicans declared *little or no trust* in the justice system, and most believed that the justice system works either *badly/poorly, or very badly*” (Liberato 237). These beliefs are reflected in inversion of the classical detective story model that culminates in the unresolved conclusion of “Crónica Policial.”

### **“Pasión de historia”: Writer Becomes Subject/Victim of Her Own Story**

Ana Lydia Vega’s short story, “Pasión de historia,” also portrays a self-conscious reflection on the frustrated creative process, while contributing a different perspective relating to crime fiction in Puerto Rico and its sociopolitical context.<sup>9</sup> Both Vega and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, whose work will also be discussed in this chapter, belong to the “Generation of the 60s” period of literary production in Puerto Rico, and, as such, much of their work deals with Puerto Rican national identity. Like many of the writers of her generation, including Rodríguez Juliá, Vega has been plagued by self-censorship associated with this generation: “...when Puerto Rican writers assume the responsibility of their literary tradition they feel compelled by the demon of self-censorship to write about one obsessive theme, national identity” (Torres Caballero 216). As a result, not only does the detective genre come late to Puerto Rican literature, but there are also undertones of the national identity narrative in many Puerto Rican crime and detective

---

<sup>9</sup> Vega was born in 1946 in Santurce, Puerto Rico. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Puerto Rico in 1968 and went on to receive a Master’s degree and doctorate, both in French literature, from the University of Provence. She has published several collections of short stories and novels including *Virgenes y mártires* (1983), *Encancaranublado y otros cuentos de naufragio* (1987), *Pasión de historia y otras historias de pasión* (1987), *El tramo ancla* (1988), *Falsas crónicas del sur* (1991), *Ciertas crónicas del norte* (1992), and *Esperando a Loló y otros delirios generacionales* (1995) Vega has received numerous prizes as well, including Casa de Las Americas Award (1982), the Juan Rulfo International Award (1984), and a Guggenheim Fellowship Award (1989).

stories, including *Sol de medianoche*.<sup>10</sup> In addition, along with contemporaries Rosario Ferré, Mayra Montero, Carmen Lugo Filippi, and Magali García Ramís, female identity is a recurring theme in her stories and novels. As Vega has stated in one interview: “I believe that the experiences that I have had as a woman since my infancy, my experiences with repression, this constant negotiation with a male dominated world, leaves an imprint on one’s self” (Hernández and López Springfield 816). While the topic of female identity may not seem central to my analysis of “Pasión de historia” as a detective story, the gender dynamics represented in the story cannot be ignored and will also be discussed here.

A metafictional reading of “Pasión de historia” as a (subversive) detective story reveals a similarly unsatisfactory conclusion to “Crónica policial.” The story is narrated in the first person from the perspective of Carola, a frustrated “novelist,” residing in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico. The story recounts her frustrating process to write the “Great Puerto Rican novel,” as one of her old friends describes it. As she recovers from a recent break-up with her cheating boyfriend, she has found a “muy woolfiano cuarto propio para poder al fin, dedicarme a escribir” (7). Carola describes the novel she is working on as “medio documental, medio policíaca.” She has become obsessed with the murder of a local woman that has been saturating the local news. The woman, Malén, was killed by her ex-husband in a crime of passion upon finding her in an intimate situation with his friend. Unconvinced by the main reports in the local news, Carola devours every article, photo, and piece of gossip she can find relating to the case and begins to imagine that which she

---

<sup>10</sup> While there are also references to national identity in other Latin American detective fiction as well (see, for example, Daniel Balderston’s study of Borges), this is clearly a very strong preoccupation for the Puerto Rican writers, particularly of this generation, and is worth closer consideration.

cannot know, reconstructing her own narrative of the crime: “Así empecé a tejer el cuento de Malén, la novela de Malén, porque cada día se iba enredando más la madeja de escenas sueltas, deshilachadas, donde siempre faltaba algo: la costurera decisiva, el hilo que las pusiera a significar” (9). Here, Vega uses language that calls attention to the self-conscious nature of the creative process, using language like “weave,” “tangling,” and “loose skeins,” drawing on the metaphor of writing as creating a garment or tapestry. Her variation in terminology from “cuento” to “novela” indicates that what began as a story has now turned into such a detailed and fictionalized account that it has become a novel.

As Carola gathers more and more information, she begins to encounter difficulty in the writing process, as she has difficulty finding the time or the mental focus to continue her writing. She also struggles with finding the appropriate perspective from which to tell the story. At the height of her frustration, Carola receives a letter from a friend, Vilma, living in the French Pyrenees, inviting her for a visit. She leaves immediately in hopes of avoiding Manuel and finally writing the “Gran Novela Puertorriqueña,” “con la Smith-Corona portátil a cuestas y el expediente del caso Malén bajo el sobaco” (11). When Carola arrives, Vilma shows her to the room where she will be staying, complete with a beautiful antique desk: “un escritorio antiguo, muy coquetón, oloroso a barniz recién frotado y lleno de gavetitas inesperadas, que había mandado a restaurar especialmente para Carola Vidal, la escritora con E mayúscula,” and comments “Si no pares algo aquí eres machorra” (12). Here, we continue to see self-conscious language that illuminates the writer’s relationship to her work and the writing process. The desk at which she is meant to create her “obra maestra” has all of the details of what one would imagine to be the creative workspace of a great author: antique, with secret

nooks and crannies, and gleaming beautifully. Additionally, the use of the verb “parir” to refer to the production of a work of literature calls attention to the writer’s process of conceiving, nurturing, and giving birth to a body of writing. Moreover, Vilma’s assertion that, if Carola is unable to conceive that masterpiece, she is a “machorra,” is indicative of a women’s value being, in part, defined by her ability to give birth.<sup>11</sup>

The dynamics of male/female relationships are central to both Carola’s novel and the story that we are reading. In addition to the relationship between Malén and her ex/killer, the “Pasión de historia” explores Carola’s own relationship with her ex, Manuel; her friend Vilma’s relationship with her husband, Paul; as well as several other relationships. While Carola is staying with Vilma and Paul, she becomes more and more engrossed in the drama surrounding her (Vilma is having marital problems and her husband takes on the “role” of the villain), similar to her obsession with the details of “el caso Malén.” She expresses surprise at the existence of such machismo outside of the context of Puerto Rico, indicating that perhaps the gender stereotypes that she has ascribed to the island are more universal than she had imagined (14). As a result of her growing involvement in Vilma’s drama, she ignores her novel. In its place, she begins to chronicle her daily experience in a diary, which also becomes part of the text. The existence of this diary within the text provides an additional layer of metafiction that points back to the narrator’s creative process as she indicates that the diary may be an “actividad sustituta por la novela abandonada?” A few days before Carola’s return to Puerto Rico the narrator resumes her previous style of narration, at which time she sends another letter to Vilma. After waiting several weeks without reply, the letter is returned to

---

<sup>11</sup> “Machorra” is a term used to refer to a sterile female animal but is used colloquially to refer to homosexual or masculine women in an offensive manner.

her marked “DESTINATAIRE INCONNU.” Carola’s surprise at receiving the letter with this designation indicates that, perhaps, Vilma has become the next victim in what turns out to be a series of “crimes of passion.”

Carola’s own personal life also begins to mirror her art. As Carola researches details relating to Malén’s murder, she discovers that a man lurking about the area and seems to be stalking her, mirroring the storyline of “el caso Malén.” Several days later, Carola discovers that her stalker is actually her former lover, Manuel. Finally, after Carola returns to the island from her time in France, the story concludes with an “Editor’s note,” stating that the author (Carola), after submitting the preceding manuscript, died from a gunshot to the head while in her apartment. The reader is left to interpret that Carola was likely killed by her former lover, bringing her story back to “el caso Malén,” and making Carola the third victim of a “crime of passion.” Like the narrator of “Crónica policial,” Carola is unable to conclude her story. Rather than succumbing to lack of substantial evidence; however, Carola becomes a victim of her own obsession.

While Persephone Braham has discussed the influence of late-eighteenth century English gothic novels on Vega and particularly on “Pasión de historia,” I would like to focus on the text as metafiction and as an inversion of the classical detective story and the *novela negra*.<sup>12</sup> “Pasión de historia,” like “Crónica policial,” subverts many of the fundamental covenants of the detective story. Once again, the “detective” figure is not a detective, but rather a writer. However, unlike the journalist in “Crónica policial,” here,

---

<sup>12</sup> In her article, “Ana Lydia Vega y el género negrogótico,” Braham focuses particularly on the aspect of sexual assault against women in her discussion of the gothic influence on Vega’s work. I argue that the metafictional nature of the detective genre is a vehicle through which Vega presents her view on sexual assault against women and the nature of male/female relationships in Puerto Rico and beyond.

in terms of her relationship with the crime that has occurred, our narrator appears to be simply a voyeur. Also, given the first-person narration, once again the reader is privy to her thoughts and reasoning process, until the conclusion of the story when we read the “Editor’s Note”; however, in this case, the motive and criminal are both known to the narrator and reader at the onset of the story. Therefore, the narrative becomes a parodic reconstruction of the detective story. The enigma, the perpetrator of Carola’s death, is presented to the reader in the final paragraph of the story by a third party and second first-person narrator, the editor. With Carola’s death also comes the death of the story’s “detective figure,” silencing the only voice that would be able to resolve the enigma.

As is the case with classical detective stories, there are two stories here: the crime that has occurred and the investigation and narration of the crime, told from the point of view of the detective (Boling 89).<sup>13</sup> I would aver, however, that there are three stories juxtaposed in this metafiction, as implied by the “Editor’s Note” at the end of the text. If the first story is the ‘caso Malén,’ and the second story is the narrator’s reconstruction of the case, then the third level of this metafiction is revealed when we discover that the subsequent story has been published in “*TEXTIMONIOS*” by “*EDICIONES SEREMOS*,” and that all along we have been reading Carola’s story. Throughout the text, Vega weaves discursive and narrative metafiction through Carola’s stream-of-consciousness first-person narration. Her narration includes the novel she is writing; her diary entries in France; the return to first-person narration upon leaving France; and concludes with the

---

<sup>13</sup> In her article, “The Reproduction of Ideology in Ana Lydia Vega’s ‘Pasión de historia’ and ‘caso omiso,’” Becky Boling argues that “although the ‘caso Malén’ is not a ‘whodunit’ in the traditional sense, because the murderer is already known, Carola Vidal’s reconstruction would constitute what Todorov calls the second story and principal story of the ‘whodunit’” (89).

“Editor’s Note,” which indicates that the one person who could clarify the story we have just read is no longer able to speak. As Boling asserts, “Vega guarantees that the reader now writes for herself the second story...what was an interesting examination of the narrator/writer becomes a metaphor for an engaged reader” (93-94). By framing her social commentary within the conventions of the detective genre, which invites the reader to take on the active role of detective, Vega also appeals to the reader to assume an active role in questioning the issues of violence against women and female identity in contemporary urban (specifically Puerto Rican) society.

### ***Sol de medianoche: Reverse Bildungsroman***

Another self-conscious aspect of the traditional detective story is the identification of the criminal with the artist or writer and the detective with the reader. In this classical model, the detective “reads” clues and looks for evidence to reconstruct the “story,” authored by the criminal. In the stories and novels discussed in this chapter, we see an inversion of this structure; herein, the detective is the writer and the criminal becomes a character in his or her story. We have seen this role reversal in both “Crónica policial” and “Pasión de historia,” as two writers (a journalist and novelist, respectively), take on the role of detective in their written reconstruction of the crime that took place prior to their narrative. On the other hand, in both *Sol de medianoche* and Padura Fuentes’s *Mario Conde* series, in terms of vocation, the narrators are a P.I. and a professional police officer; however, privately, they are both aspiring (and frustrated) authors. Much like his contemporary Ana Lydia Vega, Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá struggles with the idea of detective fiction being considered a frivolous genre and was compelled to address the

subject of national identity solemnly in his writing.<sup>14</sup> However, in his essay “Mi detective privado,” originally published on November 12, 1995 (the same year as the publication of *Sol de medianoche*) Rodríguez Juliá declares: “Finalmente escribí una novela policial, o detectivesca, o como se diga: no sé por qué la he escrito” (155).<sup>15</sup> He goes on to ponder his reasoning, but finally concludes: “Me propuse a escribir una falsa novela detectivesca que tuviese mucha veracidad social, en todo caso una falsificación divertida que también pretende ser un mural de mi particular generación puertorriqueña,” which recalls Rodríguez Juliá’s previously mentioned assertion that through inverting the genre’s conventions, the resulting “detective novels” can present larger issues for the reader to consider; in this case, national identity as well as more profound existential questions (155).

Given its propensity for provoking reflection on larger issues, the detective genre provides the ideal conditions to interrogate the questions of national identity and extend them to the more universal existential questions. Rodríguez Juliá claims that in this novel, he has captured “las voces de cierta realidad urbana puertorriqueña” and that his ambition was to create “una imagen del fracaso mediante personajes veraces” (*Pasión literaria*

---

<sup>14</sup> Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, born in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, in 1946, published his first novel, *La renuncia del héroe Baltasar*, considered a “historic” novel, in 1974, followed by the trilogy of *La noche oscura del Niño Avilés* (1984), *El camino de Yyaloide* (1994) and *Pandemonium* (unpublished) that present the initiation of Puerto Rican national identity as a series of failed foundational utopias (*Pasión literaria* viii). In addition to his works of fiction, Rodríguez Juliá is also an avid journalist, having published many articles, essays and reviews in *Domingo* y *En Grande*, supplements to the Puerto Rican newspaper *El Nuevo Día*, among other publications. He is an ardent aficionado of the detective story genre and has written literary criticism on Paul Auster and Raymond Chandler, among others.

<sup>15</sup> Both “Mi detective privado” and “Ese Los Ángeles de Raymond Chandler” were republished in 2003 in a collection of essays and articles entitled *Mapa de una pasión literaria*.

155-56). Through the representation of failed characters, the novel explores what it means to be part of a particular generation, in a particular place, in a particular time, in a particular culture. While these questions are not unique to either Puerto Rican or detective fiction, Rodríguez Juliá uses the “failed detective” to represent a generation of Puerto Ricans. Benigno Trigo describes this generation as one that has been affected by, and partially responsible for, the increased violence on the island towards the end of the twentieth century. Trigo further claims that *Sol de medianoche* and *Mujer con sombrero panamá* (2004) “can be interpreted as attempts to reveal the complicity of the Puerto Rican middle class in this violence generated partly by their investment in the forces driving the colonial economy, society and culture” (46).<sup>16</sup> At the same time that *Sol de medianoche* illuminates the Puerto Rican middle class’s complicity in the perpetuation of violence, the figure of the “failed detective/writer” reveals the denial to accept responsibility for this social problem.

As an extension of the “failed detective,” Rodríguez Juliá’s novel represents a failed or “false” detective novel. In his essay “Ese Los Ángeles de Raymond Chandler,” written in 1998, he states:

Mi novela *Sol de medianoche* sería una parodia de la novela detectivesca según Raymond Chandler...Quise componer una falsificación del género. Pensé que esta novela debería tener un virus interno que invalidara todo su planteamiento detectivesco, toda su veracidad como novela policial. Me sentía felizmente postmoderno, *anything goes*. Me decía, un tanto solemnemente, que *Sol de medianoche* sería una novela existencial disfrazada de detectivesca. (185)

Here, the author reveals his intention to appropriate the genre and subvert its conventions to reflect a particular social reality, not only proposing existential questions but also representing his “particular Puerto Rican generation,” as mentioned in the previous quote.

---

<sup>16</sup> *Mujer con sombrero panamá* also features Manolo as the narrator-protagonist.

Rodríguez Juliá uses the terms “false” and “falsification” on various occasions to refer to his “detective novel,” which begs the question: should *Sol de medianoche* even be considered a detective novel? In what ways is the novel a “falsification” of the genre? And if it cannot be considered a detective novel, is it still a valuable literary contribution to the genre?

Often considered a (pseudo) police novel, *Sol de medianoche* features first-person narration from the perspective of private investigator Manolo, who specializes in investigating cheating couples. However, the narrator’s relationship with his twin brother Frank, Frank’s death, and his desire to find his brother’s murderer drive the action of the novel. Manolo is also an aspiring novelist. The resulting novel can be characterized by its self-conscious structure similar to the “self-begetting novel.” Waugh, quoting Steven G. Kellman’s “The Fiction of Self-Begetting,” describes this type of novel as “an ‘account usually first person, of the development of a character to a point at which he is able to take up and compose the novel we have just finished reading’ (quoted in Waugh, 14). Often, novels that contain this type of structure are associated with the *bildungsroman*, in which the narrator-protagonists undergo changes or growth that give them the ability or authority to write their own story. Conversely, what we see in Rodríguez Juliá’s novel is an inversion, or perversion, of this structure.

Most significantly, Manolo does not fit the archetype of either the classical or hardboiled detective. The classical detective is intellectual, cerebral, morally unimpeachable, and indifferent. He observes in a detached manner, analyzes, and restores order with his academic conclusions. The typical detective of the hardboiled novel, like Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade, is often more emotionally engaged with his investigation

and vulnerable to moral flaws than his classical predecessor, however he ultimately triumphs over evil. Manolo, on the other hand, is not only susceptible to moral failings; he could be described as having no morality at all. He is an alcoholic, distrusts women, and is untrustworthy himself, as he readily admits:

Yo sí tengo talento. Porque de verdad, mi oficio es adivinar el adulterio, luego vendérselo a víctimas y victimarios, cobrar buen precio. Ahora bien, mi vocación más profunda es la traición; así de sencillo: ver, mirar, sobre todo eso, mirar sin que te vean, delatar la duplicidad, consolarte con esto último. (44)

While the hard-boiled detective works to ultimately solve a crime for the greater good of his community, Manolo earns his living by exploiting untrusting partners. It is clear that his affinity for investigating adultery reflects his character. In addition, although he struggles to find out what happened to his brother, he also harbors deep-seated resentment towards him, dating back to their youth, that prevents him from moving forward in his life. In other words, Manolo does not appear to possess the characteristics that would allow him to grow in authority and self-confidence to reach the point that he would be able to write his own story.

On the first page of *Sol de medianoche*, the narrator reveals his intention to write his own novel with a self-conscious reference to “esa catástrofe descrita en el primer párrafo” (9). A few pages later, Manolo explicitly tells the reader “Si me he decidido a engalanar mi insignificante biografía con ésta, mi primera novela, tengo derecho de hurgar en la llaga” (13). What follows is an account of Manolo’s daily experiences as he continues to investigate unfaithful marriages as well as deal with the psychological effects of his brother’s murder. Unlike the narrators of the typical *bildungsroman*, who acquire the capacity to narrate their own stories over the course of the novel, as Manolo continues his quest to discover what really happened to his brother on his last night, his

life appears to deteriorate and, succumbing to the seduction of alcohol, he reaches the point where he is unable to write his novel and no longer mentions it. According to Rodríguez Juliá, the first-person narration facilitated his objective to create a disguised existential novel: “En algún pasaje Manolo hace referencia a su propia escritura de novela; ésta la escribe él, quien también es su narrador. Manolo podría fantasearse como detective privado en su propia novela autobiográfica” (*Pasión literaria* 185). Not only does Manolo fantasize that he is an author, he also fantasizes that he is a private detective in his “autobiographic novel,” which ultimately never comes to fruition.

Ultimately, Manolo not only fails as a writer, but he also fails as a detective. Aside from his work as a private investigator, Manolo continues to investigate his brother’s death. At the same time, all evidence seems to indicate that it was Manolo himself who killed his brother, perhaps by accident. Manolo does not remember anything from the night of his brother’s death due to a drunken blackout. Yet, the morning after Frank’s death, Manolo wakes up with a .357 Magnum with a silencer in his hand, indicating that perhaps he did kill his twin brother. However, Rodríguez Juliá points out in “Ese Los Ángeles de Raymond Chandler”: “Si a Frank lo mataron con silenciador, Manolo jamás hubiese sido el asesino” because the weapon found with Manolo the morning after could not have killed Frank since it cannot be used with a silencer. Therefore, “estamos ante un callejón sin salida, un *conundrum*, acertijo sin solución” (*Pasión literaria* 187). Therefore, neither Manolo nor the reader is capable of solving the enigma of Frank’s death. Consequently, Manolo devolves as a detective. As Benjamín Torres Caballero points out, “We begin to see another Manolo behind the mask, especially towards the end of the novel...he no longer assumes the gaze of the detective

but rather that of a mere beach *flâneur*” (224). The failure of the metafictional novel is mirrored in his failure as a detective, provoking the reader to question Manolo’s very identity. Ultimately, we, along with Manolo himself, question his role in his brother’s death and consequently, his reliability as the narrator of his story.

### **Mario Conde Series: Detective as Frustrated Writer**

Many critics and readers agree that Leonardo Padura Fuentes (Cuba) is the best-known and most prolific practitioner, as well as critic, of the detective genre in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Within Cuba, he was one of the first crime writers to break away from the Socialist detective novel that had achieved its height preceding the Special Period. Although he has written many essays, stories and novels, he is best known for his “Mario Conde” series, featuring *Máscaras* (1997), *Paisaje de Otoño* (1998), *Pasado perfecto* (2000), *Vientos de cuaresma* (2001), *Adiós Hemingway* (2005), and *La neblina de ayer* (2005). He has received several literary prizes including the Dashiell Hammett Prize, awarded by the Asociación Internacional de Escritores Policiacos (International Association of Crime Writers) for the best crime novels written in Spanish, in 1998 and 2006.<sup>17</sup> Padura Fuentes is considered to be a pioneer of the Cuban *novela neopolicial*, which moves away from the prescriptive and normative nature of the Socialist detective novel that became a tool for defining counterrevolutionary behavior during the 1970s.<sup>18</sup> In his effort to break with the Socialist novel, “Padura sought to expose moral corruption at all levels, abandoning the Socialist model protagonist: decent, an upright family man,

---

<sup>17</sup> This prize establishes Padura Fuentes among the leading writers of crime fiction in the Spanish language. He is one of only two Cuban writers to receive this honor (Justo Vasco received the prize in 1999 for his novel *Mirando espero*).

<sup>18</sup> Braham, as well as Stephen Wilkinson and Helen Oakley, provide an in-depth overview of the history and evolution of the Socialist detective novel in Cuba. Additionally, these scholars offer postmodern readings of Padura Fuentes’s novels.

infallible (a traditional hero) in favor of a flawed but more believable man with numerous defects and problems” (Pérez 66). The protagonist of Padura Fuentes’s series of novels, Mario Conde, embodies that imperfect, fallible and plausible detective, similar to that of the American hard-boiled novel.

Much of the existing scholarship on Padura Fuentes’s work takes a postmodernist approach to its reading. Helen Oakley has pointed to his work as rejecting totalizing beliefs and his “self-conscious referencing of other literary texts and films” (46-47). Persephone Braham has highlighted the way that he “focuses on all aspects, desirable and undesirable, of Cuban society; and subordinates the rationalist elements of the mystery to social criticism and novelistic art” (56). In Padura Fuentes’s own critical study on the postmodern crime novel, he calls for a new type of police novel that reflects postmodern thought:

No obstante, ciertas características del arte posmoderno muy pronto se van a incluir entre las cualidades del neopolicial: su afición por los modelos de la cultura de masas, su visión paródica de ciertas estructuras novelescas, su propia creación de estereotipos, el empleo de los discursos populares y marginales, y el eclecticismo, el pastiche, la contaminación genérica, y esa mirada superior, francamente burlona y desacralizadora, que lanzan sobre lo que, durante muchos años, fue la semilla del género: el enigma. (*Modernidad* 137-78)

Specifically, Padura Fuentes refers to a “visión paródica de ciertas estructuras novelescas,” among them metafiction. While these structures are present in classical detective stories, they are not typically employed to achieve a parodic reading that supersedes the central focus of resolving a crime. Here, Padura Fuentes calls for postmodern detective novel that prioritizes the inversion of the genre as a means of interrogating social norms over the resolution of the enigma.

A metafictional analysis of *Pasado perfecto* and *Máscaras* interrogates the Revolution's censorship and control of literary creativity and explores literature as a key element in revealing truth, or the lack thereof. The detective-protagonist, Mario Conde, is a frustrated writer. In both novels, Conde's failure as a writer emerges as a theme of his personal reflections, as something causes him to remember with nostalgia a writing workshop that he participated in as a student in his first "preuniversitario" years. It was his first attempt to become a published author, but he was not successful. As part of the workshop, Conde and his classmates along with the professor decide to publish a literary magazine entitled *La Viboreña*. In the first edition, Conde's first story, "Domingos," was intended to appear along with other stories and poems written by his classmates. "Domingos" describes a boy who wants to play baseball with his friends on Sundays rather than go to church. Conde remembers: "Es algo increíble eso de sentirse escritor" (*Pasado* 57). However, the magazine was never published because the school's administration considered it "anti-revolutionary;" as a consequence, Conde did not realize his dream of becoming a writer. The censorship of *La Viboreña* presents an explicit reference to the Revolution's repression of creative literary expression. Many years later, this failure continues to torment Conde; in the present narrative, his success as a detective becomes intertwined with his success (or failure) as a writer.

In both novels, the library and literature are featured as clues to solve the crimes. I interpret this critical importance of literature to indicate that Padura Fuentes considers knowledge and freedom of creative expression to be essential to social change during the Special Period in Cuba. In *Pasado perfecto*, Conde investigates the disappearance of the "jefe de la Empresa de Importaciones y Exportaciones del Ministerio de Industrias,"

Rafael Morín, who coincidentally was Conde's classmate and married Conde's unrequited childhood love, Tamara. During Conde's investigation of Morín's disappearance, the detective visits Tamara and begins to reflect on the love he had for her and the time he spent in her house, studying in her father's library. He observes that very little has changed in the library and remembers a volume of Father Brown stories that Tamara's father had recommended to him "hace tantísimos años, cuando el Conde no podía ni imaginar que llegaría a ser colega del curita de Chesterton" (*Pasado* 85).<sup>19</sup> When Conde enters the library after so many years, he recalls the first time he was there: "se sintió pequeño y desamparado y terriblemente inculto y todavía su memoria es capaz de devolverle aquella lacerante sensación de pequeñez intelectual de la que no ha logrado curarse" (*Pasado* 85). Despite his feelings of inferiority, this place that houses so much knowledge and inspires so much critical thought turns out to be the key to solving Morín's disappearance, which can also be interpreted as the key to solving greater social ills.

As the novel progresses, Conde discovers that Morín was not as ethical and honest as he had been described by some of the informants the detective interrogated. It turns out that Morín had been embezzling money and also had documents that could implicate one of his associates in his illegal activities. The latter provides a possible motive for his disappearance, and potentially for his murder. Finally, Conde discovers that necessary evidence, documentation of Morín's illicit financial activity, in a safe located in the false chimney in Tamara's library, which once again highlights the

---

<sup>19</sup> C.K Chesterton's Father Brown stories, published around the time of World War I, have been of particular influence to the great crime fiction authors of Latin America, so this reference is an interesting intertextual nod to Chesterton's importance in the genre.

centrality of literature in the novel. In this case, the evidence to illuminate criminal and fraudulent activity is found in a place of knowledge and creative expression, underpinning the importance of these values in the exposure of truth, if there is indeed truth, and betterment of society.

Literature also plays an important role in the resolution of the crime in *Máscaras*. In this novel, Mario Conde investigates the death of a young gay man, Alexis Arayán. During the investigation process, Conde refers to several literary resources as inspiration. The date of the victim's death leads the detective to his first literary inspiration; Arayán's death took place on the night of the Transfiguration, which is one of the few details that Conde remembers from his youthful days in Catechism. In addition, the victim was discovered dressed as a transvestite, which Conde interprets as a perversion of the Transfiguration. The combination of these two details inspires the detective to look for answers in the Bible as well as interrogate a friend of the deceased, Alberto Marqués. Marqués is a gay playwright who stopped publishing after being arrested for being counterrevolutionary, another explicit reference to the Revolution's repression of creative expression and persecution of the homosexual, and specifically the homosexual literary community.

Marqués gives Conde literary suggestions to help him in his investigation, but ultimately the most helpful clues are found in the Bible.<sup>20</sup> Conde's partner discovers Alexis's Bible in his room and Conde confirms what he had suspected: "Lo sabía, coño, Alexis estaba pensando en la Transfiguración...Mira esto, falta la página donde ocurre

---

<sup>20</sup> The use of Biblical references and scriptural notes as clues in the process of solving a crime is a common, recurring trope in detective fiction in general, as well as specifically in Latin America; for example, Borges's "La muerte y la brújula."

eso,” and he saw that the pages that describe the Transfiguration in all of the Gospels were missing from Alexis’s Bible (*Máscaras* 115). Later, Alberto Marqués finds the missing page tucked inside another book on the shelf in his house with a handwritten note that reads “*Dios Padre, ¿por qué lo obligas a tanto sacrificio?*” (*Máscaras* 162). However, he still does not understand the significance: “El Conde...sintió que allí estaba oculta la verdad de la muerte de Alexis Arayán, pero que volvía a escapársele...” (*Máscaras* 162-3).

Ultimately, Conde’s success as a detective in this case depends on his success as a writer. Mario Conde is not able to solve this case until he is able to write his first short story since his years in the writers’ workshop. After going through the creative process of completing his story, a possible solution to the crime finally occurs to him. He searches for the necessary evidence and eventually confirms that Alexis’s father Faustino Arayán, who holds an important position within the government, is the murderer. Conde knew that Alexis’s father did not approve of the young man’s sexual preferences; however, his disapproval is not the motive for the crime. Conde learns that in a moment of anger, Alexis threatened to reveal that his father had committed fraud many years ago, and for that reason, in a fit of rage, Faustino murdered his son. After looking for the necessary evidence to incriminate Alexis’s father, Conde returns to the playwright’s house to show him his short story, and they begin another conversation about literature that illuminates the creative process of the detective. In addition to discussing the works of great writers, Marqués comments on Conde’s story: “Usted no escribió un cuento de aprendiz, amigo policía, sino el cuento de un escritor, aunque yo hubiera preferido otro final...Y, dígame, ¿cómo tuvo la idea de escribir este cuento? Es que siempre me fascina el misterio de la

creación” (*Máscaras* 219). Conde’s reply to this question is vague; however, the discussion once again emphasizes the self-conscious nature of the novel. Furthermore, Marqués connects their discussion of literature back to the crime the detective has just solved: “todos enfrentan un destino que los supera, los obliga y los impulsa en la acción dramática: sólo que aquí Layo mata a Edipo, o Egisto se adelanta a Orestes...¿Se llamará filicidio?...Hay excesos de pasión, de ambición de poder, de odios econadaos...lo único lamentable...es que los dioses hayan escogido a Alexis...” (220-21). This juxtaposition of literary themes with solving Alexis’s murder underscores the importance of the freedom of literary expression to reveal the truth and confront social ills.

## Conclusions

In the works discussed in this chapter, it is evident that the analysis of metafiction in detective stories and novels of the Hispanic Caribbean questions the relationship between fiction and reality to highlight social commentary. In each of these texts, metafiction serves to connect the relationship of the detective to the crime with the relationship of the reader to social problems and questions. In part, the evolutions (or distortions) of the metafictional mode are reflective of the historic and sociopolitical context in which they emerge. The narrator’s failure to complete his writing assignment in “Crónica Policial” is reflective of the instability and distrust that permeated post-Trujillo Dominican society. Both “Pasión de historia” and *Sol de medianoche* portray the increase in violence that characterized the late twentieth century in Puerto Rico. In “Pasión de historia,” Carola’s death, as she becomes a victim to her own story, specifically addresses the increased violence against women. Manolo’s failure as a writer (and detective) in *Sol de medianoche* is reflective of the generation’s hopelessness to

achieve tangible social change amidst the increased violence and economic challenges.

*Pasado perfecto* and *Máscaras* highlight the relationship between the Revolution and creative literary expression through Mario Conde's navigation of the challenges of investigating crimes and being a writer during the Special Period in Cuba.

The texts analyzed in this chapter confront the stifling constraints of the classical detective story and transform the traditional uses of metafiction in crime novels to present hyperrealist representations of urban life in the aforementioned cultural periods in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Referring to the "new detective novel," Padura Fuentes comments: "Lo que parece indudable es que sí tiene en su origen una insatisfacción hacia todas las propuestas antirrealistas y las copias burdas o las parodias fáciles que se habían extendido hasta la literatura policíaca de principio de los sesenta" (*Modernidad* 140). In other words, the new detective novel "writes back" to the artificial, contrived nature of the classical genre and reinvents a new genre that interrogates the social reality from which they emerge and invites readers to further question the relationship between fiction and reality.

## Chapter 2: Urban Caribbean Detective: Flâneur or “Practitioner,” Consumer or Producer of Urban Space?

“Por lo visto era cierto aquello de que uno es uno y su circunstancia porque nadie se da en el vacío sino en el contexto de sus relaciones, y éstas se establecen con las personas pero también con su mundo físico, con esa calle que transitas, y esa casa desde donde sale una mano de mujer que te saluda todos los días porque a fuerza de verte caminar por allí, a la misma hora, te has convertido en parte del entorno de su dueña que ahora se siente emparentada contigo y tú con ella a pesar de que nunca han cruzado una sola palabra” –Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, *Desamores*

The above epigraph illustrates the interconnectedness of people, even strangers, that is inherent in island culture of the Hispanic Caribbean. In my personal experience living in the Caribbean, neighborhoods are close knit. People are gregarious and often outside chatting with anyone who walks by, and everyone knows everyone else’s business. Moreover, this quote implies a relationship that is just as strong between individuals and their physical environments since people are “convertido en parte del entorno,” as they carry out their daily travels. In contrast to the relationships between the classical detectives and the cities in which they investigate, the Hispanic Caribbean detective must be understood within the interconnected “barrio” where he works. The detectives we see in this chapter are deeply connected to both the people with whom they interact and the spaces they traverse each day. Thus, the space or setting of these novels takes on a distinct role to that of the setting of the classical detective story.

The specific setting or settings of the detective story is historically important to the genre. According to the genre conventions posited by Cawelti, most classical detective stories take place in two locations: the crime scene and the detective’s office. As described in the previous chapter, as readers, we are always aware of the impending threat of the urban landscape outside of the dual spaces of the crime scene and the

detective's office. However, the essential importance of the maintenance or restoration of the social order in the ratiocinative detective story precludes the intrusion of the chaotic outside world on the carefully ordered interiority of the detective's world. Additionally, the detective does not demonstrate any sort of personal connection to the spaces between and around the crime scene and his office. The public versus private, interior versus exterior dichotomy began to deteriorate with the development of the hard-boiled novel in the United States during the early twentieth century as the chaos of the urban landscape became essential to understanding the sociohistoric context of these Prohibition Era novels. The novels of that time in history would pave the way for the crime fiction of Latin America in general, and more specifically for the Hispanic Caribbean novels I examine in this chapter.

In this chapter, I show how detectives in *Sol de medianoche* by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *Desamores* (2001) by Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón (Puerto Rico), and *Las puertas de la noche* (2002) by Amir Valle Ojeda (Cuba) are intrinsically connected to the neighborhoods in which they investigate. The relationships between these detectives and their communities reflect the social interconnectedness of Hispanic Caribbean society. At the same time, the detectives' narrations of the routes throughout the urban spaces they travel develop the city itself from a mere backdrop into a witness in their investigations and ultimately into a character. As a result, the detectives' relationship to the city in which they live and investigate provides representation of cultural identity.

The relationship of the classical detective to the city has traditionally been compared to or thought of as that of the flâneur, a term coined by Baudelaire. The flâneur is an upper-class, solitary individual who meanders about the city in his leisure time and

lazily observes his surroundings. Walter Benjamin posits that this seemingly passive observer gave rise to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century detective. Benjamin asserts: “If the flâneur is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it accredits his idleness. He only seems to be indolent, for behind this indolence there is a watchfulness of an observer who does not take his eyes off a miscreant” (40-41). The classical detectives like C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes closely resemble this model.

The emergence of the flâneur, and the detective by extension, is contingent upon the modern urban society that resulted from industrialization. Carlo Salzani says that according to Walter Benjamin, an essential aspect of modern urban society that gave rise to the detective story “is the quintessentially modern phenomenon of the crowd. In various passages and notes he argues that at the origin of the detective story lies the possibility for the criminal to hide amid the population of the big city” (Salzani 171). As such, the flâneur does not emerge prior to modern urban society; rather, the larger concentration of population that became possible in modern urban areas as a result of industrialization provided the type of environment necessary for the appearance of the flâneur. In this crowded urban environment, the flâneur is able to amble about the city, observing those around him without drawing too much attention to himself. At the same time, the criminal’s ability to conceal himself amongst the crowd provides purpose to the flâneur’s observations and leads, in turn, to the detective genre.

Like the flâneur, the detectives in the American hard-boiled novel, as well as in the Hispanic Caribbean novels examined herein, extend their settings to include not only the crime scene and their offices, but they also traverse the entirety of the city in which

they investigate. As a result, the detective not only observes the people and places surrounding him, but also narrates the city, in effect re-creating the city for his or her reader. Through this process, the detective is not simply an idle observer, in the vein of the flâneur, but rather interacts with and alters the spaces through which he moves.

Michel De Certeau's model of the "practitioner" of the city describes a more active interaction with the city than that of the flâneur. According to De Certeau, the practitioner creates the city, writing it as if it were a text, connecting disperse points with the routes he travels daily. He asserts: "Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these 'real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city'" (97). Through these alterations, the detective sometimes changes the urban landscape for the better, sometimes for the worse, but most often is incapable of making any significant change regarding the social evils portrayed in the novels. However, through his narration, he gives representation to his community, particularly to those individuals often marginalized in society.

In addition to expanding the setting to include more of the city and the detectives' interaction with it, the moral valuation of the urban space also underwent a discernible shift from the nineteenth-century classical detective story to the twentieth-century hard-boiled novel. In the classical detective story, authors such as Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reserved their moral judgment for the evil nature of the criminals they investigate. The city served as a mere backdrop to set the tone and ambiance for the investigation and resolution of the crime. According to Lewis D. Moore, "Poe introduces the city as a place of darkness, a darkness that simultaneously liberates and conceals" (8). However, he goes on to clarify that "[i]n Poe, Paris is a dimly lit city but not one in which Dupin and his

narrator friend fear to walk at night. Poe does not equate the physical darkness with a moral one” (8). Conversely, as the hard-boiled novel emerged in the late 1920s in the United States, authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler became more concerned with questioning the increase of violence and crime in the country’s major cities and reflecting their criticism in their novels. That being said, their detectives are not able to change the quality of life in the cities in which they work. Unlike the characters of Dupin and Holmes, who are able to restore social order and rationality in the ratiocinative story, even when the detectives of the hard-boiled novel are able to determine the identity of the perpetrator and his or her motive, ultimately they seem to have little to no influence on the greater societal ills that are to blame for the increase in violent crime in contemporary urban life.

Returning to the setting itself, the idea of space is expanded even more during the Transitional Period of the American hard-boiled novel.<sup>21</sup> In the novels of the Transitional Period, the idea of interior versus exterior space also extends to the psychological space: “[n]ot only the physical space in which actions occur in time but also an individual’s inner space matters. Dreams, reminiscences, and ponderings sometimes create different settings for characters than the ones they occupy at any particular moment” (Moore 123). Including these personal interior “spaces” and how they overlap with the physical spaces of the city creates a nuanced narration that is no longer primarily about the emotionally detached mental game of the ratiocinative detective story as seen in the previous chapter. Instead, the personal experiences and emotions of the detective become crucial to the

---

<sup>21</sup> In his study *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present*, Lewis D. Moore divides the history of the hard-boiled genre into three periods: Early (1927-1955), Transitional (1964-1977), and Modern (1979-Present) (3).

investigation process. He is no longer a one-dimensional character devoid of personal history; rather, the reader sees glimpses of his past and his resulting personal reactions, emotions, and opinions as they relate to his current investigation. As a result, the detective becomes a psychologically and emotionally complex character, increasing the likelihood that the reader will identify with and sympathize with him.

Setting and place become even more critical in the hard-boiled novel of the Modern Period (1979-Present), the characteristics of which the Hispanic Caribbean crime novels most closely resemble. During this period, rather than generalizing the menacing and ominous environment of modern urban spaces, the specificity of the setting is emphasized: “[T]he peculiarities of each city matter, and throughout the history of the form, local knowledge, local situations, and local places affect the stories” (Moore 195). The detective’s relationship to his community, manifested in his movements throughout the city, observations, and internal monologues lend an additional layer of social commentary and cultural identity to the crime genre. This layer is particularly evident in Mattos Cintrón, Rodríguez Juliá, and Valle Ojeda’s novels, as their detective protagonists are deeply connected to the communities in which they investigate. Mattos Cintrón’s protagonist, Isabelo Andújar, walks to work each day, interacting with neighbors and other passersby. The narrator’s description of Andújar’s daily interactions conveys the detective’s integration in the community. Rodríguez Juliá’s detective-narrator, Manolo Pérez, has returned to live and work in the same neighborhood where his twin brother was murdered many years ago. Thus, Manolo is deeply rooted in this neighborhood and is intimately familiar with all of the tragically flawed characters who inhabit the space. Finally, Valle Ojeda’s Alain Bec is a professional police officer that grew up in an upper-

class family during the time of the Cuban Revolution. His upbringing noticeably influences the way in which he interacts with the city of Havana and its inhabitants.

Consequently, the physical spaces portrayed in these novels extend far beyond the crime scene and the detective's office to include the surrounding neighborhoods, marketplace, shops, offices, and street corners. The detectives trace the city and their interactions with the surrounding environment simultaneously alter and create the city:

The spaces in which the detectives live and work are usually more than just background, more than unchanging locales for processes unaffected by people. Their cities and towns reflect, by definition, human purpose and intent, and as they add to their environments, they insert themselves in the places and become identified with them. (Moore 203)

Much like in the novels of the Transitional Period, the interior psychological spaces of the detective become important as the detective interacts with and identifies with the environment. Thus, the setting moves to the forefront of the modern hard-boiled novel. Although each detective differs in his relationship to the city and the way in which he moves about the city, the specificity of his city is of central importance to the reader's understanding of the crime, the detective's investigation, and the cultural implications of both.

In the Hispanic *novela negra*, the setting takes on new meaning, particularly in the Hispanic Caribbean. While the range of physical and psychological spaces that we will see in these novels is similar to the range of the American hard-boiled detectives of the Modern period, the authors of the Hispanic Caribbean novels utilize the urban backdrop of the crime novel and the way in which their detectives interact with their environments as a conduit through which to portray the cultural specificity of that particular city. Through this culturally specific representation, the author is able to make

a social commentary that reflects a particular time and place. For example, in Amir Valle's *Las puertas de la noche*, we see his portrayal of Old Havana during the "Special Period in Time of Peace," and in both Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón's *Desamores* and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's *Sol de medianoche*, we will see different areas of Puerto Rico represented during the latter part of the twentieth century, as well as these authors' notions on Puerto Rican cultural identity.

Just as the representation, function, and importance of place and space evolved from the classical detective story of the late nineteenth century to the American hard-boiled novel of the twentieth century, so did the detectives' movement and interaction with the city evolve from the passive observations of the flâneur to the active consumption, alteration, and creation of the practitioner. Walter Benjamin first codified the idea of the flâneur as a literary figure in his analysis of Charles Baudelaire's poetry. Within the context of nineteenth-century Paris, the flâneur emerged as a man of leisure, who, to combat the moments of boredom afforded to him by his upper-class position in society, would idly wander through the streets of the city, observing the crowds. This figure also came about as a product and representation of modern urban society. According to Benjamin, "[t]he main reason for this [observation] is the public means of transportation. Before the development of buses, railroads, and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another" (38). This new habit of silent observation gave rise to the flâneur. From here, the flâneur becomes the "unwilling detective" referenced earlier in this chapter. According to Salzani, "The detective story developed in France in the mid-nineteenth century as a substitute for an earlier 'urban'

literature, the physiologies. In these, the flâneur-as-journalist described urban types, giving a sense of intelligibility and familiarity to the urban environment” (169). While the physiologies attempted to assuage the modern urban fear of the unknown through observation and careful analysis of the characters of the marketplace, the classical detective story exploits this sense of fear and anxiety while ultimately providing a cathartic resolution of the societal ill exposed and a restoration of order, essential to the maintenance of bourgeois society (Salzani 169).

There are numerous critical studies that highlight the connection between the detective and the figure of the flâneur. In *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Dana Brand argues that Edgar Allen Poe drew his inspiration from the urban accounts of the European flâneur:

In this story, Poe offers a critique of the flâneur’s method of representing modern cities. This will enable him, in the detective stories, to develop a new method that will serve some of the same functions, while transcending some of what are understood to be the flâneur’s limitations. Inventing a new genre, and a new urban spectator, in response to changes that may have been taking place in the public understanding of cities, Poe offered new models for reading and consuming the modern city. (79)

Poe’s modernized flâneur character displayed a new process of observing and describing his city, and in the process, he created the genre that we now consider to be the “classical” detective story. In his article, “The Detective Gaze: Edgar A. Poe, the *Flâneur*, and the Physiognomy of Crime,” James V. Werner distills the central concept of the relationship of the detective to the flâneur to be one that negotiates and ultimately transcends the porous boundaries of public versus private, and inner versus outer. In this sense, the detective, drawing on the inspiration of the flâneur, becomes a figure whose liminality allows him access to spaces not available to the average citizen.

Referring to Brand's concept of the "urban spectator," Werner argues: "The implication here is that the detective represents a figure distinctly different from the flâneur and is therefore more capable to observe and interpret modern urban phenomena" (9). If the "urban spectator" is an adaptation of the flâneur better suited to the "changing intellectual and aesthetic expectations of his audience" (Brand 105), then the detectives in the novels examined in this chapter can be seen as a further adaptation of the "urban observer" that reflects the specificity of his particular cultural environment.

The ratiocinative detectives' investigation methods feature detached deductive reasoning to reach the resolution of the enigma presented at the outset of the story. Comparatively, the flâneur demonstrates an "apparently detached, aimless, and desultory (but in reality, highly present and focused) observation. The flâneur's methodology is intuitive; he bases his conclusions solely on observation and inference" (Werner 5-6). Werner defines the flâneur as possessing and/or reflecting five principal characteristics. First, the flâneur "pays minute attention to details regarding facial features, expressions, and body language" (Werner 10). The detective, like the flâneur, must be an ever-conscious observer of the details around him, even those that appear to be seemingly superfluous to the reader. We will see examples of this quality exhibited by the Hispanic Caribbean detectives analyzed in this chapter. The "importance of intuition" (Werner 9) is critical to the function of the flâneur as well as the classical detective. For these figures, intuition and deductive reasoning were more important than the methodical process of discovering and analyzing concrete evidence, a process more important in the American hard-boiled tradition, particularly in the more recent periods.

Unlike the Caribbean detectives highlighted in this chapter, the nineteenth-century flâneur inherently exhibits an “association with wealth and aristocracy” (Werner 10). This difference delineates the area in which the Caribbean detective demonstrates the most deviation from the flâneur and the figure of the classical detective, since the detectives in the novels featured in this chapter pertain to the common working class, much like their predecessors of the American hard-boiled tradition. Consequently, the flâneur demonstrates a “traditional isolation and detachment from society” (10). Isolation and detachment can be seen clearly in the classical detectives like Dupin and Holmes; however, the detectives studied here are at the same time isolated and integrated, detached and connected. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the flâneur must be a liminal entity within the urban landscape. As Werner posits, the flâneur must remain in this transitional space to understand the city. He walks among the crowd, yet is detached from it; as he navigates the marketplace he must maintain a mental distance from its people and its attractions (6). This “simultaneous engagement and detachment” is most clearly reflected in the novels examined in this chapter in “the union between the flâneur’s oblique glance and the attentive gaze of the detective” (Werner 14-17). However, the “detachment” of these detectives is often feigned in an effort to appear objective when in truth these detectives are often deeply invested in the crimes they investigate along with the people involved with the crime: innocent victims, witnesses, and implicated suspects alike.

Urbanization leads to an interrogation of the division between public and private spaces. The close proximity of dwelling places in the modern urban environment means that private matters are often carried out in more public spaces. Therefore, while the

dichotomy between these distinct spaces remains largely intact during the nineteenth century, the ability of the flâneur, and subsequently the detective, to transcend this boundary is essential: “The fluidity of that division [inner and outer] is at the heart of both the flâneur’s approach to urban landscapes and the detective’s scrutiny of people and crime scenes” (Werner 19). Poe’s seminal stories drew upon the figure and the behaviors of the flâneur to create the liminal figure of the detective and his capacity, due to the permissions granted to him by his profession, to enter what are normally considered to be private spaces.

De Certeau’s model of the “practitioner” offers a means of consuming (and creating) the modern city that contrasts with that of the flâneur. In his consumption of mass culture, and in this case, the urban landscape, the practitioner alters and appropriates to make culture (and the city) his own. Therefore, even as a consumer, the practitioner becomes creator. De Certeau defines the practitioner as follows:

The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience in the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. (93)

In this case, the practitioner’s appropriation and alteration of mass culture and the urban space can be seen as yet another model of social control to alleviate fear of the chaos of urban society and the unknown of the crowd, but on a much more individualized basis than the flâneur of the classical detective story.

At the same time, the detective’s (practitioner’s) anonymity continues to be of the utmost importance. His ability to be of the city, but also transcend the city through his traced paths while also constantly observing and reflecting, gives him access to spaces

and information not accessible to the general public. Like the flâneur, the practitioner's liminality allows him to transcend the permeable boundaries of public versus private, however in traversing the city, he produces a text through the movements of his body and his observations and reflections along the way. De Certeau explains:

the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory). (98)

In a sense, in his consumption of the urban landscape, the practitioner appropriates the official “map” of the city produced by panoptic governing bodies, alters these urban spaces, and creates a new text. Similarly, the detectives in the novels analyzed in this chapter create texts of their respective urban environments that become as essential to their narrative as the crimes that they investigate. The primacy given to the creation of this urban text particular to the individual movements of the detective reflect the importance of the detective's relationship to his environment, as we will see in Mattos Cintrón, Rodríguez Juliá, and Valle Ojeda's novels. This individual relationship to the urban (and suburban) space is particular to crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean and results from the central preoccupation of national and cultural identity.

### **Isabelo Andújar: Detective as Curator of “*Puertorriqueñidad*”**

Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón, born in 1945, is considered to be the earliest and most prolific contemporary Puerto Rican writer of the detective genre, publishing his first crime novel, *El cerro de los buitres*, in 1984. As discussed in the previous chapter regarding Ana Lydia Vega and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, the detective genre comes late to the Puerto Rican literary landscape as a result of Puerto Rican authors' primary

concern with questions of national identity. Mattos Cintrón, author of *La política y lo político en Puerto Rico* (1980), is no different. As Benjamín Torres Caballero argues, Mattos Cintrón's venture into the detective genre is surprising given his enduring concern for Puerto Rico's colonial status and resulting questions of national identity (216). He contends: "So, we must entertain the possibility that Mattos Cintrón's detective novels are not 'frivolous' narratives in Ana Lydia Vega's sense. Indeed, their construction of *puertorriqueñidad* (Puerto Rican identity) and the exemplary quality of Mattos Cintrón's detective protagonist imply a political and social agenda for the Island" (217).<sup>22</sup> In fact, Mattos Cintrón's outrage regarding the murders on Cerro Maravilla in 1978 provided the impetus for the plot *El cerro de los buitres*.<sup>23</sup> This novel cannot be considered a detective novel in the traditional sense, nor in the current of the American hard-boiled novel, but rather is closer to a journalistic investigation of a politically motivated crime.<sup>24</sup> However,

---

<sup>22</sup> Here, Torres Caballero is referring to Ana Lydia Vega's essay "Sálvase quien pueda: la censura tiene auto" from *Esperando a Loló y otros delirios generacionales*. He explains Vega's observation of what occurs when Puerto Rican authors "feel compelled by the demon of self-censorship to write about one obsessive theme, national identity, whether it be in terms of anti-imperialism or class struggle...there is little room for frivolity or humor; these are themes that demand a solemn and dignified treatment" (216).

<sup>23</sup> In 1978, two young Puerto Rican "independentistas" were murdered by police. Initially government officials, including then-Governor Carlos Romero Barcelo as well as the FBI covered up the incident and portrayed it as an anti-terrorism measure. However, the cover-up story began to unravel as a local cab driver, who unwillingly became witness to the murders, gave his testimony of the events that took place that day (Steif).

<sup>24</sup> Latin American literature has a long history of journalistic novels, pioneered by Rodolfo Walsh with his publication of *Operación masacre* in 1957. In her 1990 study entitled *Detective Fiction from Latin America*, Amelia S. Simpson discusses the tradition of integrating "documentary and detective-fiction modes" in Latin America. She claims: "This combinatory strategy may be employed for various purposes: to enhance the readability, credibility, and impact of material represented as 'fact,' to examine apparent points of convergence of reality and fiction, and to raise the subject of history as a them in itself" (157). She also analyzes Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981) and José Emilio Pacheco's *Morirás lejos* (1967) as other prominent examples of journalistic narratives.

the author does make his political agenda clear in this novel as he re-writes part of the real details that inspired his fictional account.

Mattos Cintrón's detective character, Isabelo Andújar, is a private investigator who is called upon to investigate disappearances and murders. He first appears obliquely during parts of the investigation process in *El cerro de los buitres*, although he is not the protagonist. Later, he appears as a protagonist in *El cuerpo bajo el puente*, published in 1989, in which he makes reference to his participation in the "Caso Cerro Maravilla" investigations. Mattos Cintrón continues to develop the character of Isabelo Andújar in his subsequent novels *Las dos caras de Jano* (1995), *Las puertas de San Juan* (1997), *Desamores* (2001), *Letramuerto: Asesinato en La Tertulia* (2010), *Las dos muertes de Catalino Ríos* (2012), and *La vida es una enfermedad sexualmente transmisible* (2014). Unlike the classical detective characters of Dupin and Holmes, Andújar is a socially marginalized figure. He is clearly mulatto, as "we...learn during the course of [this] first investigation he is forced to wear a wig that hides the 'African hair' of which he is most proud" (Torres Caballero 219). He is also prone to emotional involvement in his cases and reacts fervently based on his own moral and social code. José Antonio Ramos Collazo points out in his doctoral dissertation: "Andújar no solo es un inconforme ante una sociedad inmoral y sus desafueros, sino que hace constantemente hincapié en la persistente problemática social y moral del pueblo puertorriqueño y en la necesidad que hay de romper con muchas posturas que protegen la estructura social y moral vigente" (55). Here, we can see that Andújar differs significantly from his classical predecessors and even deviates significantly from the protagonists of the modern American hard-boiled novels. As Ramos Collazo notes, his personal moral code and attitudes toward

injustice and immorality affect the way in which he interacts with his surroundings. For example, at one point during his investigation, Andújar is clear about his negative feelings regarding the mutually beneficial relationship between the government and prominent businesses (100). As mentioned previously, Andújar's actions and reactions reflect Mattos Cintrón's political and social agenda. In these ways, Mattos Cintrón appropriates conventions of the genre and alters and transforms them to create a regional and culturally specific text.

Part of the regional and cultural specificity of Mattos Cintrón's novels is shaped through the description of the urban (and explicitly Puerto Rican) backdrop of the crime investigation. Throughout the Isabelo Andújar series, place and space become essential figures of the novels:

The town of Río Piedras, the open-air market and its adjacent streets represent Isabelo Andújar's base of operations. He has his office in calle Vallejo, a choice of location that is very significant. In *El cerro de los buitres* the description of Río Piedras stresses how in an area of about twelve blocks three or four different worlds meet. It is above all a transitional zone between the city and the country. (Torres Caballero 220)

In these novels, the spaces traversed by Andújar and narrated by the third person narrator become as essential to the novels and their articulation of cultural identity and social critique as the characters who protagonize their plots. I argue that Isabelo Andújar embodies characteristics of the flâneur as well as the practitioner as he navigates through, and subsequently narrates, the urban Puerto Rican landscape. For example, in *Desamores*, I focus on the expanded setting (from the office/crime scene binary) as well as on how the detective figure Isabelo Andújar interacts with the spaces he traverses as he investigates the murder of the owners and employees of a successful insurance company. As he navigates these spaces, he is an active participant and connects with many of the

members of the community that he encounters. This social interaction is essential to the development of the protagonist's character and underscores the importance of community, as "Isabelo's sense of wellbeing and belonging as he interacts with the members of this community points to Rodríguez Juliá's thesis in *Puertorriqueños* that Puerto Ricans long for a traditional form of coexistence that has become almost irretrievably lost" (Torres Caballero 220). This portrayal of the traditional Puerto Rican "barrio" and the interconnectedness of its residents as the backdrop for a crime novel stands in stark contrast to the urban landscape of the American hard-boiled novel that is characterized by anonymity, impersonality and violence. In this sense, Mattos Cintrón's revision of this particular element of the genre enhances the cultural specificity of his novels through the urban images and social commentaries they convey.

Unlike the classical detective story, in *Desamores*, Mattos Cintrón deviates from the traditional binary setting of crime scene/detective's office to include multiple settings throughout the Río Piedras area of San Juan. Isabelo walks to work to avoid the usual morning traffic jam. Each day, he takes the same route through the city to his office, passing through the market and stopping to have coffee and breakfast in the café. In fact, Isabelo first visits the crime scene at the beginning of the second chapter and it is only towards the end of the investigation that he returns once again. His office is located in the center of Río Piedras; however, during his investigation in *Desamores*, he does not frequently go to his office due to the recent explosion of a nearby building on "Paseo De Diego" and the subsequent construction and renovations. The memory of the tragedy and destruction linked to the physical space makes it too difficult to bear and recall memories of Isabelo's experience in Vietnam (33). Other important locations include the courthouse,

Elvia's pharmacy, the plaza Antonio Martínez in front of the university theater, the *Miami Jam* (a prostitutes' bar), in addition to the houses of suspects, witnesses, and informants.

As mentioned earlier, the moral valuation of the city is strikingly different from that of the classical detective story and the American hard-boiled novel. Rather than an indifference to the moral state of the urban space as seen in the former, or a moral criticism of the city as seen in the latter, in *Desamores* we see an acceptance of a range of good and evil present in various spaces. When Andújar first encounters the crime scene in this investigation, "Le asombra una vez más que al entrar a un sitio donde ha ocurrido un hecho siniestro y terrible, rara vez se pueda leer en el ambiente el drama espantoso que allí tuvo lugar" (21). He goes on to reflect on a previous experience visiting the neighborhood where the crimes of "Jack the Ripper" took place in London, and how the scene of the crime was not a sinister and decaying abandoned structure, but rather an elegant and gracefully illuminated building. The juxtaposition of crime and setting, in both the detective's memory and current experience, demonstrates once again that the moral valuation is of the crime itself and not its location.

As a detective, an essential aspect of the Andújar's vocation is observation, and walking rather than traveling by car makes this task easier since the lack of physical boundary and slower pace provide for a deeper connection with the urban space around him. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes the protagonist's daily route:

salió a la calle De Diego, en medio del acostumbrado tapón del tránsito de la mañana, cosa que afectaba poco a Isabelo Andújar porque le era fácil caminar hasta el pueblo de Río Piedras para ir a su oficina. Evadía así el azote de las agruras automovilísticas y podía contemplar con cierto despeggo filosófico, los rostros adustos de quienes iniciaban detrás del volante el desgaste del día. (5)

Andújar continues to imagine the numerous thoughts and preoccupations that the various drivers might be contemplating during their daily morning commute. In this sense, the detective exhibits characteristics of the *flâneur*, observing those that he passes by as he seemingly wanders the city aimlessly. However, Andújar's reflections go beyond that of the *flâneur*, and even that of the voyeur, as he becomes connected to those whom he observes: "porque quien observa no puede evitar ser observado, que el espejo de los otros no nos devuelve pasivamente nuestra mirada, sino que la mezcla y la transforma con una extraña química donde se asientan y reaccionan entre sí el observador y el observado" (6). Here, Andújar comments on the intimacy of the connection between the observer and the observed. Following his reasoning, one cannot exist without the other. Moreover, the observer sees himself or herself reflected back and transformed in the gaze of the observed, in essence creating a new image of the observer. This relationship implies a level of connection far more intimate and invested than that of the *flâneur* and his surroundings.

The various characters that inhabit public spaces populate his travels, his neighbors, the patrons that frequent the market and café, and the witnesses and suspects he interviews. Andújar himself is an essential part of the urban landscape, as his observations and reflections give meaning to the characters he observes. For example, early in the novel Isabelo is passing through the marketplace when he witnesses an interaction that appears to be a woman who accuses her lover of being with another woman. The "other woman," also present, denies any involvement with the man. However, Andújar, who is carefully observing the interaction and analyzing every utterance and physical reaction, thinks: "Mucha culpa en aquella cara ocultarla toda" (7).

His careful observation reveals the guilt of the mistress, and ultimately the humanity of all those he encounters throughout his travels. Although this is only one example, Isabelo's constant observation and "eavesdropping" on the conversations around him is a repeated motif throughout the novel.

As he investigates, Andújar continues to trace a path throughout the city as he interrogates suspects, interviews witnesses and informants, interacts with members of his community, and contemplates the pieces of his investigation. Andújar's character is conscious of the interconnected nature of relationships within the community. The narrator reflects on this web of relationships: "nadie se da en el vacío sino en el contexto de sus relaciones, y éstas se establecen con las personas pero también con su mundo físico, con esa calle que transitas...te has convertido en parte del entorno" (33). He is aware of his connection with the people, sometimes even strangers, with whom he crosses paths; however, he is also aware of how he becomes a part of his physical environment, a fixture in the urban landscape. In this sense, the detective is practitioner, creating and becoming part of the city as he walks.

Not only is the physical space important to the protagonist's relationship to his community and its portrayal to the reader, but it is also important to the detective's investigative process. In the beginning of the second chapter, Andújar makes his first visit to the crime scene. The narrator describes his initial observations: "Isabelo Andújar ha preferido quedarse un rato afuera para examinar la localidad, preparar un croquis del lugar y ambientarse" (21). Later, as Andújar continues to investigate, it becomes clear that he has made sketches of all the physical spaces important to his research. Towards the end of his investigation, Andújar reveals to the reader the physical map he has been

creating as he has been investigating: “Giró otra vez hacia su escritorio y buscó el croquis que había hecho de la ubicación de la oficina de los Robledo. Examinó el conciso mapa trazado a la ligera” (147). Literally, Andújar has created the city through his investigation. Later, as Andújar retraces the steps of his map, interviewing potential witnesses, his sketch essentially comes to life. In other words, his narration creates his sketch, and his sketch creates the city.

### **Manolo Pérez Cáceres: Failed Detective and “Beach flâneur”**

In the first chapter, I argued that metafiction in Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá’s *Sol de medianoche* functioned as a means to explore the relationship between fiction and reality and to explore existential questions facing a particular generation of Puerto Ricans through the failure of the protagonist as a writer. Here I look at the figure of the detective, Manolo, as a flâneur and a practitioner as he traverses, interacts with, and narrates the physical and psychological spaces that comprise the novel’s setting. As mentioned previously, in *Sol de medianoche*, Rodríguez Juliá consciously inverts the genre’s conventions, creates a “falsificación” of the genre, and poses commentary on greater social and existential issues. For example, rather than investigate one crime throughout the course of the novel and come to a resolution at the close, Rodríguez Juliá’s protagonist is a private detective who provides surveillance for adulterous couples. Although he does report his findings to various clients, this investigative process is not central to the plot of the story. At the same time, he continues to investigate the circumstances of his brother’s death from a personal perspective rather than that of an objective “detective.” In fact, this pseudo-investigation is given primary importance over the detective’s “professional” work in the narrative. Additionally, Manolo’s vocation is not one that seeks to right

injustices and restore social order. Rather, he thrives on continued betrayal and deceit. As such, Manolo deviates markedly from the classical detective as well as the hard-boiled detective. Not only is he not an intellectual, cerebral, detached investigator, he is also morally repugnant.

Manolo's questionable morality leads to a different moral valuation of, and interaction with, his surroundings than that of Isabelo Andújar in *Desamores*. First, his job description is very different from that of Mattos Cintrón's protagonist. Rather than investigate crimes perpetrated on innocent victims with the aspiration of bringing the guilty parties to justice and restoring moral and social order, Manolo makes his living investigating unfaithful couples. Early in the novel, he makes comments regarding his chosen trade: "sentí esa atracción mezclada con repugnancia que siempre siento ante el adulterio. Atracción porque es mi oficio y repugnancia porque detesto la traición, aunque sea mi modo de vida" (39). His mixed feelings towards the duplicity and infidelity on which his profession depends reflect the protagonist's ethical ambiguity. Additionally, Manolo himself is an untrustworthy narrator. He is a self-proclaimed alcoholic who harbors deep resentment for his deceased twin brother even as he struggles to come to terms with his death. Due to an alcohol-induced blackout, Manolo cannot reconstruct the events that led up to his brother's death. In addition, the lack of steady moral compass affects the way in which he observes, interacts with, and reflects upon his surroundings, as well as how the reader interprets his narration.

As in *Desamores*, the setting of *Sol de medianoche* extends beyond the detective's office and crime scene. This expanded setting is partly due to the fact that in this case there is no determined "crime scene"; however, it also reflects Manolo's trade, lifestyle,

and the community of which he is a part. The first physical space described in the novel is the beachside “hospitalillo” where the narrator inhabits his tiny, horrible apartment, to which he refers, not-so-affectionately, as his “ratonera.” Manolo describes his apartment as a physical representation of his interior space: “este cubujón donde vivo es una adecuada metáfora de mi conciencia, la moral y la otra” (9). His bare walls are similar to those of a psychiatric ward, with the only adornment being a photo “del rector don Jaime Benítez junto a Juan Ramón Jiménez y un grupo de niños” that the narrator stole from a photography exhibition during college (37). Manolo describes his apartment as being so small that when he urinates, it can be heard in the kitchen. Also, the divisions between the apartments are almost nonexistent (the walls do not extend to the ceiling and there are curtains instead of doors), so the residents can hear (and smell) all of their neighbors’ exploits (and bodily functions). This communal living space blurs the boundaries between public and private.

The description of Manolo’s neighborhood occupies a large part of the second chapter, highlighting the importance of space even at the expense of action. The neighborhood, Punta Grande on Isla Negra, becomes a symbol of the utter despair and desolation that drive a soul to the depths of the abyss as the narrator comments: “A la playa vienen a vivir las almas que convalecen, esos solitarios que huyen de la vista ajena, porque están dolidos, porque, coño, son incapaces del suicido” (9-10). Interestingly, these individuals are attempting to escape the “vista ajena;” however, their refuge is a living space that is open to the scrutiny of their neighbors, and as such, they become exceedingly vulnerable in Manolo’s observations and descriptions. Although they are the subjects of Manolo’s gaze, they remain isolated from the rest of society. The street,

“callejón Génova” is so forgotten that even the street sign has disappeared long ago and only the residents know its name. This neighborhood becomes a central character in the novel, complete with history, background and personality. According to Manolo, the neighborhood is a “basurero humano,” replete with seedy characters. As Torres Caballero has pointed out, Manolo has even employed “imagery relating to cancer” to describe the “Spanish revival style guest house” where he resides (222). According to Torres Caballero, “instead of convalescing, the inhabitants of the “hospitalillo” are suffering from an incurable, progressive and fatal disease” from which the only escape is “death—by homicide or suicide...because there is no cure for what ails these patients” (222). Part of Manolo’s description of the neighborhood includes a detailed portrayal of all of the degenerate and infirmed inhabitants, many of whom are Vietnam veterans, and all of whom, including Manolo himself, believe themselves to be beyond redemption. These characters are so entrenched in their environment that it becomes impossible to distinguish whether they are products of their environment, or whether their environment is a reflection of their deterioration.

Much of the novel focuses on Manolo’s observations of the inhabitants of Punta Grande as he goes about his daily life. For example, one morning he hears a commotion in the street outside his apartment and goes out to the “callejón” to investigate what is going on. Manolo sees Hashemi and Jose, two neighbors, arguing. He proceeds to digress into a monologue recounting Hashemi’s past and current circumstances. While the contents of the monologue may seem irrelevant to the plot of the novel, as well as to Manolo’s job as “detective,” Manolo’s observations and commentaries regarding the characters that populate his daily travels not only give representation to these

marginalized individuals, but also develop Manolo's character and distinguish him from conventional detectives, both classical and hard-boiled.

The neighborhood surrounding Manolo's office is not portrayed in a much better light: "Es territorio apache aunque de alquiler barato, calle de indocumentados dominicanos, tiradores de poca monta, boxeadores que nunca llegaron, putas envejecidas y abogados de panza retumbante..." (34). There is a general tone of failed aspirations and disillusionment that permeates the space, where dreams come to die. The office itself is similar in atmosphere to the surrounding neighborhood: "El mobiliario de la oficina es una butaca reclinable de madera y un escritorio gris, color rata. El abanico de pie, que no funciona...ha quedado allí como una patética gárgola de cara redonda, polvorienta, sonriente y esperanzada" (35). The description of the detective's office is a stark contrast from that of the classical detective's office, which is described as having beautiful bookcases filled with endless tomes of literature and history, as well as the modern hard-boiled detective whose office is not as elegant and sophisticated as the classical detective, but does not share the same air of failure and despair as Manolo's office. Manolo's office even differs from that of the detective's office in *Desamores*. By contrast, the environment surrounding Isabelo Andújar's office is marked by the tragedy of recent explosions in the area. However, it can also be characterized by the faint optimism that comes with remodeling and rebuilding the structure and thoroughfares of the area. The same cannot be said for the area surrounding Manolo's office, where there is seemingly no hope for the future.

The ambiance of Manolo's office is fitting for his trade as an investigator of adulterers. In addition to working in his office, Manolo carries out his duties at various

points throughout the neighborhood. One of his standard meeting/working locations is the bar at the hotel Don Pepe: “sitio de toda la vida, los jodedores más viejos me dicen que está allí desde fines de los cincuenta” (38). He also frequents Kasalta, a café that Manolo describes as “el lugar perfecto para husmear y que no te vean” (58). Both of these spaces provide the ideal atmosphere for Manolo to carry out his surreptitious meetings with various clients, since he often plays both sides against the middle in cases that he references as “doble carne.” In other words, he provides surveillance for both members of the adulterous couple, unbeknownst to the parties involved. The atmosphere of the bar and the café provide both the familiarity and anonymity that Manolo’s profession requires.

As in the American hard-boiled novel of the Transitional (1960s-70s) and Modern (1980s-present) periods, designated by Moore, the narrator’s interior space is also central to the development of the novel. Not only does the space through which the detective moves in *Sol de medianoche* extend well beyond the urban landscape into the detective’s interior spaces, but it also extends into the interior and intimate spaces of others, blurring even further the boundaries of interior versus exterior and public versus private than seen in the American hard-boiled novels and in *Desamores*. As a result of his profession, Manolo carries out surveillance on the individuals that he investigates, which includes audio recordings of intimate conversations and interactions. In this sense, Manolo’s observations and interactions with his subjects exceed that of the flâneur and the practitioner and extend into the realm of voyeurism. Embarrassed by his betrayal for the sake of making some money, Manolo confesses to his neighbor, Nadja, that he has been spying on his friend Carlos and Carlos’s married lover. He and Nadja then listen to

several of the recordings that Manolo has made for the subject's mother during his investigation, including one particularly intimate interaction. Nadja questions the mother's intentions: "Pero dime, ¿por qué tú crees que la vieja quiere husmearles hasta los pelos del culo a la pareja esa? Extraño, verdad" (60). Manolo responds: "¡Qué sé yo! ¿Cómo entender la perversidad de la gente? ... Aunque déjame decirte, mi experiencia es que la gente cuando se quieren mucho disfrutan de las obscenidades" (60-61). A transcription of another intimate conversation between the adulterous couple follows, making what is typically considered to be private rather public.

As the narrator, Manolo's psychological space often mirrors his physical space. In other words, the moral and personal decay that he experiences is reflected in the physical decay and degeneration of the surrounding environment, from his home to his office, and at all points in between. As Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá has commented, *Sol de medianoche* is an existential novel disguised as a crime story. Therefore, one of the ways in which Rodríguez Juliá distorts the conventions of the genre is through the extension of the physical space into the psychological, not only through the detective's process of reasoning through a case, as we saw in *Desamores*, but also through his "investigation" of his own psyche, thus producing the existential questioning that is the essence of this novel. Often, Manolo's explorations of his psychological spaces are alcohol and drug induced. For example, after one particular drunken night, the narrator reflects: "Viajando por esos espacios nocturnos que nos sorprenden con la certidumbre de que en verdad no nos conocemos, que hay un lado de nosotros que siempre permanece oculto..." (89-90). Ultimately, Manolo fails in his endeavor to answer his existential questions, as he does in his pursuit to determine who killed his brother. As mentioned in the previous chapter,

once again “We begin to see another Manolo behind the mask, especially towards the end of the novel...he no longer assumes the gaze of the detective but rather that of a mere beach flâneur” (Torres Caballero 224). Towards the end of the novel, Manolo provides lengthy description of a barbeque on the beach with his friends. He recounts the food, beverages, and conversations they had and comments: “supe que estábamos en una sesión de espíritus, quizás de almas en pena” (196). At this point, we see that Manolo has given up the active search for logical clues and has succumbed to melancholic reflection.

Additionally, a large part of the psychological space that provides the setting for the novel is that of the narrator’s past. Manolo begins the third chapter: “Vivo y muero en el pasado” (33), and throughout the novel recalls his childhood with Frank, his twin, and the resentment that he often felt towards his brother, who seemed to have drawn the longer straw of the two in most areas of life. For example, Frank was always more charismatic and the most popular. Manolo suffered from terrible acne as a teenager while Frank never had a pimple. Frank learned how to skillfully play the trumpet for their school band in six months while Manolo struggled to play even the simplest songs after a year of practice (10-15). These memories, while nostalgic, are often tinted with bitterness, as Manolo struggled through life, even as a child.

Manolo’s memories often come to him through dreams, another important psychological space explored throughout the novel. According to Manolo: “Los sueños logran decirnos esas verdades terribles y a la vez triviales, desechables, no del todo engañosas, pero sí inconsecuentes. Conozco bien los sueños. Los observo como ellos me observan a mí” (90). Although they seem to reveal the truth, Manolo either will not or

cannot trust what is revealed to him in his dream. Perhaps his distrust is due to the dreams' alcohol induced nature, or perhaps the fact that these truths are so terrible.

Despite Manolo's feelings of resentment, it is the enigma of his brother's death that occupies most of his thoughts and keeps him awake at night: "Desde que Frank murió el insomnio me acecha" (47). The majority of Manolo's internal monologue throughout the novel, as well as his physical traces throughout the urban space of the "crime scene," are occupied by an attempt to reconstruct the events leading up to his brother's death and explain who killed him and why: "He recorrido y escudriñado mil veces el callejón Génova, tratando de imaginar lo que ocurrió aquella noche. Nada sunda lógico, aunque todo parezca razonable..." (83). This matter is also complicated by the fact that Manolo awoke the next morning with the supposed murder weapon in his possession.

It is also the psychological space of his memories that keeps Manolo attached to the physical space of the beach. He is more than aware that Punta Grande is an unhealthy quagmire of mental and physical disease, and he often contemplates picking up his things and looking for greener pastures, but the memory of his brother keeps him from leaving (75). Walking along the beach, close to the memory of Frank, is the only way that Manolo can find peace. On one occasion, he recalls deciding to take a walk along the beach: "Caminaría en dirección al condominio Mundo Feliz, éste queda después del cementerio Fournier; era la única manera de sosegar mi corazón. Llegaría a ese sitio donde ya me sería impostergable el recuerdo de la noche intransitable" (104). In this sense, his physical and mental flânerie is an act of self-preservation, rather than a contribution to the collective memory and social experience of his community. As long as

Manolo inhabits the same physical space in which his brother lived and died, he is able to keep his memory alive and avoid dealing with the pain, and increasingly plausible possibility that he, in fact, killed his own twin brother.

### **Alain Bec: Detective as Exposer of Cuban Social Reality**

Amir Valle Ojeda (b. 1967) is a Cuban writer, literary critic, and journalist. He has published several non-fiction works, of which the most well-known is *Jineteras* (2006), a journalistic investigation on prostitution in Cuba, for which he received the Premio Internacional Rodolfo Walsh. He has also published numerous works of fiction, including collections of short stories and novels, among which are a detective series, *El descenso a los infiernos*, featuring the characters Alain Bec and Alex Varga: *Las puertas de la noche* (2001), *Si Cristo te desnuda* (2001), *Entre el miedo y las sombras* (2003), *Últimas noticias del infierno* (2005), *Santuario de sombras* (2006), and *Largas noches con Flavia* (2008). Forced into exile as a result of this series, as well as the publication of *Jineteras* (also known as *Habana Babilonia*), Valle Ojeda currently resides in and continues to write from Germany.

For Valle Ojeda, it was important to reflect the city of Havana in his detective series as well as in his works of non-fiction, regardless of the personal cost. In a 2009 interview, the author cites the following as one of the reasons he has been forced into exile: “yo puse a vivir el barrio de Centro Habana tal cual él es, con toda su podredumbre, con todas sus miserias, con el tráfico de droga, con la prostitución, con la gente de la doble moral, con el discurso cotidiano que tiene la gente” (*Hipertexto* 155). According to Valle Ojeda, the government was not pleased that this unflattering portrayal of the urban landscape of La Habana would be read outside of Cuba. As a result, he was not allowed

to return to the island after he completed an international tour promoting *Santuario de sombras*. However, Valle Ojeda claims that in bringing this realistic version of La Habana to life through his work, his intention was not to present a critical view of the city, but rather to present an accurate rendering of his daily-lived experience in Cuba. Perez-Simon observes that *El descenso a los infiernos* series “describe con gran detalle la lucha cotidiana por sobrevivir en estos barrios y la constante y profunda marginación de sus habitantes” (156). By portraying the city in this manner, Valle Ojeda uncovered the socioeconomic inequalities in Cuba that the Revolution was meant to erase.

Similar to Mattos Cintrón’s depiction of Río Piedras, due to Valle Ojeda’s preoccupation with providing an accurate representation of the city of La Habana, the urban landscape takes on critical importance in the novels of this series, and particularly in *Las puertas de la noche* (2001), the first novel in the series that sets the scene for the novels that follow. As Luis Perez-Simon asserts in his article, “Crónica de un tiempo anunciado—La novela negra de Amir Valle y Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo,” “una nación no es un pueblo hasta que sus espacios y su aire y su luz han entrado en un otro espacio, el de la literatura. Cuba ha llegado al libro, o ha salido de él, convertida en una mezcla de sueño y realidad, y con ella, la ciudad de La Habana” (155). Of course, Valle Ojeda is not the first author to bring the city alive through his writing; however, by following Perez-Simon’s analysis of Valle Ojeda’s work, we see a different perspective of the city reflected in the crime novel.

In this chapter, I examine the representation of the city in *Las puertas de la noche*, in order to explore the detective’s interaction with the urban landscape as he “creates” the story of the city during his investigation process. In this novel, the first in the series

featuring Alain Bec, the detective investigates the disappearances and deaths of several local children. The investigation begins when the first victim's body is discovered by local fishermen in the bay, and Bec ultimately uncovers a child prostitution ring. Alain Bec is a different type of detective figure than those we have seen thus far. Unlike the private investigators we have seen in this chapter, Alain is a professional police officer, specifically, a lieutenant. However, in some ways, he is reminiscent of the classical detective insofar as his process for solving a case is rather cerebral. For example, as he stomps out a cigarette, the narrator points out: "su pensamiento desandaba por los recovecos más raros del cerebro y entonces, en ese preciso momento, tenía los mejores alumbramientos, le venían las mejores ideas, las más claras y posibles soluciones al problema que lo ocupaba" (20). In fact, the narrator makes several self-conscious references to Bec's similarities (and differences) to the classical and hard-boiled detectives, as well as the Cuban police serials, on various occasions throughout the novel. For example, as Alain interviews the mother of one of the missing boys, he reflects on specific detective figures: "De nuevo Alain se dijo que no por gusto Poirot y Holmes, sus lecturas policíacas preferidas, casi únicas lecturas, preferían ir al lugar de los hechos a conversar en detalles con todo el que tuviera que ver...en los crímenes o robos" (68). In this sense, the narrator not only draws attention to Alain's knowledge of these prototypes, but also the ways in which he differs, as Bec laments his own lack of deductive reasoning skills when compared with his predecessors.

On the other hand, Alain Bec differs noticeably in his personal life from the detective figures mentioned by the narrator; he is the first detective we have seen who is married and has a son. While the protagonist embraces his wife and son, the narrator calls

attention to this difference and notes the following contrast: “realmente no tenía que ver él con esos policías de las películas americanas que se metían la vida en templetas con putas y amantes y pasaban mil necesidades...” (56). Alain’s role as husband and father not only humanizes him, but also seems to make him more vulnerable and susceptible to becoming emotionally involved in his work, particularly in *Las puertas de la noche*, as the victim is a young boy, around the same age as the detective’s son. Finally, he is far from impartial in his investigations. Throughout the novel, the narrator makes many observations and comments that reveal Bec’s tendency towards racism, which may cloud his judgment as he observes, interrogates, and traces the urban space of La Habana Vieja and Centro Habana.

As noted previously, the setting of the classical detective story alternates between the detective’s office and the crime scene, while only hinting at the impending threat of the chaotic outside world. The classical story often opens at the scene of the crime, with the detective beginning to look for clues, motives, suspects, anything that will help him to determine what happened and who is the culprit. However, the space of the first chapter of *Las puertas de la noche* is the funeral of the nine-year-old victim. During this scene, the reader receives a glimpse of the narrator’s feelings and prejudices towards the community in which he is currently investigating. The victim is a black boy, Oriel, and through the narrator’s focalized description of the detective’s interior monologue, it becomes clear that Alain Bec is vehemently racist. His bigoted point of view colors and distorts his descriptions of La Habana Vieja as he carries out his investigation in this part of the city. According to Orosman López Bao,

By creating a fictional world in which such a racist discourse is possible and by turning the police detective at the center of the plot into one of that discourse’s

main exponents, *Las puertas de la noche* manages to shine a light on the state of race relations on the island, and to cast doubts on the government's claims to have successfully eliminated a legacy of racial discrimination. (94)

It also becomes clear throughout the novel that Bec belongs to a higher social class than most of the people he speaks with as he attempts to solve the murder of Oriel and prevent further child disappearances. This difference of class becomes particularly evident in his descriptions of the city and, along with Bec's racist discourse, highlights the Revolution's glaring failure to eliminate racial and economic differences.

Throughout the novel, Alain describes the different parts of the city that he visits during his investigation. These locations include the home of the victim, the victim's grandfather's brother, a doctor's office in the victim's neighborhood, the homes of other disappeared children in the neighborhood, his own office, and the amphitheater and parks in La Habana Vieja frequented by the disappeared children. An air of decay, corrosion and degeneration permeates the narrator's descriptions of the surrounding urban landscape. Not only is the deterioration of the city apparent, the contrast between the different neighborhoods of La Habana also becomes clear:

Es increíble que uno descubre de pronto, un día, que la ciudad se va cayendo... además de los luminosos sitios de La Habana (Vedado, Miramar, Playa), que seguiría siendo la ciudad más linda de Cuba, los escombros comienzan a crecer en las esquinas como yerbas malas, que las paredes se cuartejan y van dejando al desnudo sus ladrillos antiquísimos y sus hierros viejos y oxidados, que las calles se llenan de baches que crecen y crecen como amebas que se extienden por el asfalto y el cemento y joden las gomas de los carros y los amortiguadores y van a podrir las más flamantes carrocerías que ya vienen heridas de salitre y sol. (22)

This passage is reflective of the overall tone of deterioration and decomposition of the city that, in addition to providing the backdrop for the plot of the novel, becomes a

central figure in Alain's investigation. The impotence of the decaying city is ultimately reflected in Alain's inability to solve the case at the end of the novel.

Alain contrasts the decay and degeneration of the impoverished (and often "black") parts of the city with the parts where the "glorious" past can still be found. For example, when he visits the home of Yordanka, one of the disappeared children, he notes the comfort, if not luxury, of her family's home: "a diferencia de los otros sitios que había visitado, en aquella casa se respiraba eso que puede llamarse paz hogareña o amor familiar...de los lugares donde la armonía es algo que se respeta y se cuida" (59). In this example, we notice that the protagonist conflates lack of obvious poverty and economic struggle with familial love and stability, perhaps a product of his own upbringing. Later in the novel, Bec makes reference to his own familial home (or homes), as well as the home of his wife: "la gente de su familia anduvo siempre con tremenda suerte en el asunto de las casas, todo lo contrario a ese pugilato enorme que tenía lugar en aquella misma ciudad" (61).<sup>25</sup> He describes his childhood home, his mother's current residence, and his wife's home where he currently resides, all in the Miramar and El Vedado neighborhoods of La Habana, using very different language from that of the homes he visits in La Habana Vieja and Centro Habana during his investigations, juxtaposing these two very different narratives of the city. Through the juxtaposition of Bec's housing and that of the poverty-stricken people he interviews, Valle Ojeda portrays the Revolution's

---

<sup>25</sup> Here, the narrator refers to the housing crisis that the Revolution inherited and promised to solve. However, a severe housing shortage persisted through the early years of the Revolution and was further exacerbated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting "Special Period" in Cuba in the 1990s. As Carrie Hamilton states: "Since then, Cubans have increasingly had to find creative ways to ease the housing crisis, dividing homes or constructing additions" (610).

failure to eradicate socioeconomic disparities and provide acceptable housing for all Cuban citizens.

It is also Bec's particular relationship with the city, rooted in his upper-class upbringing, that colors the lens through which the reader experiences La Habana Vieja. Later in his investigation, Alain sits on a bench in the Plaza de Armas in La Habana Vieja and observes, with relative disgust, the overt poverty and deterioration around him: "Imagina que siglos antes ésta fue zona de paseo de la alta aristocracia habanera, siempre orgullosa como todos los cubanos, y le duele que ese orgullo se haya perdido de tal modo con la miseria que lentamente iba anegando ciertos estratos sociales" (103). The protagonist has been so isolated in his own surroundings of the upper-class sections of La Habana that he has not noticed the slow progression of decay and degeneration of the city around him. He admits that his daily travels with his wife and son do not typically bring him into contact with these "new" realities, "por lo lejos que estaban de toda la vida céntrica de la ciudad, no había visto casi nunca lo que ya era común en...otras partes de La Habana..." (106). Here he refers to children begging in the streets, young girls offering their bodies to tourists and wealthy Cubans in exchange for a few dollars, pimps marketing their prostitutes, black market peddlers, etc. Alain's interactions with the city, through his investigation, ultimately do not change the city for better or for worse, however he does give voice to the marginalized sectors of the city that seem to have been ignored by the upper classes.

The narrator later goes on to compare the current shared living spaces of the impoverished communities in La Habana with the "palenques," autonomous communities formed in the mountains by the slaves who escaped the control of their Spanish slave

masters. He refers to a friend's theory of the survival instincts of the black community, comparing them to animals: "La cosa igualaba a las cuarterías de hoy con los palenques que hacían los negros cuando eran esclavos..." (100). According to Alain's friend, the urban crowding of modern day Habana recreates conditions that inspire a similar instinct in the black community: "se ponía a funcionar su instinto de conservación como especie y cuando uno ocupaba una casona que podía dividirse, le avisaba al otro y éste a otro...y todos se iban a vivir allí...pegaditos y pestositos y revuelticos" (101). The credence Alain gives to this theory reveals the personal bias through which he experiences La Habana Vieja, while at the same time calls the reader's attention to the porous boundaries of interior versus exterior in specific areas of this urban environment.

Similar to the American hard-boiled novels, as well as the novels discussed previously in this chapter, the dichotomy of public versus private is interrogated and broken down during Alain's investigation. As in the Spanish guesthouse in *Sol de medianoche*, there is little to no division of interior and exterior spaces for the residents of the more impoverished neighborhoods of La Habana. When Alain visits the home of the first victim, he observes: "la peste a orina era fuerte sobre todo en la entrada del solar, sitio oscuro en las noches, letrina pública de los borrachos que bajaban de alguno de los pocos bares que sobrevivían en La Habana Vieja" (27). Here, as in *Sol de medianoche*, the narrator specifically draws attention to the communal nature of the rather private act of bodily functions. Later in the novel, Bec visits the home of one of the missing children, Yumary, which the narrator describes as a large, old house with a long hallway and many rooms that had been converted into individual apartments, in which the detective

estimates some eight families might live in very close quarters. Again, the detective observes:

A medida que caminaba hacia uno de los compartimientos que estaban justo al centro del pasillo...Alain sintió que muchos ojos lo miraban. Pensó que en aquella casona no había ninguna vida privada y se propuso imaginarse haciendo el amor con Camila mientras alguno de esos ojos que ahora lo calaban fisgoneaba por quién sabe qué rendija. (86)

Here, the narrator highlights another private and intimate act that becomes public in the impoverished neighborhoods of Havana as a result of the close living quarters shared by these communities.

The detective's movements through the city are critical to his understanding of the case. Back in his office reflecting on his investigation up to a specific point, Alain "trata de sacar algo en limpio de sus primeros pasos..." (27). This language indicates that the detective's literal "steps" string together to create the narrative of the crime, as well as that of the city. As he pieces together all the information he has gathered, he mentally retraces his journey through La Habana. Toward the end of the novel, once again, Alain mentally retraces routes throughout La Habana Vieja and Centro Habana as he reads through his reports, as well as those of his fellow officers. As Alain reads these reports that specify particular buildings and street addresses throughout the city, he connects the victims and suspects, situating them within their environments, representing these marginalized figures and their neighborhoods and creating a literary map of La Habana. The mental process of retracing the city leads Alain to the end of his investigation: "Todo encajaba. Y finalmente aparecía la pieza que faltaba...Pieza a pieza había ido Armando el rompecabezas, o mejor, la cadena..." (164). Ultimately, however, Bec is not able to

provide a resolution to the case. Therefore, his contribution lies in bringing to the forefront the plight of these marginalized neighborhoods and their inhabitants.

## **Conclusions**

Isabelo Andújar, Manolo Pérez Cáceres, and Alain Bec interact with, and represent, their urban environments in different ways, and their relationships to the city in which they live and investigate are essential to their stories. They each embody characteristics of both the flâneur and the practitioner as they engage with and represent the spaces through which they travel. At the same time, as members of Hispanic Caribbean communities, they are more deeply connected to the people and spaces that surround them than the figure of the flâneur. While these detectives, like the flâneur, are part of the urban crowd, they differ in that they do not enjoy the anonymity of the masses but rather form an intrinsic part of local populace. Moreover, they are not detached in their urban observations. Rather, these detectives convey insightful commentaries on the social ills of late-twentieth-century urban Puerto Rico and La Habana Vieja during the Special Period. Just as de Certeau asserts that cities exist as a result of the practitioner's movements within them; Isabelo, Manolo, and Alain bring significance to their communities through their interactions and observations.

In each of these novels, the depiction of the urban landscapes of Río Piedras, Punta Grande, and La Habana Vieja become representative of the cultural identity of Puerto Rico and Cuba during specific moments in history. These cultural representations, in turn, provide a conduit through which the authors can communicate social commentaries through a genre that has been considered "less serious." Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá comment on the increased violence, poverty, and

corruption in Puerto Rico in the late twentieth century through their representations of Río Piedras and Punta Grande. In his novel, Amir Valle Ojeda elucidates the poverty, hunger, lack of housing, and pervasive implicit racism in La Havana Vieja during the Special Period. Through the expansion of setting, differentiated moral valuation of the urban landscape, and notes of cultural specificity, these authors appropriate, transform, and subvert the conventions of the classical detective genre to create texts that are specific to their Hispanic Caribbean cultural context.

### Chapter 3: The Post-Colonial Detective in/as Liminal Space

“Leo, nosotros somos amigos desde chamacos. Tú tienes confianza en mí y yo también confío en ti. Todos los de nuestro grupo confiamos en ti, pero tú eres policía...aquí pasan muchas cosas, cosas que las sabe todo el mundo menos tú...”

– Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo, *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*

The figure of the detective or police officer in the Hispanic Caribbean often occupies a uniquely problematic position within the community. The above quote from *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* distills the essential conflict that the Hispanic Caribbean detective faces in his neighborhood or city. On a personal level, he is an integral part of the community in which he was raised. However, on a professional level he represents a hegemonic authority that cannot be totally accepted among his peers and neighbors. In this chapter, I argue that this controversial position is due to the Hispanic Caribbean detective’s post-colonial legacy. While the term “post-colonial” may not be fully adequate for describing the sociopolitical contexts in contemporary Cuba and the Dominican Republic given their complex history of various colonial and neo-colonial relationships, in this chapter, it is useful to take into consideration how the post-colonial condition informs the figure of the detective and his relationship to his work and community in the Hispanic Caribbean.<sup>26</sup>

The introduction to Ed Christian’s edited volume *The Post-Colonial Detective* (2001) provides a definition of the term “post-colonial detective.” He is a character that resides in a post-colonial region, while he is not necessarily the creation of a post-

---

<sup>26</sup> The term “post-colonial” is especially problematic when referring to both Cuba and the Dominican Republic because while both are considered to be nation-states fully independent from their colonizer (Spain), the Dominican Republic has also endured a period of colonization by its neighboring nation-state of Haiti, and both (to different degrees) are currently experiencing a situation of neo-colonialism with respect to the United States.

colonial author. Post-colonial detectives are “usually marginalized in some way, which affects their ability to work at their full potential; they are always central and sympathetic characters; and their creators’ interest usually lies in an exploration of how these detectives’ approaches to criminal investigation are influenced by their cultural attitudes” (Christian 2). In this sense, these characters differ greatly from the affluent, bourgeois protagonist of the classical detective narrative; however, they more closely resemble their predecessors, the protagonists of the American hard-boiled novel as previously described by Giarndinelli. Nonetheless, these characters go one step further: rather than perpetuate social stereotypes, they begin to interrogate them. For example, in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the character of Leo Martín, the “jefe del Sector de la Policía” in a marginal neighborhood of Santa Clara, Cuba, presents unfiltered, unbiased (in terms of race and class) descriptions of the individuals he encounters throughout his investigative process. His analysis removes moral judgment and reflects an equality bestowed upon these characters by the commonality of the same lived experiences in the community. In *Candela*, the character of Imanol Petafunte, a lieutenant in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, fights against the social injustices manifested in his investigation of the murder of a lower-class man by his upper-class, foreign-educated lover.

The novels I analyze in this chapter each feature the figure of the detective who inhabits a marginal position, reflective of the peripheral position of their very culture, with respect to both their countries’ former colonizers and their current neo-colonial relationships to the United States. However, these characters are not “subalterns” as

defined by Antonio Gramsci and later problematized by Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak.<sup>27</sup> That is, although these characters are indeed marginalized, they also occupy a position of relative authority and power afforded them by their occupation, resulting in conflict between the detective and his community. The Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, founded in 1992 and inspired by the South Asian scholars that formed the Subaltern Studies Group, re-conceptualized the term, taking into account “[T]he present dismantling of authoritarian regimes in Latin America, the end of communism and the consequent displacement of revolutionary projects, the processes of redemocratization, and the new dynamics created by the effects of the mass media and transnational economic arrangements” (110). In the group’s “Founding Statement,” they argue that “the subaltern functions as a “migrating” subject, both in its own cultural self-representations and in the changing nature of its social pact with the state(s)” (118). The detectives I examine in this chapter are more closely aligned with this description of the subaltern as they “migrate” between their social insignificance and their positions of influence relative to their peers.

The post-colonial detective occupies a position of comparative privilege that sets him apart from the subaltern as described by Gramsci. Christian further clarifies: “Even though they may be resisting the colonial past or the effects of the neo-colonial effort, and even though there may be many ranks of power and office above them, they still have, by force of office, a power and respect that sets them apart from the subaltern” (10). In other words, this figure is both “same” and “other.” These divergent positions coincide

---

<sup>27</sup> Gramsci employed the term “subaltern” to refer to social groups that were subject to hegemonic power, yet denied access to the same. However, Spivak argues that if the “oppressed” is able to represent itself, albeit employing the hegemonic discourse, it is not in fact subaltern.

within one character, shaping the way in which he is received by his community. This perception is crucial to both the character's development and the reader's understanding of law and order in the given context. To examine the characterization of the post-colonial detective, I discuss Rey Emmanuel Andújar's *Candela* (2007-Dominican Republic) and Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo's *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* (2003-Cuba) and explore how these particular characters negotiate the liminal space between the colonizer and the colonized.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, the detectives' position in their respective communities, their relationships to other members of their communities, as well as their relationships to the victims they investigate demonstrate how these characters represent the liminal space.

It is almost impossible to find what would be considered a "successful" crime novel written by a Dominican author. Rey Emmanuel Andújar's *Candela*, however, incorporates many key elements of the genre, while at the same time subverting many conventions to more adequately reflect the sociopolitical climate of the contemporary Dominican Republic.<sup>29</sup> Andújar (b. 1977) published his first novel, *El hombre triángulo*, which I discuss in the final chapter of this project, in 2005. He has also written short stories and has won several prizes including Premio de Cuento del Banco Central, Premio Internacional de Cuento Casa de Teatro, and Premio de Cuento de la Alianza Cibaëña. *Candela*, Andújar's second novel, is narrated in a third-person omniscient voice that alternates between the perspectives of various characters related to the murder victim, including the detective, the coroner, the victim (in flashbacks), the victim's brother, a

---

<sup>28</sup> Here I am referring to Homi Bhaba's theory as referenced by Ed Christian in his introduction to *The Post-Colonial Detective*.

<sup>29</sup> "Successful" as defined by the major critics and theorists of the genre and summarized in the introduction.

prostitute named Candela, an ambiguous character named Lubrini, and the murderer herself. This third person narration is interspersed with letters and poetry written by a first-person narrator. According to Avelino Stanley, “La estructura de la obra se levanta sobre un zigzaguo que rompe con la linealidad muchas veces socorrida por algunos narradores. Hay madera de narrador en ese vaivén del tiempo interior de la obra, en esa forma en que se quiebra la duración de la misma para dislocar el orden temporal” (261).

As such, *Candela* is a rich text that easily lends itself to many layers of analysis.

Surprisingly, however, there is little academic scholarship on this novel. I have chosen to include it in my project partially for this reason but primarily due to the lack of traditional crime, detective, and mystery novels produced in the Dominican Republic.

*Candela* represents one of the very few Dominican texts that deals with a detective figure. At the same time, the novel undoes the main tenets of the genre, primarily through the character of the detective and his death at the end of the novel. Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on the aspects of this novel that relate to crime fiction and its sociopolitical commentary. When the novel begins, teniente Imanol Petafunte has just arrived at the crime scene and is investigating the death of Renato Castratte. However, the problem is that, unbeknownst to the protagonist, the only witness, Sera Peñablanca, a lawyer from the upper class of Santo Domingo, is also the killer. The chapters of the novel that I examine here follow Imanol as he attempts to negotiate the liminal space between his lower class upbringing and that of his victim, the authority of his position, and the power of his upper class suspect in his attempt to solve Renato’s case and bring the perpetrator to justice against all odds. Ultimately, Imanol

fails in this endeavor, underscoring the ongoing struggle for justice, particularly for the marginalized, in the Dominican Republic.

In contrast to *Candela*, Lorenzo Lunar Cardedos's *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* (originally published in 2003) is situated within Cuba's rich tradition of detective and crime fiction, which includes the serial detective author Leonardo Padura Fuentes and celebrated author Amir Valle Ojeda, discussed in other chapters of this thesis. Lunar Cardedo (b. 1958) has published short stories, articles, and essays on literary criticism, in addition to several novels. His stories are featured in many anthologies, including *Variaciones en negro, antología del relato policial iberoamericano* (2003), published by Editorial Plaza Mayor in Puerto Rico. He has won numerous prizes, including the Premio Internacional de Relato Policial "Semana Negra" in Gijón, Spain, on several occasions. In addition, *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the first novel in his trilogy featuring Chief Inspector Leo Martín, has been awarded several prizes.

*Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* is, in a sense, a more traditional detective novel than *Candela*. It is narrated in the first person by Leo Martín, the Chief Inspector in a neighborhood in Santa Clara; and, as is traditional of the hard-boiled crime novel, the reader experiences each detail through the perspective of the protagonist. Like Padura Fuentes and Valle Ojeda, Lunar Cardedo's novels break with the tradition of the Cuban Socialist detective genre in that they present a more nuanced view of Cuban society, fraught with moral and political corruption. Just as Padura Fuentes sought to present a more imperfect but authentic detective figure in the character of Mario Conde, Lunar Cardedo's protagonist is also a believably flawed but sympathetic character. In this particular case, Leo must investigate the murder of a man who has always been like a

father to him. However, he does not receive this assignment in the manner most detectives do; as the novel opens, there is knock at Leo's door in the middle of the night and his friend, "El Jabao," informs him that "el viejo Cundo" has been killed. As Leo seeks justice for his old friend, he encounters obstacles to his investigation along the way; he is intimately involved in his small community and therefore personally knows his victim, witnesses, and suspects. This, in turn, complicates his investigation and compromises his impartiality as a detective. Moreover, Leo vehemently defends one of the principal suspects, refusing to believe that he could have possibly committed this crime. In so doing, Leo risks his career and reputation as police chief. In the end, though, thanks to his instincts and persistence, Leo is able to solve the case and bring Cundo's murderer to justice.

By examining Leo and Imanol's social positions, professions, and their relationships to the communities in which they investigate from a post-colonial perspective, we can further understand how race, class, and authority function within the context of law and justice in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Albert Memmi asserts in his foundational theoretical work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (first published in English in 1965 but debuting in French in 1957) that the colonized, in an effort to be accepted by the colonizer, begins to adopt the colonizer's way of life. Memmi contends that this is particularly true of "the representatives of the authorities, cadres, policemen, etc., recruited from among the colonized" (16). He further claims, "[they] form a category of the colonized which attempts to escape from its political condition. But in so doing, by choosing to place themselves in the colonizer's service to protect his interests exclusively, they end up by adopting his ideology, even with regard to their own values

and their own lives” (16). Memmi ultimately finds that this model leads to a degeneration of the cultural uniqueness of the colonized. At the same time, Memmi argues that the colonizer cannot exist without the colonized. They are codependent. The colonized knows the colonizer as well as he knows himself. In fact, perhaps he must know the colonizer to be able to know himself. As we will see in the novels discussed in this chapter, the detective protagonists to a certain extent embrace ideologies of the “colonizer.”<sup>30</sup> However, Leo and Imanol do not entirely adopt the colonizer’s worldview at the expense of their particular perspectives shaped by their individual experiences, socioeconomic status, and familial background.

In my view, the detective-protagonists analyzed in this chapter represent a blending between the culture of the colonizer and the colonized. Frequently, during the course of their investigations, they experience internal and external conflict with regard to the “colonizer’s” values, the community’s values, and even their own personal set of values. Perhaps more aptly than Memmi’s characterization of the colonized, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha explores the notion of what he calls “the beyond” or “in between moments.” Bhabha describes the beyond as “those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences;” that is, the cultural negotiation that occurs in the overlapping of the colonizer and the colonized, and that this negotiation can be both antagonistic and affiliative (2-3). Bhabha’s theory of culture is based on the idea of the gray area; blurred lines; not knowing where one thing begins and something else ends. In describing the post-colonial, Bhabha asserts: “we find ourselves

---

<sup>30</sup> This can most clearly be seen in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* with Leo’s strict position regarding contraband and in *Candela* when Imanol accepts a bribe from his superior despite his moral position against such practices.

in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (2). As such, the process of “collaboration and contestation” becomes the key to analysis rather than a definition or category (2).

In applying this notion to post-colonial detective fiction, Christian asserts: “Often, the post-colonial detective *is* this space, this area of overlap, this space of meeting. In the detective the colonizer and the colonized collided, the oppressor and the resistor struggle for space” (11). That is, rather than “adopting” the colonizer’s ideology, as posited by Memmi, or simply rejecting it, the post-colonial detective adapts these values to concord with the community’s values, or at least to minimize discord. In the process, he creates something new: “The result of the conflict between the two...is...not the depowering of one of the other, but a decentering of power, a sharing of power” (Christian 12). In this sense, Bhabha’s outlook on this negotiation of values between colonized and colonizer is one of optimism. That is, this cultural hybridity leads to “the strengthening of both peoples,” even though the path to arrive at this destination is characterized by suffering and violence (Christian 13).

*Candela* and *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* are notable examples of Christian’s description of the post-colonial detective negotiating the liminal space; both of these protagonists represent both the oppressor and the oppressed and illustrate a collision between the two. However, I would not go so far as to say that the “destructive cultural encounter [of colonialism] is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms,” as posited in the classic post-colonial study *The Empire Writes Back* (35). While I agree that the novels by Andújar and Lunar Cardedo present cultural encounters between

oppressed and oppressor that are far less destructive than the initial collision of colonization that the Spanish conquistadors produced, they still expose a violent and inequitable intersection between groups of disparate power. In the *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin explain: “Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group ‘purity’, and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized” (35). However, as we examine the “post-colonial” detectives in these two novels, we will see that there is more conflict present between the oppressor and the oppressed than is implied by the idea of “cross-culturality” as a “termination point.” The protagonists continue to negotiate their social positions, just as they interrogate social and political systems.

### **The Post-colonial Detective and the Representation of Race**

Any examination of the post-colonial detective with respect to his navigation of cultural differences and the liminal spaces that these cultural differences create must inevitably lead to a discussion of the question of race. This identity category is featured prominently in the novels studied in this analysis. The American hard-boiled novel was the prototype for detective fiction in terms of encoding normative models of race and masculinity and perpetuating these models in literary form. Maureen T. Reddy, Stephen Soitos, Adrienne Johnson Gosselin, and other critics have examined the hard-boiled novel and its portrayal of race and masculinity. In Chapter Four, I will examine issues of masculinity and sexuality in the figure of the detective in Ray Emmanuel Andújar’s first novel, *El hombre triángulo*. Here, focusing on race in the detective novel, Reddy, Soitos,

and Gosselin have noted that crime fiction in general has been quick to perpetuate racial stereotypes, creating a racial binary that portrays whiteness as “heroic” in the form of the detective figure and blackness in the form of the criminal as “sinister” or evil. However, in examining the representation of race in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* and *Candela* it is important to consider that while this issue is still salient in the crime fiction of the Hispanic Caribbean with its distinct and complex history of racialized baggage, it manifests itself very differently than the black/white, evil/heroic binary mentioned above. For example, Leo and Imanol are mulatto and therefore, even racially, represent the intersection of oppressor and oppressed.

Many popular discourses of the construction of racial identity in the Dominican Republic attempt to exclude blackness. Nevertheless, the process of racial identity is much more complex than a mere negation of blackness. Factors such as the colonial experience of Santo Domingo, its unique model of slavery, its turbulent relationship with Haiti, the negrophobia of the Trujillo regime, and the neocolonial relationship with the United States have all marked the formation of Dominican racial identity in different ways that continue to evolve in the present day. In her book *Modernity Disavowed*, Sibylle Fischer discusses the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath in Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. She argues that the Dominican Republic, as a result of the Haitian Revolution, (predominantly white) Dominican intellectuals endeavored to engineer a Dominican national identity that did not include “blackness”:

With a state next door that originated in revolutionary antislavery and whose foundational ideology centered on racial equality, most Dominican statesmen, intellectuals, and writers are acutely aware that Creole modernity was not the only option: Haiti represented an alternative, and it needed to be avoided at all costs. At the center of the fantasies that characterize the Dominican cultural imaginary is Haiti as the nightmare of a barbarian future. (Fischer 146)

As a result, according to Fischer, Dominican elites constructed a national identity based on a fictional and paradoxical view of both the past and future. In other words, despite the fact that most Dominicans are of African or mulatto descent, Dominican national identity is perceived as a curious mix of *indigenismo* and *hispanismo*. Consequently, as Fischer affirms, “The twentieth century vocabulary of Dominican racial identity is startling in its apparent success in erasing blackness from the self-consciousness of a nation that is evidently mulatto in its vast majority. In an act of racial alchemy, Dominican mulattoes become ‘Indians’ and Dominican blacks *blancos de la tierra* [whites of the earth]” (147). This discourse, in its exclusion of the term *negro*, assigns blackness to the Haitian “other.”

Cuba’s Spanish colonial history and the legacy of the African slave trade have created a similar racial spectrum to that of the Dominican Republic. However, despite the islands’ geographic proximity and shared language, there have been other historical processes post-colonization that have produced a different rhetoric regarding race in Cuba. In his comprehensive study, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, Alejandro de la Fuente provides a historical overview of race and discrimination in Cuba. According to de la Fuente, leading up to the Cuban Revolution, despite “José Martí’s dream of a racially egalitarian republic, a nation with all and for all,” racial segregation and discrimination still permeated Cuban society (1, 260). The Revolution attempted to address racial inequalities through programs such as distributing employment through the Ministry of Labor, nationalizing private schools, and literacy campaigns (274-75).

By 1962, government officials deemed racial discrimination to have been eradicated: “Fidel Castro...argued that discrimination in Cuba had disappeared along

with class privileges... This became the dominant theme in public discourse, echoed in official documents, journalistic pieces, and even scholarship. The revolution had solved Cuba's historic race problem: racism and discrimination were things of the past" (279). While it is true that many government programs achieved success in reducing "racial inequality in a number of crucial areas, including education, health care, and employment," attitudes of racial prejudice persisted in private spheres outside of government control, "where race continued to influence social relations among friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family members" (309, 322). In my analysis of Amir Valle Ojeda's *Las puertas de la noche* in Chapter Two, we still observe this discriminatory attitude toward black members of the community through the perspective of the protagonist, Alain Bec. However, in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, we see a less polarizing perspective through the narrator, Leo Martín. I argue that Leo's neutral position regarding race is a result of his liminal racial identity.

Since both the Dominican Republic and Cuba are characterized by populations that encompass a racially-diverse spectrum, rather than perpetuating the previously-mentioned black/white binary, the discussion of race in these texts is indicative of the "no-man's land where the permanent battle for the Caribbean Self's fragmented identity is fought," as described by Antonio Benítez-Rojo (201). He argues:

in the Caribbean, skin color denotes neither a minority nor a majority; it represents so much more: the color imposed by the violence of conquest and colonization, and especially by the plantation system. Whatever the skin color might be, it is a color that has not been institutionalized or legitimized according to lineage; it is a color in conflict with itself and with others, irritated in its very instability and resented for its uprootedness; it is a color neither of the Self nor of the Other... (201)

Thus, even in terms of race, the detective is neither “of the Self nor of the Other,” but rather once again represents another “in between” position produced in the cultural history of the Hispanic Caribbean. Unlike the detectives of the hard-boiled novel, who continue to perpetuate the social, economic, and racial status quo by blaming the “other” for all societal ills, the detectives studied in this chapter, rather, interrogate society as a whole and find fault with the political structure rather than with the marginalized individual.

In *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, race in Cuba is represented much differently than in *Las puertas de la noche*, discussed in the previous chapter. In Valle Ojeda’s novel the detective, Alain Bec, is deeply bigoted and therefore identifies the people involved in his case through racist commentary, reflecting the Revolution’s failure to eradicate racial injustices. In contrast, in Lunar Cardedo’s novel, Leo rarely mentions race. When he does, the comment is always in passing and there is no moral or social judgment ascribed to the description. For example, when Leo describes César, his colleague who is assigned the case of Cundo’s murder, he comments “César era un negrito medio engreído, pero buena gente” (20). Similarly, when he describes Blanquita, the neighborhood prostitute found drunk and unconscious at the scene of Cundo’s murder, he describes her as: “mulata, de nalgas duras, atrevida y siempre presta al manoseo” (16). These descriptions include racial identifiers, but they are used in a series of other identifying adjectives and are understood as simple descriptors that do not carry judgment. The lack of value, negative or positive, reflects Leo’s position as a liminal figure in this neighborhood. He does not see himself, or anyone he interacts with, as superior or inferior.

In *Candela*, race (and class) differences are captured most explicitly in the relationship between Renato, the victim, and Sera, his lover and killer. Though the narrator does not explicitly categorize these characters by race, the binary is implied in the following juxtaposition: “Él sigue enamorándose del perfumito Aqua di Gio de Sera, y ella aprende a reconocer y a aceptar el grajo y el descuido del afro de su macho” (43). Here, as is frequent in the Dominican construction of racial identity, race is conflated with social class, as the “afro” indicates Renato’s blackness and “el grajo y el descuido” indicate a lack of personal hygiene associated with poverty. The social differences between them are what ultimately caused Renato’s death (53-54). Like Renato, the racial description of Petafunte is not overt; however, the author makes oblique references to his lower economic status and, at one point, another character describes him as “un moreno bello” (99). Both his racial designation and economic status cause him to identify on a deep level with the victim.

### **Literary Development of the “Central, Sympathetic, Detective Figure”**

In both *Candela* and *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the detectives are central and sympathetic characters. According to Reddy in her study on race in crime fiction, “Almost always, hard-boiled fiction uses first-person narration, with the voice of the detective central to readers’ experiences of the text; this narration is as much about the detective himself as it is the events that comprise the plot” (8). This statement can also be applied to post-colonial detective fiction in general, as defined by Christian. In keeping with this literary convention, Lunar Cardedo employs the first-person narrator in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* to establish his sympathetic protagonist. In addition, the use of the second person informal addressee involves the reader and

compels the reader to sympathize with the narrator. For example, at the beginning of his narration, Leo addresses the reader: “En el barrio tu vida es parte de la vida del barrio” (7). Here, Leo includes the reader as part of his life and community. This type of discourse also has a universalizing quality that invites the reader to join his or her own life experiences with those of the narrator. The detective-protagonist/narrator shares with the reader personal and intimate experiences of his past, some of which are loosely related to the plot insofar as they involve some of the principal players in the unfolding investigation. Leo shares childhood memories of his friends, some of whom are suspects and others of whom are primary witnesses and informants. He shares memories of the war in Angola and flashbacks to his previous personal encounters with death. He shares parts of his personal life, specifically details relating to his mother, ex-wife, and daughter. These details position Leo specifically as a “post-colonial detective” as defined by Christian in that he is “central and sympathetic,” allowing the author to explore how his position within the community affects his investigation.

Deviating from the first-person narration model described by Reddy, in *Candela*, Andújar’s third-person limited narration that moves between characters requires other strategies to cultivate a central and sympathetic detective protagonist. Even though portions of the novel are narrated from the point of view of the victim and the murderer, Imanol’s experience and perspective still remain central to the reader’s reception of the text since often the perspective of the narrator and the perspective of the protagonist are nearly indistinguishable. As early as the first page of *Candela*, we can see that teniente Petafunte is not cerebral, impartial, or objective when it comes to his work. When he is called to examine the crime scene, the narrator remarks: “Con indiferencia simulada

[Petafunte] observa... [el cadaver]" (15). The reader can see that Petafunte is personally affected by his encounters with death and we can begin to sympathize with him. The author continues to develop Petafunte's position as marginalized, or subaltern, through a marked contrast between detective and prime suspect, beginning with their first interaction. As Petafunte begins to question Sera Peñablanca, he can hardly contain his disdain for the upper class, foreign-educated lawyer. He observes her: "las uñas perfectamente arregladas, las manos acostumbradas a firmar cheques y contratos, a ordenar botellas de champaña..." (25). Through Petafunte's disparaging description of Sera, it is evident that detective and suspect come from two different social classes. Once again, through this distinction, the author is able to filter the reader's experience through the perspective of the detective-protagonist.

### **The Personal Life of the Detective**

The post-colonial detective novel is also characterized by the reader's profound knowledge of the personal life of the detective. This represents a direct contrast to the classical detective novel in which the detective remains impartial to his investigation, causing the reader to also remain unsympathetic to the detective. The classical detective as a character remains one dimensional, characterized only by his intelligence and ability to reason logically and solve the crime in question. On the contrary, the post-colonial detective tends to be the narrator of his story, which allows the reader to have knowledge of his innermost personal struggles and triumphs. As previously mentioned, in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the reader becomes familiar with aspects of Leo's life that are both unrelated and loosely related to the crime and Leo's subsequent investigation. When Leo encounters Cundo's cadaver, he is emotionally moved and compelled to

remember his experience during the war in Angola when he witnessed the death of his friend, Jiguaní (11). The next morning, before continuing his investigation, Leo stops by his ex-wife's house to visit his daughter, Yanet. However, Yanet has already left for school and Leo begins to reflect on this troubled relationship and his inadequacies as a husband and father. Leo revisits this topic throughout the novel. Chapter 7, for example, opens with an interior monologue as Leo showers after a long and frustrating day of investigation, in which he questions every detail of his life, finally concluding: "Pensaba, por primera vez también, que un policía por muy amigo y hombre que se piense que es siempre va a vivir en un mundo aparte" (72). Although his personal life intersects with the crime he is investigating through his relationship to the victim and witnesses, as a police officer he still occupies a distinctly separate space from his friends, acquaintances, and even his own family.

In *Candela*, the reader is also exposed to details of the protagonist's life that are either unrelated or loosely related to the principal plot of the investigation. At various moments throughout the novel, the reader catches glimpses of the personal life of the detective that are seemingly irrelevant to his professional life and the case at hand: "La vida de Imanol Petafunte es un caos, se le va entre cacerías de fantasmas, propios y ajenos... a un lado elevan las columnas de libros llenos de polvo con los que ha intentado a lo largo de años saciar su interminable búsqueda existencial" (54). This universalizing characterization of Petafunte as a deeply flawed individual struggling to make sense of the chaos of his own life allows the reader to identify with him on a deeper level than is possible with the one-dimensional characters of the classical detective story. The narrator provides the reader with a closer look into Imanol's personal life through his late-night

visit and conversation with his friend José Levi. Here, Petafunte reflects on the extreme isolation and loneliness of the victim whose body lay in the morgue with no loved ones to claim him, and wonders if he will be equally alone in his last moments of life, foreshadowing his own solitary death (56, 138). Petafunte is not portrayed as the classic hero; rather, Andújar exposes his fallible humanity. This is particularly evident when he accepts bribe money from his superior to close Renato's murder case. He had entered into his captain's office determined to proceed with the investigation and demand the necessary resources to do so. However, without protest, he accepts the money and walks out, chastising himself: "pero al aceptar el soborno, sabía que él mismo estaba concediendo esas exoneraciones y benevolencias; el dinero, en grandes cantidades, pero también en pequeñas, era capaz de comprar cualquier conciencia" (64). Although Petafunte desires to be morally superior to accepting a bribe, he knows that he is not; he knows that poverty is as humanizing (taking away from his ability to be the idealist he would like to be) as it is dehumanizing (making one capable of doing anything to subsist). He has strong convictions regarding right and wrong but is vulnerable to fall short of those standards due to his marginalized condition.

### **The Detective's Relationship to the Community**

As previously mentioned, the "post-colonial detective" occupies a paradoxical position within his community. While he is usually considered to be a marginal figure by nature of his education, economic, and political status, the position of detective or police officer inherently bestows a level of relative authority on the character that excludes him from the category of "subaltern." This liminal position within the community affects not only how the detective perceives crime in the community, but also how the community

perceives the detective, both of which determine the course of the investigations. As we have already seen, both the classical detective and the detective in the traditional American hard-boiled novel are characterized by their impartiality regarding their investigation. Conversely, the post-colonial detective, as seen in these novels from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, is characterized by a different type of relationship to his community and therefore to his work. Due to his entrenchment within the community and his personal investment in the cases they investigate, it is impossible for the post-colonial detective to remain unbiased. As a result, his professional judgment is often clouded and he acts based more on intuition and emotion than on logic. Not only does the post-colonial detective reveal his personal bias throughout his investigations, but, as Christian asserts, he also illuminates “the process and difficulties of detecting in post-colonial countries” (3). That is, the differences encountered due to a less rigid system of law and order. For example, on one hand, Imanol encounters difficulty in his investigation and pursuit of justice due to political corruption in the Dominican Republic and the resulting untouchable status of his white, upper class suspect. On the other hand, Leo faces different challenges in his investigation that result from distrust of authority in Cuba by the marginalized members of the community.

In *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, the relationship between the detective narrator, Leo, and the community is one of the principal aspects of the novel and is indispensable to understanding the resolution of the crime. In fact, in the first several pages, the narrator does not yet reveal his profession but instead establishes his relationship to the community before the reader even discovers that he is a detective. Through his description of, and his complaints about, the *barrio*, he locates himself

within the *barrio* as simply another resident, on the same level as any other individual. Leo affectionately, and sometimes exasperatedly, refers to the *barrio* as a monster: “Un monstruo que amas y no estás dispuesto a abandoner nunca. Porque te has acostumbrado a él” (Lunar Cardedo 9). Only after establishing this intimate affiliation with the community does the narrator reveal that aside from being born and living 35 years in this community, he is also the “jefe del Sector de la Policía.”

Later, Leo offers many objective observations of his community, in line with the type of observations typical of a detective, but he also offers the reader many subjective commentaries that could only come from a source with an intimate connection to the community. For example, Leo observes: “La gente del barrio tiene la imaginación suficiente para encontrar un asesino sin necesidad de mucho análisis. Y es que en el barrio, aunque un asesinato no es lo más habitual, su posibilidad es algo permanente” (28). Leo’s insightful comments reveal his intimate relationship to the community in which he works, proving that his affiliation to the community goes well beyond the scope of professional objectivity. Moreover, the implication that the average resident would not require much analysis to find a murderer, while Leo struggles to find clues and interview possible witnesses, underscores the detective’s position as “other” as perceived by his neighbors.

Each time a new character is introduced, Leo provides the backstory on the character, further highlighting his own intertwined past with the primary suspects, witnesses, and informants. In these descriptions, he goes back sometimes to the new character’s birth, or discusses their parents and grandparents. Leo knows every detail that makes that person who they are today and might explain their involvement, or lack

thereof, in the crime he is investigating. In addition, although perhaps superficial, the use of nicknames for nearly all of the secondary characters in the novel also adds to the sense of intimacy between detective and community established in the first several pages of the novel and developed throughout the novel. For example, when Leo goes to Cundo's house after hearing of his death, he finds Blanquita there and he describes for the reader his personal connection with her: "Blanquita disfrutó iniciándonos a todos los del grupo en cada uno de los secretos del sexo... Primero fue Manolito el Buty, que era el mayor...después el Jabao, luego el Puchy, yo ... ¡hasta Pepe la Vaca!" Not only does Leo establish his personal connection to the other members of this group by using their nicknames, but he also underscores his entrenchment in the community by including himself in the list of people sexually initiated by the neighborhood prostitute.

Although Leo is enmeshed in all aspects of the history and daily life of this community, he is still, in some ways, an outsider due to his position within the police force. The reader is reminded of this liminal position in various ways throughout the novel. For example, Leo's relative authority is codified in the signifier of the uniform. When he is first informed of el Cundo's death, he does not leave the house without changing into his uniform, even though it is three o'clock in the morning: "No perdí tiempo en ponerme el uniforme...me metí en él y salí a la calle con el Jabao" (10). This uniform can be viewed as a sort of performative costume that solidifies his social role as an authority figure in the community, playing a role in a performance.

However, the author contrasts the type of authority that Leo maintains, as a police officer mitigated by his connection with the community, with that of law officers who have come from outside, such as Manolo and César:

Manolo entró con mano dura, metió presos a tres o cuatro por no tener vincula laboral, botó al carnicero y al administrador de la bodega, hizo una campaña contra las putas y los maricones que frecuentaban la Terminal de Ómnibus por las noches, prohibió los juegos de dominó en la esquina y así mantuvo al barrio aparentemente tranquilo durante un tiempo. (20)

Although Manolo's rigid style of policing the neighborhood was effective in the short term, chaos broke out in the long term. Leo was asked to replace Manolo because, due to having grown up in the barrio and knowing how to get information, how to enforce the law when necessary, and bend the rules when it will be to his advantage, he is able to get information that "outsiders" would not be able to get. For example, in a conversation with El Moro, Leo is able to get him to start talking and give him valuable information for solving his case, but he says: "Esto yo te lo digo, Leo, porque yo sé que tú eres un hombre y que contigo no hay problema" (29). Later, another member of the community comments on Leo's position of authority: "Ese muchacho será policía, pero es un hombre" (34). Both comments indicate that in this context, to wear the police uniform does not make Leo more of a man, like one might think. Rather, masculinity is constructed within this cultural context as being loyal to one's community.

At the same time, Leo's relationship to the community cannot be one of complete acceptance and intimacy given the "uniform" he wears, which represents his position of relative authority and his relative allegiance with the agents of the law. During a conversation over the course of his investigation, el Puchy, a childhood friend, illuminates this paradox: "Leo, nosotros somos amigos desde chamacos. Tú tienes confianza en mí y yo también confío en ti. Todos los de nuestro grupo confiamos en ti, pero tú eres policía...aquí pasan muchas cosas, cosas que las sabe todo el mundo menos tú" (50-51). He ultimately concludes: "Vete ahora mismo mi hermano y trata de no venir

más a esta casa con ese traje de policía” (52). Through el Puchy’s words, the reader understands that although Leo remains the same person as before he became a police officer, this position of authority, symbolized materially in his uniform, creates his liminal situation, placing him between the people and the law.

The Cuban socialist detective novel depended on “la inestimable colaboración... del pueblo en general” (Uxó 261). Citizens that did not participate in the resolution of the crime were deemed to be against the Revolution. Additionally, due to the prescriptive nature of the novel, it was important to designate early on who the criminals were, as they were antirevolutionaries. Similarly, crimes could only take place in “espacios propios claramente identificables como ajenos al proceso revolucionario, como casas de familias burguesas, locales frecuentados por homosexuales o por practicantes de la santería, o residencias con alguna conexión con el extranjero (preferentemente Estados Unidos)” (Uxó 264). Therefore, people and places were deemed to be good or evil depending on their position with regards to the Revolution.

In contrast, in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, “Leo Martín no necesita desplazarse hasta un espacio depravado donde el orden social (revolucionario) se ha roto” (Uxó 265). Because Leo represents the liminal space between the state and the people, the crimes that he investigates take place in the same space that he inhabits. At the same time, as Leo’s friend Puchy reminds us above, the people of *el barrio* do not feel compelled to collaborate in the process to discover Cundo’s assassin and bring him or her to justice, as had been typical of the socialist detective novel. In fact, the opposite is true, as many members of the community attempt to hide information or throw Leo’s colleague, César, off track with misinformation. Through this contrast to the socialist

detective novel, Lunar Cardedo dismantles the façade of socialism and exposes a more plausible picture of the interactions between citizens and the law.

Imanol Petafunte does not have the same kind of relationship to his respective community as Leo. However, this difference is more indicative of the urban (Santo Domingo) setting of the novel as compared to the small-town atmosphere created by Lunar Cardedo, rather than a commentary on the figure of the detective itself. The novel portrays the dark and poverty-stricken portions of the urban space of Santo Domingo. As Rita De Maeseneer and Fernanda Bustamante assert:

el espacio representado es el de Mierdópolis, un Santo Domingo pobre donde nuevamente imperan la mugre, los escombros, los vómitos, el olor a orina, la violencia, todo ello bajo un estado climático que va de la mano del estado emocional de sus personajes: sujetos marginales atormentados que se desenvuelven en lluvias y vientos huracanados, que anuncian el desastre (404).

Teniente Petafunte inhabits this Santo Domingo, which solidifies his affiliation with the marginalized characters in the novel such as the victim, Renato, and his twin brother, Gustaff, and sets him apart from the vastly different Santo Domingo of the economically and socially privileged suspect, Sera.

However, to a certain extent, teniente Petafunte continues to occupy a similar liminal space with regards to the people and the authority. Petafunte enjoys a position of relative security and authority afforded to him by his profession: “Manejan por entre la ciudad oscura, sin miedo; las pistolas y los rangos les ofrecen seguridad, el hecho de ser policías los separa del resto de la humanidad: ellos están un poco más allá de la ley de la clase baja, ellos pueden sobrevivir en los barrios menores” (*Candela* 96). At the same time, the protagonist is aware of his socioeconomic position. He is dark-skinned and

comes from a humble background.<sup>31</sup> According to Christian, “Postcolonial detectives, approaching crime with a special sensitivity enhanced by their marginalized positions, are quick to notice societal contradictions because they have always been exploited by them” (2). This can most clearly be seen in Petafunte’s observations about the discrepancies in the justice system in which he works. He is not ignorant of the corruption and contradictions implicit in his society as well as professional environment. The narrator observes: “A lo largo de su trayectoria como policía ha visto como otros se ha desarrollado a partir de sobornos, de regalos y favores concedidos para que un compañero de menor nivel académico consiga puestos” (*Candela* 64). However, Petafunte fights to overcome these conditions to repair his society’s injustices, if only in this one case.

His perception of the crime he is investigating is colored by his own socially marginalized position. Imanol sympathizes with Renato not only because he is the victim and Sera is the attacker, but he also identifies with Renato and is positioned against Sera due to socioeconomic status. His attitude regarding this case and his quest for justice on behalf of the victim, compared with the complacency of his superiors, reflect his personal sense of responsibility to the members of his community, and, in particular, to Renato. Petafunte continues his investigation, motivated by his moral indignation and unable to accept social inequality, despite the difficulties presented by the privileged socioeconomic status of the assassin: “A Imanol lo jode el hecho de que la asesina deambule por la ciudad como se nada hubiese pasado” (76). However, the same marginalized position that allows him to identify with his victim makes him incapable of affecting change, as he reflects on the bribe money he accepted from his superior: “Por

---

<sup>31</sup> The racial description of Petafunte is not overt; however, the author subtly refers to his social status and at one point, another character describes him as “un moreno bello” (99).

un momento, durante la mañana, quiso ser diferente, quiso poner un grano de arena para que el país avanzara. Pero aunque también el dinero huele mal, de seguro que hiede menos que la pobreza” (64). Ultimately, despite his determination, or perhaps as a result of it, Petafunte meets the same fate as Renato; he is another victim of the same murderer.

### **The Detective’s Relationship to the Victim**

Due to his intimate connection with the community, the post-colonial detective’s association with the victim and the case to be investigated also takes on a dimension rarely seen in classical detective fiction or the traditional *novela negra*. In *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, Leo is not officially assigned the case he investigates. Instead, he discovers the case through a friend who knocks on his door in the middle of the night, highlighting his liminal status between his official position representing the law and his allegiance to his neighborhood. Not only this, but Leo has a personal relationship to the victim, “El Viejo Cundo,” having grown up spending time with him. Particularly Leo feels a sense of loyalty to the “Viejo Cundo,” describing him as a sort of father figure, who taught him to play baseball and even gave him his first drink (23). Based on this relationship, Leo vows to avenge his death and bring his killer to justice, going above and beyond the call his professional position stipulates. “Camino a mi casa me hice otra promesa, en silencio: ese hijoeputa, fuera quien fuera, iba a pagar lo que le había hecho al Viejo Cundo” (24). This personal and intimate relationship between victim and detective resurfaces constantly over the course of the novel, and ultimately, perhaps due to the motivation this personal interest provides, Leo succeeds in getting justice for his friend, restoring the relative social order of the community.

While Petafunte does not have the same long-standing personal relationship with the victim of his case, Renato, he does form a sort of emotional bond with him due to his inferior social position. Petafunte knows that he should remain impartial and indifferent, but he sympathizes with the victim more than his position of detective allows for: “Por segunda vez en el día, el corazón le pesa, pero también sabe que debe mitigar, aprender maiobras de vuelo, calmar los animales salvajes que lleva en las costillas, alejar esa pena profunda, como si lamentara la muerte de un hermano” (*Candela* 35). He blatantly ignores the directives of his captain, despite offerings of a bribe, to cease all investigation of the murder of Renato. Immediately following the discovery of the crime scene, Captain Rossana commands Petafunte to cease all investigation, claiming that the case has been closed. However, Petafunte, perceptive of the injustices perpetrated by the neo-colonial ruling class, can see right through the murderer, Sera Peñablanca: “Tiene la ropa húmeda, se encuentra un poco descompuesto pero para nada pierde el glamour de joven abogada graduada fuera del país y con dos idiomas sin acento” (23). This perceptive description reveals a character that exemplifies the neo-colonial ruling class of the Hispanic Caribbean.

Petafunte, sensitive to these socioeconomic inequalities, vows to continue his investigation to ultimately seek justice for the death of Renato, whom the narrator describes as a mulatto without education. He states decidedly “habría que adelantar la investigación hasta las últimas consecuencias, el hecho de que ella viniese de una familia pudiente no le daba exoneraciones ni ventajas” (64). The case becomes an obsession for Petafunte. It keeps him awake at night. He cannot stop thinking about it even when he is with the prostitute. The night before his own untimely death, Petafunte’s obsession with

Renato compels him to the victim's house. There he meets Renato's brother and spends the night drinking, smoking, and talking with him. The next morning, before going out to eat with Gustaff, Imanol "se toma la libertad de usar la ropa del muerto (119). He identifies so much with the victim that it is almost as though they fuse identities. "al ponerse los pantalones del muerto tiene que asumir su destierro" (133). Petafunte perseveres to the end to seek justice for Renato, who in death is as socially inferior as he was in life, but ultimately Petafunte succumbs to the same fate, suggesting that there is little justice in Dominican society. The novel ends as it began, with a cadaver in this street; this time Imanol's. "Los cadáveres abyectos de Renato e Imanol se exponen, pese a los intentos por ocultarlos, a los ojos de los *voyeurs* urbanos, mientras la sangre de sus cuerpos se mezcla con los otros desechos de la urbe, por lo que la ciudad y su espacio público por excelencia—la calle" (De Maeseneer and Bustamante 404).

## Conclusions

As we have seen in *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria* as well as in *Candela*, the post-colonial detective occupies an intermediary space that coincides, at least in part, with two social entities, the "oppressor" and the "oppressed." Both Leo and Imanol assume a profound obligation to seek justice on behalf of the individuals most oppressed by society. It also becomes clear over the course of both novels that these detectives do not merely investigate their respective assigned cases, but rather they also interrogate the evils of their societies. Pearson and Singer affirm that the investigations of hardboiled detectives demonstrate a tendency to "broaden out from individual criminal acts to implicate larger social ills...[and therefore] are easily adapted to the cultural critiques common to postcolonial literature" (Pearson and Singer 6). In both novels, the

social criticisms of class differences and social and political corruption are evident in the behavior of the detectives and the motives that inspire their actions.

The conclusions of each novel ultimately reflect two different views of the future. In *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*, Leo ultimately proves the innocence of the wrongly accused and brings the guilty party to justice. Justice ultimately triumphs, offering a grain of hope for a more just society in the future. However, in *Candela*, it is injustice that ultimately prevails. Petafunte, as the only character determined to get justice for Renato and punish his murderer, represents the quest for social justice. As such, his death represents also the lack of hope to rectify the social injustice characterized in the novel. In the next chapter, I will return to Rey Emmanuel Andújar's work with an analysis of the figure of the detective in his first novel, *El hombre triángulo*. While the detective-protagonist in this novel is also a marginalized figure, the novel departs completely from previous models in that the investigation of a crime is only important insofar as it compels the protagonist to confront his past and examine his sexual identity. Thus, the personal struggles of the detective figure become a vehicle through which to examine masculinity and sexuality within the context of the Dominican Republic.

#### Chapter 4: Detective-less Crimes and Crime-less Detectives

Can novels without a crime giving rise to a plot structured by a detective character who pursues the truth be considered crime fiction? In the typical crime novel, the plot revolves around the detective's investigation and the solution of the crime. During this investigation, the reader learns little of the detective's personal life or ideologies. In this study, I have argued that the many authors of the Hispanic Caribbean *novela negra* knowingly invert the classical model, which allows the reader to relate on a more personal level to the detective and the victim and provides a more nuanced knowledge of the crime and its social implications. As a result, crime fiction from the Hispanic Caribbean engages more deeply with the detective-protagonists' socio-historic and geopolitical contexts. Of note are the poverty, inequality, and corruption prevalent in the contemporary Hispanic Caribbean, and the resulting increase in crime and violence perpetrated by both the individual and the state. As Maureen T. Reddy notes, "[t]he codes and conventions of each genre are intertwined with the codes and conventions of the society in which the literary texts are produced, making genre fiction an especially useful arena for investigating race and gender" (1-2). I argue that the lack of detective and/or crime investigation in the novels studied in this chapter confront the "codes and conventions" of crime and justice in the Hispanic Caribbean to explore the contemporary social issues mentioned above. In addition, the exploration of gender and sexuality is particularly discernable in the last novel I will examine, as the detective featured in this novel reveals conflicts of sexuality and masculinity within the context of the historically and stereotypically *machista* and heteronormative culture of the Dominican Republic.

This chapter considers two texts in which the detective is absent along with one novel in which the detective does not investigate a crime; rather, the novel focuses exclusively on the personal life and psychology of the detective. All three texts are exemplary of Hispanic Caribbean authors' innovation of the crime genre to explore culturally relevant issues. The texts that lack a detective provide a complimentary layer of analysis that presents crime as a vehicle through which to understand culture. Josefina Ludmer's study of crime in Argentinean culture and fiction, *El cuerpo del delito: Un manual*, is useful in thinking through crime fiction that lacks a crime or a detective. She posits that crime itself is a useful critical tool given that "desde el comienzo mismo de la literatura, el delito aparece como uno de los instrumentos más utilizados para definir y fundar una cultura..." (12-13). She further claims: "El 'delito', que es una frontera móvil, histórica y cambiante (los delitos cambian con el tiempo), no sólo nos puede servir para diferenciar, separar y excluir, sino también para relacionar el estado, la política, la sociedad, los sujetos, la cultura y la literatura" (14). In other words, the examination of what is considered to be "crime" in any given society provides useful ways in which to view that society's ideals and priorities.

Ludmer posits a relationship between crime and culture, and her theory provides a means for us to analyze the fictional crimes in the texts I discuss here within the context of the Hispanic Caribbean. In Luis López Nieves' *Seva: Historia de la primera invasión norteamericana de la Isla de Puerto Rico, ocurrida en mayo de 1898* (2000 - Puerto Rico) and Emilia Pereyra's *El crimen verde* (1994 - Dominican Republic), crimes are committed, but there is little to no effort on the part of government officials or police officers to investigate these offenses. Any investigation that does occur is not central to

the plot of the novels. The investigative process, as stipulated by Cawelti and discussed at length throughout this project, is central to a detective story, and its absence as well as the absence of the figure of the detective should preclude these novels from being included within the detective genre. However, these novels still provide important social commentary on crime and deception perpetrated on a massive scale by the state, as seen in *Seva*, and the inability of the state to maintain law and order among the populace, as observed in *El crimen verde*.

Rey Emmanuel Andújar's *El hombre triángulo* (2005 – Dominican Republic) is similar to *Seva* and *El crimen verde* in that it lacks a key component of what is typically considered to be detective fiction, but it contrasts with those novels in that it features no specific crime. Instead, the novel focuses on the personal life of a character who happens to be a detective. This detective-protagonist is even less similar to the classical detective characters of C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes than American hard-boiled detectives such as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. The protagonist of *El hombre triángulo* struggles throughout the novel with his past abuse and sexual identity; his personal challenges separate him from the traditional stereotype of the white, heterosexual, hyper-masculine detective figure featured in the American hard-boiled novel. Through the juxtaposition of this sexually conflicted character with the hypermasculinity of the stereotypical detective figure, Andújar interrogates the normative masculinity that permeates Dominican culture.

As we have seen already in the case of the Puerto Rican detective novels discussed in previous chapters, authors such as Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá and Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón consciously undertook the task of producing works that did not conform

to the conventions of the classical detective story or the American hard-boiled novel. This is particularly salient given the motif of preoccupation with national identity in the Puerto Rican literary tradition and resulting disdain for the crime novel as a frivolous genre. This chapter explores Luis López Nieves's short novel *Seva: Historia de la primera invasión norteamericana de la Isla de Puerto Rico, ocurrida en mayo de 1898*, which details the non-traditional investigation of a historical crime perpetrated by the state. While the novel acknowledges the frivolous nature of the crime genre through its narrative form, at the same time it is deeply concerned with the question of national identity. Thus, *Seva* both affirms and adapts the detective story to explore the myth of the "Docile Puerto Rican" and reimagine the history of the US invasion of 1898.

This chapter also considers the way in which the crime genre is altered to represent the social reality of the Dominican Republic through the novels of Emilia Pereyra and Rey Emmanuel Andújar. Pereyra's *El crimen verde* is considered to be the first "*novela policiaca*" written and published in the Dominican Republic; however, law enforcement only appears obliquely throughout the novel, as the narration focuses on the perpetrators of the crime in the months following the murder and quartering of the victim's body. The relative absence of Dominican law enforcement throughout the novel draws the reader's attention to the vivid depiction of the crime itself. The reader also becomes acutely aware of Pereyra's depiction of the criminal justice system as inefficient at best; corrupt and malevolent at worst. Unlike *El crimen verde*, Rey Emmanuel Andújar's *El hombre triángulo* lacks the investigation of specific crime. Rather, the narration features a suicidal detective as he struggles with his sexuality and coming to terms with his abusive past.

As outlined in the introduction of this dissertation, Cawelti proposes four main features that characterize classical detective stories that can be summarized as the following: First, the story must begin with an unsolved crime. Typically, the story will begin *in medias res*, with the crime having already been committed and the detective arriving on the scene to begin the process of elucidating the mystery. Second, the action of the story must center on the following phases: “(a) introduction of the detective; (b) crime and clues; (c) investigation; (d) announcement of the solution; (e) explanation of the solution; (f) denouement” (82). Third, the classical detective story requires four main characters to participate in the plot: “(a) the victim; (b) the criminal; (c) the detective; and (d) those threatened by the crime but incapable of solving it” (91). Finally, the setting is the fourth defining convention of the genre. In the classical detective story, the majority of the plot takes place at the scene of the crime and in the detective’s office, both of which are isolated from the impending chaos of the urban landscape that surrounds them (96).

The American hard-boiled novel begins to deviate from these conventions, while at the same time it is necessary to preserve certain characteristics to maintain the integrity of the genre.<sup>32</sup> The third and fourth conventions are where the American hard-boiled novel begins to break down the traditional formula. In the American hard-boiled novel, the characters often do not fit into the four strictly defined categories proposed by Cawelti; however, the character of the detective remains constant. With respect to the

---

<sup>32</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, Lewis D. Moore divides the history of the American hard-boiled genre into three periods: Early (1927-1955), Transitional (1964-1977), and Modern (1979-Present). His study explains that the genre evolved over time during these three periods and that each subsequent incarnation of the genre deviated increasingly from the conventions of the classical detective story.

setting, the detective is no longer sheltered from the impending chaos of the city by remaining isolated in his office or at the scene of the crime. Rather, he becomes enmeshed in, and therefore affected by, the urban landscape around him.

The stories and novels analyzed in this study begin to depart significantly from even the American hard-boiled structure as authors adapt the genre to reflect social realities in the Hispanic Caribbean. However, the novels examined throughout this chapter diverge so drastically from the genre's conventions that they can no longer be considered detective or crime fiction in a traditional sense. All the Hispanic Caribbean novels I analyze here lack essential elements of the classical detective novel that had been preserved in the American hard-boiled novel, namely detectives and crimes. However, each text focuses on a particular element of the genre and, in so doing, provides a particular lens through which to view elements of social commentary. For example, both Pereyra's and López Nieves's novels focus on a detailed description of the crime, its perpetrators, and their respective motives. However, the figure of the detective himself is absent, as is the traditional investigative process. Conversely, Andújar's novel concentrates on the detective and his interior (psychological and emotional) spaces at the expense of a specific crime, investigation process, and resolution. The departure from the classical detective formula highlights the cultural specificity of the times and places in which these novels emerge. By abandoning the formulaic nature of the genre, the authors studied in this chapter are free to focus on deeper social themes such as police brutality, abject incompetence of the police force, and government corruption. Further, more individual topics such as sexual identity, past pain, and personal existentialism can be examined. In other words, these authors are not constrained by having to fit their stories

within the conventions of the genre, but rather are able to explore different facets of their characters, settings, and crimes.

### ***El crimen verde: Absent Detectives***

Crime defines the values that are important to a culture at any given point in history and the transgressions that are deemed to be egregiously unacceptable highlight a society's moral priorities. Ludmer's aforementioned study focuses on crime as a tool by which to define various aspects and priorities of culture. She argues that the way in which crime is portrayed in literature throughout the history of diverse cultures is useful for determining societal characteristics at varying points throughout human history, because the nature of crime itself is ever-changing and evolving. Additionally, she posits that crime in literature provides a lens through which to view social connections and interactions: "En las ficciones literarias 'el delito' podría leerse como *una constelación* que articula sujetos: voces, palabras, culturas, creencias y cuerpos determinados. Y que también articula la ley, la justicia, la verdad y el estado con esos sujetos" (14). Therefore, through the fictional representation of crime, the reader is able to glean a sense of a particular society's view of law and justice, the role that both individuals and the state play in these systems, and the way in which individuals interact with each other as well as members of the state.

Ludmer applies this concept of crime as social indicator to various crime stories throughout the literary history of Argentina, defining her study as "un 'manual de las conversaciones' de una cultura a partir de los 'cuentos de delitos' de su literatura" (16). Throughout the study, she uses crime as a critical tool to address cultural constructions including gender, sexuality, politics, power, and nationalism in short stories, novels, and

films produced in Argentina in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adopting Ludmer's concept of crime as social indicator, I view the crimes portrayed in two novels, one in the Dominican Republic and others in Puerto Rico, as expressions of political and legal relationships between individuals and the state, and as representations of societal priorities and concerns in specific times and places. The crimes described in these two novels confront the weakness of the contemporary criminal justice system of the Dominican Republic (*El crimen verde*) and the general perception of distrust of political and legal authorities in Puerto Rico following the Cerro Maravilla scandal of 1978 (*Seva*).

Crime as a critical tool in the examination of social structures and their implications is especially useful in the analysis of Emilia Pereyra's *El crimen verde* (1994). Pereyra, born in Azua, Dominican Republic, in 1963, is a writer and journalist. She studied social communication at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo and received her Master's degree in multimedia journalism from the Universidad del País Vasco in Spain. In addition to writing for several Dominican periodicals, Pereyra has published three novels including *El crimen verde*, *Cenizas del querer* (2000), and *Cóctel de frenesí* (2003). She has also written a collection of short stories entitled *El inapelable designio de Dios* (2007). Several of her short stories have been included in various anthologies, although few scholarly texts have been published about Pereyra's works outside of the Dominican Republic.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Dominican author and literary critic Avelino Stanley includes a chapter on Pereyra and *El crimen verde* in his study, *La novela dominicana 1980-2009: Perfil de su desarrollo*. Outside of the Dominican Republic, the anthology *Dominican Women Writers on the Edge: Alienation, Pain and Resistance* includes an interview with Pereyra conducted by H.J. Manzari (2014), a version of which was previously published in *Confluencia* in 2002 with the title of "Comenzamos a salir de la isla: entrevista con Emilia Pereyra." Aside

*El crimen verde* has been said to be the first crime novel to emerge from the Dominican Republic. However, the novel cannot be considered traditional in any sense of the genre, since it does not follow any of the conventions of the classical detective novel, nor the American hard-boiled novel. Additionally, it would be difficult to assert that the novel is an inversion of the traditional genre, because it lacks almost all of the essential elements that characterize a crime novel. As such, Pereyra's debut novel can be seen as the creation of a new manifestation of this genre, particular to the cultural and social context of the Dominican Republic. H. J. Manzari comments: "Pereyra descubrió un original filón literario al adaptar un género foráneo, la novela policiaca, al contexto cultural de la República Dominicana. La aparición de esta pionera novela policiaca dominicana supuso una audaz propuesta cuyo impacto en la novelística posterior está aún por estudiar" (149). While the novel does not exhibit the elements or style of great works of detective literature, nor has it been widely studied outside of the Dominican Republic, it is important in its groundbreaking introduction of crime novels in a country in which the literary tradition had mainly focused on topics of national identity, rural life, and the legacy of authoritarianism of the Trujillato.

In the same interview, Manzari asks Pereyra to comment on the lack of *género negro* novels in the Dominican literary landscape, to which she responds: "Me parece que el *género negro* no es muy valorado en la República Dominicana. De hecho, alguna gente me ha dicho, ¿pero cómo escribes tu primera novela sobre un tema tan escabroso?...Tal vez debido a esa percepción, a ese freno que creo que prevalece entre escritores y escritoras, no se ha desarrollado el *género negro*" (151). Interestingly, I noted while

---

from these sources, there have been no other academic studies published on Pereyra's work.

living in the Dominican Republic that there exists a widespread view that the *género negro* is too macabre to be tasteful and enjoyed on a wide scale, yet the general public is fascinated by true accounts of crime and violence in the local media. In fact, in recent years, the pervasive consumer-like obsession with gruesome crime details has led to public sharing of photos on social media of crime scene photos, and particularly cadaver photos, as I have experienced in two cases of the deaths of family members of close friends. In both instances, the individuals affected implored via social media that people refrain from disseminating the gruesome images of their deceased loved ones. In contrast, fictionalized accounts of similar gruesome descriptions do not seem to be met with widespread popularity, as evidenced in Pereyra's observations. Perhaps the lack of interest in crime fiction is due, in part, to the pervasiveness of real violence in the everyday lived experiences of Dominicans for the entirety of the island's history. Examples range from the violent Spanish conquest of the Taino people; to the intra-island conflicts with Haiti; to the violent Trujillato; to the contemporary prevalence of domestic violence in the country. The country's historical violence combined with the overabundance of media and social media representations of modern violence have created a saturation of real-life violent images. Thus, the crime novel does not provide the type of "escapist" literature that it did for consumers of the classical detective story in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Great Britain and of the American hard-boiled novel in the early- to mid-twentieth century in the United States.

With regard to the role of the criminal justice system in controlling violence in the Dominican Republic, both fictional and journalistic publications indicate a flawed structure. In a 2012 article in the Puerto Rican newspaper *El Nuevo Día*, Limarys Suárez

Torres wrote that drug traffickers have found “una meca para sus negocios ilícitos en la República Dominicana, gracias a la debilidad institucional y la corrupción en este país.” Moreover, the process of prosecution is long and convoluted. According to the accused drug trafficker Marcos Irizarry, “[e]l sistema de justicia aquí no es el mismo al nuestro. El proceso es largo y te conviertes en abogado para poder entender lo que te está pasando,” which demonstrates that the process of prosecution is not as transparent as that of Puerto Rico or the United States. In addition, the article describes differing living conditions for prisoners, dependent upon their economic and political statuses. For example, “[l]os presos ricos -grandes narcotraficantes y banqueros corruptos- viven como reyes aun dentro de la cárcel, con celdas privadas, aire acondicionado, televisor y teléfonos celulares” (Suárez Torres). In contrast, those prisoners that do not have the economic status to warrant this treatment are subject to far worse conditions. Pereyra’s novel vividly captures the corruption, institutional weakness, and ambiguity in the legal system, and differing treatment of criminals described in this article.<sup>34</sup>

Police corruption in the Dominican Republic is not a recent phenomenon and can be seen at least as far back as Balaguer’s presidency, beginning in 1966 (Berroa). During his presidency, with the support of the United States government, Balaguer employed the National Police as his personal servants in carrying out the extermination of any potential opposition to his government in the name of anticommunism. At the same time, the social construction of “crime” took on new meaning as “Balaguer trató de minimizar el crimen a través de definiciones relacionadas con las tendencias culturales de los dominicanos,

---

<sup>34</sup> See also the comic film *Perico Ripiao* (dir. Ángel Muñiz, 2003) for a critique of corruption in the prison and criminal justice systems in the Dominican Republic at the end of Balaguer’s second presidency.

herederos de las tradiciones trujillistas, mientras intentaba fortalecer la percepción de que el crimen era una respuesta necesaria para evitar la aparición del comunismo” (Berroa 25). In other words, under Balaguer, the government became the sole legitimate perpetrator of crime in the name of protecting the nation from communist ideology that could lead to a similar fate as Cuba’s.

While police corruption and violence during the presidency of Balaguer can be examined and understood within the political and social context of his regime and desire to eliminate all opposition, the corruption and violence in the Dominican legal and political systems does not end there. Rather, agents of the law continue to demonstrate their inefficacy through continued violence and corruption. Berroa propounds various causes of this corrupt and violent legal system, including the extreme poverty and conditions of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in which many police officers were raised (47). He also explains the dehumanization of those in charge of applying justice in the Dominican Republic and the resulting perception of the police by the public: “La violencia policial hoy sigue afectando a la institución, pero con motivaciones que señalan la desintegración de los valores, la crisis social y la incapacidad que ha venido caracterizando a los partidos tradicionales” (55). In other words, while the Dominican Republic is no longer suffering under a violent authoritarian dictator in the guise of “democracy,” police corruption continues to pervade Dominican society, reflecting the greater societal ills. In this context, the police force is rendered useless in the best of cases and continues to be the perpetrators of violence in crime in the worst of cases.

*El crimen verde* provides a literary lens through which to view the inefficacy of the corrupt police force in the Dominican Republic. Based on a true story, the novel

details the account of an American expat who is murdered by two other American expats. The murderers subsequently devise a plan to dispose of his body and appropriate his land and monetary wealth. As a journalist, Pereyra had access to all the articles and police reports related to this atrocious crime, and consequently wove together pieces of reality with fiction to create the polyphonic narrative, *El crimen verde*. In his interview, Manzari asked Pereyra if it was her intention to write the first *novela negra* in the Dominican Republic when she wrote *El crimen verde*. She responded: “cuando la escribí no tenía plena conciencia de que estaba entrando en un terreno literario inexplorado en mi país. La obra está basada en un hecho real y tal acontecimiento me estremeció tanto que desencadenó un proceso creativo muy fuerte e intenso” (40).<sup>35</sup> Pereyra’s inspiration for *El crimen verde* came from a particularly gruesome murder that had been committed in Santo Domingo at the time that she was working as a journalist for a local newspaper. The crime and following investigation affected Pereyra emotionally, yet she was able to utilize her access to the documents from the police investigations to create her novel.

The fact that the novel is based in reality, taking from events that occurred and combining them with fiction, lends the text well to an analysis of the crime as commentary on late-twentieth-century Dominican social, political, and legal systems and the history of corruption and inefficacy in these systems. However, Pereyra also injects many elements of fiction into her narration of the crime committed, several of which are also very telling of her perception of the political and legal climate in which this crime occurred. For example, Pereyra states: “Muchos personajes no existieron y muchas

---

<sup>35</sup> Here, I am quoting from the revised version of the previously referenced interview that was published later in the collection *Dominican Women Writers on the Edge: Alienation, Pain and Resistance* (2014).

situaciones no se dieron en la realidad. Por ejemplo, los acusados aún no han sido condenados. Sin embargo, en la novela ellos son sentenciados” (Manzari 150). In her alteration of reality in the novel, Pereyra rewrites history in an attempt to pursue legal justice for the victim of this heinous crime. At the same time, the novel underscores the major failings of the Dominican legal system.

The unique form of narration of *El crimen verde* differentiates the novel from the classical detective story and provides the reader with multiple viewpoints. As mentioned previously, the novel is narrated from a variety of perspectives, including a third-person omniscient narrator; the night watchman of the victim’s apartment building; Belinda Torres, the Dominican girlfriend of one of the murderers; and two letters written in the first person between peripheral characters living in the United States informing them of the details of the crime. The classical detective story is typically narrated in the first person, or omniscient third person from the perspective of either the detective or his associate. In the case of the hard-boiled novel, the narrator is most often the detective himself. In both cases, the reader receives access to information relevant to the crime as the detective uncovers each clue and detail. However, given the absence of a detective figure in *El crimen verde*, the variety of perspectives allows the reader access to many details of the crime and its subsequent cover-up and discovery that would not be available to the detective or the reader in a classical detective story.

Much like the classical detective story or the American hard-boiled novel, *El crimen verde* begins *in medias res* as the night watchman narrates his experience when the police arrive after the murder of Karl Smith. The night watchman addresses his narration to a second person interlocutor, Carmela, who is presumably his spouse. In the

third chapter, two marginal characters, Alberto and Tirso, discover plastic bags disposed of in the river, which contain the dismembered body of Karl Smith. In the fourth chapter, the narration flashes back to the weeks leading up to the crime, as the third-person omniscient narrator describes the advent of the plan to murder Karl Smith. Belinda Torres originated the idea one night as a joke when she was out with her boyfriend Max Meyers and Bill Ryan, two other expatriates residing in the Dominican Republic. Later, Meyers and Ryan contemplated the idea further: “Fue a Bill Ryan a quien se le ocurrió que lo mejor era descuartizar el cuerpo y lanzar los pedazos al mar para que fuera alimento de tiburones y jamás apareciera. Después sería fácil apropiarse de los dos apartamentos, el carro y del local comercial, propiedades de Karl Smith” (18-19). As the description of the crime unfolds, the reader is privy to details of the execution of the crime and the disposal of the body. None of this information would be known to the readers of a classical detective novel at this point in the story, as narrated from the perspective of the detective while he investigates the crime. Here, however, the reader is not left wondering as to the identity or motive of the murderers, but rather if and when their crime will be discovered and persecuted. This structure points the reader’s attention away from the investigation and toward the law enforcement and criminal justice systems. As a result, by moving away from classical conventions, this “crime novel” goes beyond merely reflecting the social reality of the Dominican Republic to interrogate the efficacy, transparency, equity, and integrity of state power.

The inefficacy of the Dominican justice system is underscored throughout the novel, as Bill Ryan and Max Meyers are convinced of the unlikelihood that their crime will be discovered, as noted in the following conversation between the two: “‘Nadie nos

relacionará. No habrá huellas. El crimen perfecto.’ ‘No hay crimen perfecto. Eso lo he oído tantas veces’ replicó Bill. ‘Tonterías. Burradas. En ese país hay montones de crímenes que nunca se descubren. Esos son crímenes perfectos’” (34).<sup>36</sup> In fact, the perceived weakness of the Dominican legal system and idiocy of law enforcement allow for Bill and Max to even entertain the idea of committing this crime. Convinced of this major flaw in the Dominican criminal justice system, Bill and Max proceed with their plan. The reader is led to speculate as to why Bill and Max seem so convinced that officers of the law are so incompetent that such a gruesome crime will go undiscovered in “this country.” As the reader focuses his or her attention on the criminals’ perception of Dominican law enforcement, the novel adapts the norms of the traditional detective story to dialogue with the cultural and social context of the Hispanic Caribbean.

Returning to Ludmer’s theory that crime provides a lens through which we can view a society’s moral priorities, the gruesome, but detached and impersonal description of the murder of Karl Smith and the subsequent quartering of his body allows the reader to understand the psychosis of the criminals involved, which is perhaps a commentary on the Dominican perspective of these American murderers. In the following quote, the narrator describes the heartlessness with which the murderers treated their victim: “Max Meyers siguió la operación con indiferencia, fumando parsimoniosamente, la mirada fija sobre el cuerpo agonizante” (50). Then, to assure that he was dead, Bill Ryan kicked Karl’s bloody corpse. “Bill Ryan sabía que le esperaba un trabajo muy fuerte...No estaba nervioso. Su estado era normal. Prefería pensar que iba a trocear un animal. Así

---

<sup>36</sup> The direct quotes from the American characters in the novel display incorrect syntax and grammatical structures through which Pereyra reflects that she is imitating the language of Spanish-language learners.

despersonalizaba el trabajo” (53). As Ryan and Meyers proceed with the quartering, they make jokes, laugh uproariously, listen to music, drink whiskey, and take snack breaks. Meyers even takes a souvenir from the cadaver: “tomó un ojo del cadáver y lo echó en un pote de vidrio lleno de alcohol. Fue hasta la habitación y lo escondió en una gaveta repleta de calzoncillos y medias” (55). The reader begins to wonder at what point these men became so cold and dehumanized that they are able to carry out the act of disarticulating the body of another human, seemingly without a shred of remorse. Only at one point does Max Meyers seem to show signs of guilt for his actions. After spending the night cleaning the blood from the apartment, he finds himself unable to sleep, with images of Karl Smith’s dismembered body and bones flooding his mind, whereas Bill Ryan sleeps deeply (85). Even later, when Belinda, Max’s girlfriend, expresses concern over what he has done, instead of remorse, Max expresses anger towards her: “El semblante de Max enrojeció, sus ojos chispearon. Me parece que la ira se posesionó súbitamente de todo su cuerpo, y sus manos se cerraron... ‘Pensar antes tú estar conmigo, no contra mí. ¡Ve, correr, a polis!’ gritó” (94). Throughout this description of the crime, Pereyra portrays these American expats as cold, remorseless psychopaths, while at the same time the characters in the novel demonstrate a general lack of shock in response to a crime of this nature in the Dominican Republic.

Initially, it appears the pair will get away with the crime as a result of the inefficacy or laziness of the local police. Max and Bill enter a deal to sell Karl’s property to Ralf Guber, an acquaintance that Max had met years ago in the Netherlands. When they finally explain to Ralf the true origin of the property, Ralf is incredulous: “Lo que no entiendo es ¿cómo no lo han identificado?, aunque tú lo hayas hecho pedazos. En otro

país ya se hubiera sabido quién es” (103). With this comment, Pereyra points to the egregious deficiencies in the Dominican judicial system compared to countries in the developed world. While the identity of the deceased would probably have been ascertained by that point in a different location and legal system, in the Dominican Republic, the newspaper had only reported that human remains had been discovered; their origin and identity were unknown. Bill Ryan assures Ralf: “Nadie podrá identificarlo nunca. Es imposible. Le saqué los dientes. Los trituré, los majé bien. No hay manera de reconocerlo” (103). Ryan and Meyers continue to mock the local police: “La Policía anda dando palos a ciegas. Yo leo en los periódicos y me doy cuenta de que no han encontrado nada. Ni siquiera saben de quién son los restos. Me da risa” (104). They remain convinced that they will not be discovered due to the ineffectualness, or perhaps even indifference, of the Dominican investigators. By contrast, Belinda remains anxious regarding her involvement in the crime, though Meyers assures her that there is no way they will be discovered: “¿No darte cuenta polis estar perdida? No saber nada. Investigadores no saber nada. Irrnorantes [sic]. Nunca atraparán nosotros. Disfrutar dinero” (119). Meyers again underscores the incompetence of the local police force, further undermining their authority and reliability. Additionally, the bastardized Spanish spoken by the perpetrators reflects a general indifference, if not scorn, for the local culture and people.

Not only does the novel highlight the failings of Dominican law enforcement, it also points to political corruption on a higher level. After the initial crime is committed, Max Meyers entrusts Belinda to handle the legal side of selling Karl Smith’s properties through her personal and romantic connections to Congressman Isidro Vargas. The

chapters in which Belinda interacts with Vargas illuminate the underpinnings of the Dominican political system: coercion, personal favors, and corruption. The reader initially meets Vargas in the second chapter of the novel. Independently of Belinda Torres, the third-person narrator establishes his character and background, describing him as “casi analfabeto, pero tenía una inteligencia natural, agallas, intuición y tiro certero para triunfar en la marrullería y en toda suerte de trapisondas” (9). The narrator continues by describing Vargas’s rapid rise from poverty to political power through ruthlessness, guile, deception, and luck, presenting an archetype of Dominican politicians. His rise to power was so swift that he began to talk about running for the presidency, asserting: “Si hemos tenido analfabetos en la Presidencia de la República, por qué yo que soy un licenciado de la vida no puedo llegar a ese sitio. Agallas no me faltan” (10). It becomes evident in this quote that there is little respect for the office of president in the Dominican Republic, and that anyone who is aggressive enough can rise to the highest political office in the country, despite being illiterate. Additionally, the narrator describes the current president as a puppet master, further developing the reader’s perspective of politics in the Dominican Republic.

The lack of respect for the office of the president and the commonality of uneducated and illiterate politicians in positions of power can be seen throughout the political history of the Dominican Republic. Trujillo’s long ruling dictatorship was founded upon populism and caudillo politics, with very little ideological basis. According to Maja Horn, “a 1931 memo from First Secretary Cabot to the US State Department notes that ‘Trujillo was raised from the gutter by the Marine Corps and started toward this present position’” (33). In other words, Trujillo did not come from a well-educated

and elite socioeconomic background. However, he molded himself as a leader through the ideals of the United States Marines, including “competence, organization, and discipline,” rather than intellectual talent and accomplishments, such as former Dominican president and intellectual Juan Bosch (Horn 34). As we will see later, Trujillo founded his rule on particular constructs of masculinity, virility, and power, rather than on political or intellectual ideologies. As Horn asserts, “...Trujillo, who was not part of the upper echelons of society and resented the Dominican elites for their initial rejection of him, identified himself insistently as the people’s candidate” (36). The character of Isidro Vargas portrays an attitude similar to Trujillo’s toward holding a political office and governing.

The second time the narration comes back to Isidro Vargas, the narrator describes how he first met Belinda Torres. Although married, Vargas continued to enjoy many sexual conquests throughout his travels and political dealings. However, most women seemed to be more interested in what his power and money could do for them than anything else. Belinda was different. She never asked for anything and seemed to just enjoy his company, and as a result, Vargas fell in love with her and proposed marriage to her. Belinda, uninterested, disappeared for a time (47). When Vargas finally found her, she insisted that they just be friends. Just as the initial description of Vargas is important for the reader to understand the politically corrupt nature of his persona, this chapter sets up the relationship between the two of them for the reader to understand how, unlike other women, she never asked for anything, making him more in love with her and willing to do anything she asked.

In the third appearance of Vargas, Belinda enters his office at Congress after a seemingly long absence and Vargas is delighted to see her (71), but nothing comes from the encounter as Belinda storms off. Finally, Belinda calls Vargas in a panic. She wants him to purchase Karl's apartments from Meyers and Ryan. However, Vargas is suspicious regarding the origin of the apartments and is concerned about his political image. Belinda retorts: "No seas necio...Puedes hacer lo que te dé la gana. Tú me lo has dicho. No me vengas con esas historias. Siempre me dijiste que podías hacer lo que yo quisiera y ahora que te necesito, que acudo a ti por primera vez en la vida, pones excusa...Nadie te acusará de nada" (139). It is implied that Vargas concedes; however, later, the president discovers that Vargas has been involved in the crime and removes him from his political position (150). Ultimately, Vargas avoids punishment due to his political influence. His extramarital sexual relationship with Belinda, subsequent involvement in the cover-up of the crime to appease her, and ultimate avoidance of punishment due to social and political status, all underscore the corruption of the Dominican political and criminal justice systems.

Eventually, the reader discovers that the crime was not as perfect as Max Meyers and Bill Ryan had hoped. The narration switches to a letter written to Pam, a former girlfriend of Bill Ryan, from her mother, explaining that Bill had participated in a horrific crime that involved quartering (63). The news had reached the United States via telegram, indicating that it had also been discovered in the Dominican Republic, contrary to the criminals' initial predictions of never being found out. Eventually, several months after Karl's death, having heard nothing from him for many weeks, Karl's brother Tom goes to the Dominican Republic looking for him. When Tom can't find his brother, he goes to

the police (92). Although the exact timeframe is not made clear in the novel, some time later, the police detain Ralf Guber, who in turn confesses to having purchased the property from Ryan and Meyers.

As Pereyra specified in the previously cited interview, although the criminals had not yet been sentenced in reality, at the end of the novel, both Bill Ryan and Max Meyers are sentenced to thirty years in prison. Belinda Torres receives fifteen years; her friend, Tatis Ramírez; and Ralf Guber receive ten years each; and Arturo Ben, the lawyer, receives three years. The only other party involved, Isidro Vargas, is ultimately declared innocent and escapes with no punishment. Vargas's declared innocence is telling of the unique position of impunity that Dominican politicians occupy with regards to the legal system. In addition, Pereyra's sentencing of the criminals in her novel is a revisionist commentary on the lack of justice within the Dominican legal system. Throughout the novel, the inefficacy and outright stupidity of the police investigators is highlighted repeatedly, as is the corruption of the political system. The chaotic, disjointed, and inefficient nature of these systems is directly reflected in the fragmented, disordered, and discontinuous narration of Pereyra's novel. The inversion, or perhaps perversion, of the classical detective genre underlines the ineffectiveness of the traditional model to adequately portray the nature of crime and justice in the urban Dominican Republic in the twentieth century, since a novel that responds to this social context inherently cannot follow the conventions as stipulated by Cawelti.

### ***Seva: The State as Criminal***

An examination of crime and its relationship to social and cultural paradigms is also valuable in a very different way in the analysis of Luis López Nieves's *Seva: Historia*

*de la primera invasión norteamericana de la isla de Puerto Rico ocurrida en mayo de 1898*. First published in the culture and literature section of the Puerto Rican newspaper, *Claridad*, López Nieves's story rewrites the official history of the North American invasion of the island three months prior to the official chronicle detailed in the annals of history. Luis López Nieves was born in Puerto Rico in 1950. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, and completed his graduate studies (Master's in Hispanic Literature and Doctorate in Comparative Literature) from SUNY Stony Brook. He has published many short stories, including two collections, *Escribir para Rafa* (1987) and *La verdadera muerte de Juan Ponce de León* (2000); two novels, *El corazón de Voltaire* (2005) and *El silencio de Galileo* (2009); as well as many newspaper articles, essays, and columns. *Seva*, originally published in *Claridad* on December 23, 1983, was inspired by López Nieves's graduate studies during which his reading of the Spanish epic poems caused him to reflect on the lack of the same in the Puerto Rican literary canon: "echaba de menos una epopeya puertorriqueña. Esta tristeza ya no lo abandonaría y, tal vez para deshacerse de ella, a los pocos meses tomó una seria determinación: ya que no existía (o no se conocía) una gloriosa y potente epopeya...sólo quedaba una cosa por hacer: inventarla" (85). As a result, López Nieves researched and (re)wrote Puerto Rican history.

*Seva* provoked an unprecedented polemic, for many historians, academics, and laymen interpreted the narrative, given its particular literary form and medium of publication, as historical fact rather than a work of fiction.<sup>37</sup> The story takes the form of a

---

<sup>37</sup> When *Seva* was first published in *Claridad*, it did not explicitly mention that it was a work of fiction (García-Calderon 200).

letter to the director of *Claridad* from the fictional “Luis López Nieves”<sup>38</sup> in which he includes diary entries, letters, photographs, maps, and other historical documents he has received from his friend, Víctor Cabañas, a local university professor. The narrator is concerned about his friend’s disappearance, as Cabañas mentions in his letters that he is sending copies of his research to Luis as a safeguard in case something should happen to him. Within Cabañas’s letters and research, he explains that he has discovered an error in the official discourse of Puerto Rican history relating to the United States invasion of August of 1898. Upon reading a book about Puerto Rico’s oral, folkloric history, Cabañas was intrigued by a supposed error in the text, mentioning the United States invasion of May of 1898. The author addresses the “error” in a footnote and provides two possible explanations: simple ignorance spread orally, or poetic license employed in the interest of maintaining a particular rhyme scheme (19). Regardless, Cabañas believes there to be another possible explanation and sets out to prove that there was a United States invasion of Puerto Rico prior to the August invasion as described in the official historical records. His investigative process takes him throughout Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., Spain, and Puerto Rico again, during which time he discovers that the invasion he imagined did, indeed, take place in May of 1898. As a result of that invasion, the population of an entire town (Seva) was massacred and eradicated from the official Puerto Rican maps to conceal the crime and protect its perpetrators. In its place, a military base was constructed and a new town, Ceiba, was established nearby to explain any inquiry as to the locus of Seva. According to (fictional) historical documents found in Washington, D.C., the

---

<sup>38</sup> Although the author of the short novel *Seva* is Luis López Nieves, the fictional narrator within the story also bears the same name. To avoid confusion or conflation of the two, throughout this project I will refer to the fictional character as Luis and the author as López Nieves.

suggestion to create a town called Ceiba came from “Luis M. Rivera,” who thought: “De esta manera si alguien pregunta por Seva se le responderá: ‘Usted se equivoca, el nombre correcto es ‘Ceiba’” (38). Cabañas continues his investigation in Spain where he eventually comes across a map showing the original Seva, confirming his previous research and conjectures. Shortly after this discovery, Cabañas returns to Puerto Rico in search of the only individual reported to have escaped the massacre of Seva, then a nine-year-old boy who would now be in his nineties.

In previous chapters, I discussed the general preoccupation with national identity seen in many canonical works of Puerto Rican literature. In *Seva*, López Nieves employs different literary strategies to reimagine the national story of Puerto Rico and to fill what he perceived as a void in the literary canon: an epic poem or narrative detailing the heroic foundation of the nation.<sup>39</sup> Myrna García-Calderon asserts: “Su reescritura polémica y subversiva de la historia puertorriqueña intenta romper con los viejos mitos que la literatura y la historia oficial puertorriqueña de distintos momentos han propulsado: la falta de rumbo, el pesimismo, la docilidad y la derrota” (202). López Nieves directly responds to the trope of the “docile Puerto Rican” by portraying a much different, and not at all docile, community of Seva and its violent and valiant resistance against the “first” United States invasion. Linda Hutcheon’s model of historiographic metafiction most aptly describes the literary strategies employed by López Nieves in the reimagining of the

---

<sup>39</sup> The lack of heroic resistance to the American invasion of Puerto Rico inspired the myth of the “Docile Puerto Rican,” as coined by René Marqués in his essay, “El puertorriqueño dócil,” first published in 1960.

Puerto Rican history in *Seva*.<sup>40</sup> According to Hutcheon, postmodern historiographic metafiction calls into question the separation of the literary and the historical: “This kind of novel asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time” (105). In the case of *Seva*, López Nieves self-consciously highlights the subjective and narrative nature of the official history texts through his work of fiction in the guise of historical document. As Hutcheon further states, “Historiographic metafiction... keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in so doing problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge...” (106). That is, historiographic metafiction novels, and *Seva* specifically, call into question the veracity and exactitude of narrative history, and by extension raise existential questions about the nature of truth itself and its role in crime fiction.

While many scholars have explored *Seva* within the context of reimagining Puerto Rican nationality, I include the story in this project to also look at the “crimes” perpetrated through Ludmer’s lens of crime as social and cultural artifact. We can look at two levels of crime in this short story, both fictional. First, the massacre of the entire population of *Seva*, perpetrated by the North Americans with the help of “Luis M. Rivera” and the subsequent cover-up by the Puerto Rican state. Secondly, we can look at the disappearance of Doctor Victor Cabañas as a result of his discovery and probing investigation of the previous crime. In her 2006 article, “Contradicción y archivo negro en Puerto Rico: El caso de *Seva*, de Luis López Nieves,” Berenice Villagómez Castillo

---

<sup>40</sup> In her 2016 article, “*El corazón de Voltaire* and *El Silencio de Galileo*: Neo-Historical Approach in Two Detective, Epistolary, and Postmodern Hybrid Novels,” Marialuisa Di Stefano proposes a similar reading of López Nieves’s last two novels.

discusses the similarities between *Seva* and the *género negro*. Although *Seva* deviates drastically from the traditional detective story, Villagómez Castillo turns to a particular quote from Leonardo Padura Fuentes to justify her inclusion of the story in the genre:

Para ser policial sí es imprescindible la existencia de algún delito o la intención al menos de cometerlo—preferiblemente, al principio de la historia—, y un conflicto que de ese hecho se desprenda. Después puede venir el suspenso, la investigación de los actos violentos—o no venir ninguno de ellos—, pero la trama debe armarse alrededor o a partir de aquel acto criminal que impulsa las acciones dramáticas. Sin ese requisito no existe la novela policial. (Padura Fuentes, qtd in Villagómez Castillo, *Modernidad*, 12-13; 51)

While both Villagómez Castillo and Padura Fuentes see the investigation of the violent acts committed to be marginal to classifying a text as *policial*, Padura Fuentes's novels do include the traditional details of a crime: victim, detective, and investigative process; whereas the texts discussed in this chapter depart from this model and lack one or more of these elements. I argue that it is this departure from the classical detective story formula, a conscious modification of the genre, which lends cultural specificity to the Hispanic Caribbean crime narrative.

The lack of investigation of the crimes committed in *Seva* makes the reading of the story as a *género negro* text indicative of social and cultural priorities in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Puerto Rico. That is, the norms of the classical detective story presuppose a reasonably efficient and trustworthy criminal justice system. However, López Nieves's novel portrays the absence of a reliable criminal justice system in Puerto Rico during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Much like Mattos Cintrón's *El cerro de los buitres* responded to the 1978 Cerro Maravilla murders and cover-up, mentioned in Chapter Two, *Seva* also responds to the general atmosphere of distrust toward the police force and government in general created by this scandal. In the case of *Seva*, both

Cabañas and Luis harbor an amount of fear for their personal safety and distrust of the authority figures that might intervene in their investigation in an effort to continue covering up the crimes of the past.

Villagómez Castillo compares the character of Víctor Cabañas to the Golden Age style of detectives, as seen in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's and Edgar Allan Poe's foundational stories. She states: "Por ejemplo, el hecho de que Cabañas sea un profesor universitario lo vuelve indirectamente una personificación de la razón—ya que los centros académicos son los núcleos generadores del conocimiento contemporáneo" (51). Indeed, Cabañas takes on the role of *de facto* detective as he begins with his first clue, the "error" in Dr. Marcelino Canino's book, and investigates the eradication of and subsequent conspiracy to conceal all evidence of the town of Seva. Much like the protagonists of the classical detective story, rather than employ the grit and bravery exemplified by the protagonists of the hard-boiled novel, Cabañas's training as an academic, and his intelligence, rationality, deductive reasoning, and persistence eventually lead him to the conclusion of his investigation.

The second, and unresolved, crime in this story is the disappearance of Cabañas, as expressed by the fictional Luis López Nieves. In this case, the narrator takes on the role of "detective" as he organizes and archives the documents he has received from his friend. However, he fears for his own safety and rather than actively investigate the disappearance of his friend, he assumes a passive role by submitting the organized materials to the director of the newspaper *Claridad*, Sr. Luis Fernando Coss. At the conclusion of the text, the reader is uncertain as to the identity of the perpetrator of this crime, as well as the location and condition of the victim. Unlike *El crimen verde*, which

focuses most of the narration on the villains, the second narration of *Seva* focuses on the victim. As such, Villagómez employs Thomas Narcejac's classification of similar novels to characterize *Seva* as a "suspense" novel. According to Narcejac, in the "suspense" novel, the victim, rather than the detective, is the primary focus of the narration (56). Ultimately, in *Seva*, the crime is never adequately resolved, the criminals are never discovered and brought to justice, and order is never restored. It is this unresolved and uninvestigated crime that highlights the underlying issues of untrustworthy and inefficient legal and justice systems. Villagómez Castillo suggests: "Los problemas de la sociedad puertorriqueña en que los personajes habitan, más que denunciarse abiertamente, se sugieren a través del suspenso que recorre la narración" (55). That is, the lack of definitive information or answers pertaining to the investigation of both crimes suggests a lack of a transparent, efficient, and unbiased criminal justice system on which citizens can depend to protect them, rather than perpetrate crimes against political dissidents, as was the case in the Cerro Maravilla murders. Later, she refers to the narrator's suggestion that perhaps the authorities are involved in the disappearance of Cabañas, further pointing to government corruption in an effort to perpetuate the official discourse of national identity. Government involvement in the disappearance of an individual who might pose a threat to the status quo is, in my view, a direct reference to the Cerro Maravilla case.

Both "unresolved" crimes reflect the priorities of their cultural and sociohistorical contexts. I refer to the first crime as "unresolved" because, even though Cabañas appears to have "solved" the crime regarding the occurrences of May 1898, his theory is not corroborated in the text, nor is justice carried out for the victims against the perpetrators, nor does the official national discourse change. In the years following the massacre of

Seva, it was in the government's best interest to cover up and not solve the original crime to preserve the official historical discourse that Puerto Rico had been invaded in August of 1898 rather than in May. In the case of the disappearance of Cabañas, the lack of resolution perpetuates the same national discourse sanctioned by the government. A resolution to either of these crimes would threaten that version in favor of an *independentista* view. By suggesting this alternative view and employing specific literary techniques, such as epistolary historiographic metafiction and the publishing medium that he chose, Luis López Nieves destabilizes the foundation of Puerto Rican national identity. In *Seva*, through both the citizens of Seva and the character of Cabañas, López Nieves envisions the Puerto Rican citizen as brave, courageous, and active in defending his or her independence rather than the myth of the docile Puerto Rican produced as a consequence of decades of colonization and subjugation.

### ***El hombre triángulo: The Detective's Struggle for Self-discovery and Acceptance***

In contrast to the two novels examined up to this point in the chapter, *El hombre triángulo* lacks a crime rather than a detective. Given the lack of crime to drive the plot, it focuses on the inner struggles and identity crisis of the protagonist. The protagonist seen here departs markedly from the paradigms of the classical and hard-boiled detectives. By featuring such a detective, Rey Emmanuel Andújar consciously circumvents the narrow paradigms of the detective genre to question gender, sexual, and national identities. In the third chapter, I discussed the figure of the postcolonial detective and how he occupies a liminal space between the colonizer and the colonized, authority and subjugation, and in so doing, appropriates the conventions of this traditional figure and inverts or subverts them to create a socially and culturally specific symbol. However, in this case, the

protagonist goes one step further as he is a detective by trade, but his story does not follow the investigation of a particular crime but rather his own introspective “investigation” of his personal identity. It is useful here to read this detective figure in dialogue with the model of the hard-boiled detective, who is a professional, “working class” individual, delves actively and physically into his investigation, is usually more emotionally involved in his cases and, moreover, often demonstrates moral fallibility.

However, before turning to the final detective analyzed in this chapter, it is important to develop a further nuanced view of the hard-boiled detective, since this archetype is significantly more complex than the one-dimensional classical predecessor. It is particularly relevant to note that the American hard-boiled detective archetype experiences an observable evolution over the course of the history of the genre. In his study *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present*, Lewis D. Moore delineates the transformation of this model over time.

According to Moore, along with the increased gratuitous violence in the early hard-boiled novels, detectives were characterized by a general lack of introspection.<sup>41</sup> In the early period, “the overtly active detective overwhelms one with his moving, seemingly without pause, from one situation to another...he never seems to relax; even his thinking is on the run. If he has an office, it is either little used or the scene of action when occupied” (43). Although Moore also describes several detectives who appeared to be less active and more contemplative in the Early Period (1920s-50s), this overall stereotype began to

---

<sup>41</sup> Moore’s full-length study provides an in-depth analysis of the character of the hard-boiled detective and his/her evolution over time, but here I summarize the trajectory in much broader strokes only to contextualize the detective of the Hispanic Caribbean, and more particularly the two detectives analyzed here, within the greater global landscape of the genre and its predecessors.

change more generally as the hard-boiled authors moved toward a “blend of thought and action” (21-22) in the Modern and Transitional Periods. Even though these detectives become more thoughtful, they are still markedly different from the aristocratic detectives of the classical era. According to Moore, “In the Modern Period, the detectives emphasize the importance of reason and analysis to the successful conclusion of their work. While most modern hard-boiled detectives are well educated, few have any pretensions of being intellectuals” (22). Thus, detectives of the Modern Period (1980s to the present) display a blend of characteristics of the classical and earlier hard-boiled archetypes.

During the Transitional Period (1960s-70s), Moore describes a “wider emotional and intellectual range” in the character of the detective as various authors “introduce the ideas of sexual identity and gender as relevant to the detective’s character” (104). When personal identity and experiences, seemingly unrelated to their vocation and current investigation, are introduced to the detective’s character, the detective develops into a multifaceted and dimensional character, deserving of more in-depth study and analysis. Furthermore, the detectives of this period tend to be more introspective than their predecessors. As Moore indicates, John D. MacDonald’s character of Travis McGee is the most salient example of this shift: “MacDonald’s extensive exploration of McGee’s thoughts and feelings in a first-person narration comes as a marked shift in the development of the hard-boiled detective” (108). In addition, while the classical detectives are infallible, and the Early Period hard-boiled detectives portray themselves as heroes, in the Transitional Period “there is also a lessening of the detectives’ sense of certainty about themselves and their profession, a growing tentativeness about what they

do” (Moore 109). In contrast to the classical detectives and the hard-boiled detectives of the Early Period, the detectives of the Transitional and Modern Periods exhibit greater human weakness and fallibility. As a result, they are less confident professionally as well as in their personal lives, creating more genuinely human characters. These multidimensional detective characters provide a point of departure for the crime-less detectives we will see in this part of the chapter.

Rey Emmanuel Andújar’s melancholic, tortured, and introspective detective figures offer the reader material to analyze the issues affecting modern Dominican society. In the previous chapter of this study, I discussed Rey Emmanuel Andújar’s second novel, *Candela* and its protagonist, Lieutenant Petafunte. In *Candela*, the reader is exposed to glimpses of Petafunte’s thoughts and psychology as he investigates a recent murder. In Andújar’s first novel, *El hombre triángulo* (2005), in contrast to *Candela*, the narration focuses solely on the detective’s personal journey, providing an even deeper look into the psychology of the protagonist. It is “un relato del sufrimiento...sus personajes son representantes de una sociedad en crisis, fundada en el dolor, la sangre y las lágrimas” (De Maeseneer and Bustamante). By traditional genre standards, this novel would not generally be considered a *género negro* novel since it lacks a crime, a victim, and a criminal. The protagonist, “el teniente Pérez,” is a lieutenant in the Dominican police force. However, similarly to *Sol de medianoche*, which was analyzed in Chapter Two, the investigation of a specific crime is not central to Pérez’s role in the novel; rather, his personal, emotional, and mental journey lies in understanding his past and how it relates to his identity.

When we meet Pérez in the first chapter of *El hombre triángulo*, we learn that he has intense internal struggles to the point that he is considering suicide: “Se hace tarde, tiene que matarse...Dentro de todas esas sombras que nublaban su interior se destacaba una oscura, desafiante: Tengo que acabar con todo esto. Tengo que matarme” (11).

However, the source of this turmoil is ambiguous at this point. As the novel unfolds, the reader is increasingly privy to Pérez’s internal battles and it becomes clear that he is struggling with his gender and sexual identities. This conflict is brought into clear relief by the juxtaposition of the typical masculinity of police officers with the protagonist’s own sexual identity. The narrator comments on the ideals of the police and the military that the government begins to “sell” to boys starting in high school, convincing young men that as cadets they will receive immediate and widespread respect. However, this respect is tied to a particular construction of masculinity. The narrator states that young boys and men are told: “Imagínate que desde que eres primer año hasta los sargentos tienen que hacerte el saludo en la calle. Y ya el gusanito de la hombría y el maldito machismo-heterodominicano se te van inflando” (14). This comment is suggestive of the military’s role in the perpetuation of this concept of “heterosexual Dominican machismo” within Dominican culture.

Maja Horn’s book *Masculinity After Trujillo* offers an analysis of Dominican male identity useful for framing my reading of how “el machismo-heterodominicano” operates in the life of the detective in Andújar’s novel. Horn asserts that masculinity in the Dominican Republic cannot be understood simply as an extension of the “centuries-old ‘traditional’ Latin American patriarchal culture,” but rather must be analyzed within the context of the legacy and effects of Trujillo’s discourse on masculinity during his

dictatorship as a response to the “imperial and racialized notions of masculinity” perpetuated by the United States during its occupation of the Dominican Republic (1). Horn argues: “In response to the emasculating experience of the United States occupation, Dominicans felt that the nation and Dominican men needed to recuperate and reassert their virility,” therefore linking concepts of masculinity and nationality (27). As a result, Dominicans (both male and female) were amenable to Trujillo’s appeal to their sense of national pride in the implementation of his discourse and performance “hyperbolic virile masculinity” to define and separate Dominican nationalism from outside, imperial forces (28). It was essential for the Dominican Republic to reclaim its sovereignty and sense of national and patriotic pride, which became enmeshed with a particular construction of masculinity: “Trujillo’s role as the country’s patriarch, supreme macho, and virile savior was legitimatized and naturalized by the widespread sense that the Dominican Republic had been feminized and emasculated by the outside forces’ domination and the curtailing of the country’s sovereignty” (35). Many Dominicans were eager to embrace Trujillo as their savior from outside, imperialist control and internalized his performance of masculinity as necessary to reclaiming the nation’s autonomy.

Thus, Trujillo espoused a specific type of masculinity, not only rooted in the traditional figure of the Latin American caudillo, but also partly in response to the US-imposed ideas of masculinity. Trujillo’s masculinity was most frequently represented through his sexual prowess and virility. Horn mentions the traditional and “prevalent practice of having more than one family and mistresses” in the Dominican Republic at the time of Trujillo’s ascent to power. The logical extension of the type of masculinity espoused by Trujillo in response to the feminizing effects of the United States occupation

was the manner in which this idea of masculinity invaded the military, police, and political systems. It is not surprising, then, that Pérez encounters the “machismo-heterodominicano” in his experience as a police officer.

Although the reader does not see him investigate a crime, the fact that Pérez is a police officer provides similar insight into the protagonist’s psyche as Pérez employs the analytical tools of a detective to his daily thoughts, much in the same manner that a detective would apply a mental process of deduction to solving a crime. For example, in the first chapter upon waking, his internal monologue is as follows: “Decide usar la misma ropa interior: No está sucia, no huele mal. Eso no lo dijo en voz alta, lo pensó muy para sí mismo y muy rápido para no sentirse asqueroso. Pérez podía pasar horas dándole mente a simplezas como ésa...” (11). Additionally, throughout the novel, the reader learns that the protagonist tends to ruminate and overanalyze everything, a trait common to detectives: “Tenía el defecto de pensar demasiado, de complicarse más de la cuenta” (18). However, as we see throughout the narration, Pérez turns those thoughts inwards and the reader learns of his personal struggles rather than the details of a criminal case.

In fact, the central “crime” that Pérez “investigates” only serves as a catalyst for his internal examination. One morning, he is given a report that the precinct has received a man of mysterious identity, later known as Baraka, el Hombre Triángulo, arrested for running around a park naked at dawn. When Pérez interrogates him, he refuses to answer questions, stating ambiguously: “yo estoy condenado a vagar, a ser errante” (21). Later in the interrogation, the man says to Pérez: “Sé que sufres, se te nota, tienes un tormento, pero eres mucho más que eso” (22). Later, as he drinks to “control his demons,” Pérez remembers Baraka and insinuates a sexual attraction to him: “Trago a trago, pensó en sus

ojos, su agonía, ese hombre, ese hombre tan desnudo, tan bien formado, tan limpio para ser vagabundo...” (25). Pérez’s sexual attraction to a male suspect departs significantly from the notion of “machismo heterodominicano” that is so engrained in Dominican military and police culture. As Elena Valdez proposes, as a result of “the militarization of the country initiated by Rafael Trujillo...the military attitude based on the division of gender, heterosexism, and aggressive homophobia permeates into the daily life of the Dominican society” (117). It is not surprising, then, that Pérez is struggling to reconcile his past experiences and sexual identity with the normative masculinity that dominates Dominican culture. His attraction to Baraka is the most recent catalyst to incite his examination of his own sexual identity as he negotiates *machista* military and police culture.

As Pérez examines his own identity, he is unable to figure out who he is, other than a tormented individual desiring to take his own life. Moreover, Pérez is not particularly apt for his position as a law officer. He does not have what he views to be the requisite masculinity or tendency toward violence: “Era un civil en ropa de militar, un hombre atormentado” (24). As Pérez drunkenly confesses to Baraka, he continues to have nightmares about his past; about his failings and inadequacies in his relationships with his loved ones, particularly the child he fathered who is now deceased. Baraka advises him: “Tienes esa clase de sueños porque vives en una amargura del pasado, tienes que empezar a vivir, aquí, ahora, vive” (42). In addition to awakening Pérez’s sexual curiosity and forcing him to examine his own identity, Baraka also enables Pérez to confront his painful past and residual bitterness.

As we have seen, this protagonist's sexuality and concept of masculinity are central to his personal psychological journey. Stereotypes of Dominican (and Latino in general) conceptions of masculinity are called into question, along with gender stereotypes related to the detective profession, as Pérez struggles with his own masculinity and sexuality along the lines of heteronormative. In detective and crime fiction, particularly in the hard-boiled novels, male detectives typically have been characterized as hyper-masculine. As many critics have pointed out, most hard-boiled detectives are white heterosexual men.<sup>42</sup> The hard-boiled novels are characterized by "the voice of white, heterosexual male experience. This voice stakes its claim to our attention on its authenticity and its acceptance of the ugly faces of modern life" (Reddy 8). Reddy adds that it is this "authentically tough" voice that determines the social (masculine, white, heterosexual) norm as well as the "Other," anything that falls outside that norm. However, as Reddy notes, "In most hard-boiled fiction, only the detective himself fully meets all the criteria for whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity encoded in the text, hence his heroic stature" (10). Even though minor characters that do not meet these criteria are present, the juxtaposition of these characters with the detective characters only further codify these stereotypes. In this vein, although Orosman Bao López addresses the issue of sexuality in his dissertation, the homosexual characters he looks at in Padura Fuentes's novel *Máscaras* are victims, not detectives. Conversely, in *El hombre triángulo*, we see the "detective" figure who occupies a position of power in Dominican society struggle with his sexual identity while surrounded by his hyper-masculine colleagues.

---

<sup>42</sup> Maureen T. Reddy makes mention of this standard, while also citing Bethany Ogdon and James Naremore.

Pérez's initial encounter with Baraka further incites questions of his sexual identity. After this initial encounter with "el hombre triángulo," Pérez takes solace in a visit to his favorite prostitute, a large woman, aptly named Rotunda. Not surprisingly, it is her seemingly masculine characteristics that most attract the protagonist: "y lo que me vuelve loco Rotunda son tus vellos de hombre que nunca te me afeites las piernas Rotunda nunca te me afeites tus bigotitos naturales y tu voz ronca ronquísima..." (26). Pérez's sexual reaction to Baraka, as well as his choice of prostitutes, begins to illuminate for the reader the nature of his psychological struggle. During his visit with Rotunda, Pérez confides in her regarding his interaction with Baraka and the confusion he feels afterwards. His discussion of "el hombre triángulo" with Rotunda is juxtaposed with his sexual interaction with her, implicitly demonstrating a connection between the two.

Later in the narration, Pérez recalls his first sexual interaction with another man, one whom no one would have suspected of homosexual tendencies because of his generally accepted portrayal of masculinity: "ese era un hombre hombre, un militar destacado, el esposo de Tati, que todo el mundo sabe que es un mujeriego que vive poniéndole los cuernos a la pobre. ¿Que un sargento del ejército? No, no, que va, ese es un macho, ni hablar" (46-47). The repetition of the word "hombre," the conflation of "militar" with the concept of masculinity, as well as "mujeriego" (prone to infidelity, skirtchaser), illuminates the cultural stereotypes at play here. However, it is this man, whom Pérez refers to as "el Indomable Gran Monstruo Maricón," who from age 7 to age 10 molests Pérez. Pérez recalls the encounters in great detail and conveys how deeply the sexual abuse has affected him. In fact, even into adulthood he is unable to masturbate

because he only recalls the feelings of disgust and guilt provoked during the three years in which “el Indomable Gran Monstruo Maricón” molested him.

As a result of the sexual assault he experienced during the period of his own sexual maturation, Pérez has spent most of his life struggling with depression and his sexual identity. The only tender and emotionally fulfilling relationships he has had are with Matilde, a girl with whom he fathered a child years ago, and Rotunda. However, his relationship with Matilde has only caused more suffering and regret, as their child died suddenly, and Matilde, struggling with her own demons, is placed into a mental health facility. Pérez deeply regrets his lack of involvement in his son’s life as well as his inability to care for Matilde. With regard to Rotunda, toward the end of the novel, she informs Pérez that she is moving to the Netherlands. Pérez’s reaction reflects his incredible frustration, desolation, and impotence: “¿Y ahora, que tú también te vas, qué voy hacer?” (64). Although his impotence is explicitly sexual in this scene with Rotunda, it reflects his powerlessness to make peace with his past and his own identity to improve his emotional and psychological condition.

It is useful to compare Pérez to the protagonist in *Sol de medianoche*, discussed at length in Chapters One and Two. Similarly to Pérez, in *Sol de medianoche*, Manolo is desperate to heal from the pain he has suffered. On the first page of his narration, he describes his current emotional state: “Ahora que estoy en el pantano de la madurez me confieso sometido por la amargura, humillado terca y consecuentemente por una rabia impostergable” (9). He continues that he has caused his own suffering as a result of his decisions and has returned to “vivir a esta playa para curarme” (9). In an effort to heal himself, Manolo continually seeks information about his brother’s murder. Ultimately,

Manolo is unsuccessful in his investigation of his brother's death, as he is unable to discover a satisfactory explanation as to what happened the night of the crime. Nor is Manolo able to reconcile his past to make peace with his present. Much like Pedro Pérez, Manolo's inability to overcome his inner turmoil is mirrored in his professional ineffectiveness to resolve his brother's death.

Although Pérez is a police lieutenant, and rather than a specific crime and subsequent police investigation driving the plot of the novel, Pérez's personal psychological journey to deal with and understand his past becomes the central story of *El hombre triángulo*. However, the impetus for this journey is provided by his interaction with Baraka as part of his professional duties as police officer. As such, Rey Emmanuel Andújar radically alters the archetype of the detective to create a new character specific to the twenty-first century and his own cultural context. In the absence of a criminal investigation and resolution, the detective's emotions and psychology are at the forefront of the novel, portraying a more multidimensional character than seen before in classical detective fiction or hard-boiled crime novels.

## **Conclusions**

The three novels discussed in this chapter break new ground for the genre of crime and detective fiction by placing the conventions of the traditional genre in dialogue with the social realities of the Hispanic Caribbean. The first two novels I discussed feature specific crimes in which detectives are absent, or at least peripheral to the plot of the novel. In the absence of a formal investigation that conforms to the conventions of the crime novel as stipulated by Cawelti, the crimes themselves become the driving force of the novels. The authors' accounts of the murder of Karl Smith in *El crimen verde*, and the

massacre of the inhabitants of Seva and disappearance of Cabañas in *Seva* are cultural artifacts. As the authors move away from the model of the detective-driven crime story, they are able to present these fictionalized crimes as a means explore the respective criminal justice and political systems of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, as well as the official discourse of national and personal identity in Puerto Rico that would not be possible within the formulaic constraints of the traditional genre.

As we have seen, neither the classical detective nor the American hard-boiled detective would be culturally relevant to contemporary Hispanic Caribbean society, but rather would be starkly out of place. However, Rey Emmanuel Andújar has created a “detective”-protagonist character that reflects the struggles and cultural priorities of his specific context. In order to focus on this character’s personal struggles that are in turn reflective of greater cultural struggles, Andújar focuses on his detective’s psychological introspective “investigation” rather than on the external investigation of a particular crime. Pedro Pérez struggles with his sexuality and masculinity within cultures (the Dominican Republic, and more specifically the Dominican military) that espouse very rigid and exclusive ideas of what it means to be a man. It is not the investigation of a crime and subsequent resolution of an enigma that is the focus of this novel, but rather the detective’s personal experiences and how they reflect larger cultural values.

All three novels re-imagine the crime genre in order to interrogate social and psychological themes that do not have a place in classical or hard-boiled crime fiction. These novels’ nonconformance to the constraints of the genre informs the readers’ understanding of crime and justice in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, particularly the pervasiveness of police brutality, incompetence of the police force,

government corruption, and a general distrust of all authority. Further, the vulnerability and fallibility of the detective figures seen in these novels create space to explore topics that would be at odds with the figure of the classical or hard-boiled detective, such sexual identity, past pain, and personal existentialism. As a result, these novels transform the crime genre and propose an alternate model for crime and detective fiction appropriate for the contemporary Hispanic Caribbean.

## Conclusion

I began this dissertation with a few essential questions about crime and detective fiction created in the Hispanic Caribbean: why is there so little production of crime fiction in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico in comparison to Cuba and other parts of Latin America? Within the few crime texts produced in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, why are most of them antithetical to the model that one normally thinks of in the genre? And finally, what does crime fiction produced in the Hispanic Caribbean tell us about the social, political, economic, and historical processes that have influenced the development of culture in this region? By putting works from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic with their shared yet distinct histories and cultures into dialogue with each other, I sought to illuminate the similarities and differences manifested in the crime stories of these places. I took crime fiction to be indicative of the moral, social, and political values of a culture and its people, as it shows what crimes are acceptable and unacceptable through the representation of the processes of investigation and justice.

My first chapter showed how four crime stories and novels from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic inverted the mode of metafiction traditionally seen in the detective story. I explored how this inversion of metafiction provokes the reader to question the relationship between fiction and reality, and consequently to question the reality reflected in the narration. In both “Crónica policial” and “Pasión de historia” the writer-protagonists are unable to complete their writing tasks. Moreover, they are unable to uncover the truth regarding the crimes they are writing about. Nevertheless, their ultimate fates differ. While the journalist in “Crónica policial” resigns from his position, indicating the futility of seeking the truth in his occupation, the writer’s fate in “Pasión de

historia” is much more final: Carola dies, becoming the next victim in her story. Their failure to uncover truth and pursue justice, both as writers and as “detectives,” provokes us to question the social structures and cultural standards that affect crime and justice in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Through the juxtaposition of the writer-detective figures in the “Mario Conde” novels and *Sol de medianoche*, we can contrast a frustrated writer who is ultimately able to successfully complete his creative process and also solve the crimes he investigates with another frustrated individual who fails to write his novel and also loses his critical detective gaze. In comparing and contrasting Mario Conde and Manolo Pérez, we reveal antithetical metafiction narratives. Manolo’s writing process devolves to the point where he is no longer able to complete his story. His failure indicates a completely morose view of the future with little hope for redemption. By contrast, Mario’s completion of his story coincides with the pivotal moment of his investigation. The interdependence between the creative literary process and the illumination of the mystery suggests a correlation between literature and justice, a salient commentary in Revolutionary Cuba at a time in which literary production was regulated and censored by the state.

My second chapter questioned the relationship between the Hispanic Caribbean detective and urban space in three novels. I argued that the detective protagonists in *Sol de medianoche*, *Desamores*, and *Las puertas de la noche* exhibit an amalgamation of Baudelaire’s flâneur and de Certeau’s “practitioner” with regard to their interaction with the cities around them. While, like the flâneur, the detectives in these novels are active observers of their surroundings, they are also actively engaged in their urban environments and give life and significance to their urban communities through their

travels, observations, and resulting narratives. These detective's interactions with the people and spaces around them reflect the social intimacy that differentiates Hispanic Caribbean communities from the anonymous modern city of the flâneur. Similarly, the detectives featured in the third chapter are deeply entrenched in their communities, which consequently affects their cultural attitudes and their professional investigations. I framed my analysis of the two Hispanic Caribbean detective-protagonists using the model of the postcolonial detective to reveal the detective as representing and negotiating the liminal space between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. Both Leo Martín and Imanol Petafunte transcend the boundaries between authority and community and in so doing illuminate the dynamics of race, class, and social differences in the Hispanic Caribbean.

In the last chapter of this project, I moved the furthest away from the typical detective story to novels in which major elements were completely missing, totally undoing the tenets of crime fiction. Two of the novels focused on atrocious crimes that were committed, but lacked detectives to investigate them, and ultimately lacked a resolution or justice. The absence of the detective, and thus the reader's focus on looking for clues along with him to solve the mystery, highlighted the appalling nature of the crimes and the even more appalling lack of justice. The final novel lacked a crime, but rather the plot centered on the psychological and emotional struggle of the detective-protagonist to come to terms with his painful past and his sexuality. Thus, his detective gaze was self-reflexive rather than outward focused and exposed the *machista* and heteronormative discourses that permeate modern Dominican society.

When examining the chapters together, several important conclusions come to light. First, despite the commonalities of colonization, language, and geography between Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, the rate and nature of production of crime and detective fiction varies greatly between countries. The main historical process that impelled the production of detective fiction in Cuba was the Cuban Revolution and its project of consolidating a socialist state through prescriptive socialist detective novels. The Cuban authors studied in this project, Leonardo Padura Fuentes, Amir Valle Ojeda, and Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo, are among the pioneers of a new Cuban detective genre, the *neopolicial*. This new type of detective novel breaks with the socialist tradition by featuring flawed and believable detectives and presenting the ugly truths of Cuban reality that interrogate, or at least reveal, the failings of the Revolution. However, while these four novels most closely resemble the classical prototypes, they not only differ greatly from one another, but they also appropriate the tenets of crime fiction to present questions that are uniquely Cuban.

The Cuban authors discussed in this project problematize various issues during the Special Period and subsequent years, including race, the economy, housing, crime, and authority. Padura Fuentes's novels provide a subtly subversive commentary on the role of the state in controlling literary production and particularly the persecution of homosexual intellectuals. Valle Ojeda's novel brings to light the failings of the Revolution to create an egalitarian society by uncovering economic and racial inequalities and prejudices as well as exposes the atrocities of child prostitution. Lunar Cardedo's novel presents a detective that is as personally committed to his community as he is to his profession. The protagonist's loyalty to his friends and neighbors colors his

narrative and results in a morally and ethically neutral portrayal of the degenerate individuals that populate his neighborhood, undermining the prescriptive nature of the Cuban socialist detective novel.

The Puerto Rican crime fiction studied in this project represents a narrower, yet varied field. Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón's protagonist, Isabelo Andújar, most closely resembles the Cuban detectives, as he is a detective that investigates crimes in an emotionally invested, yet professional manner. At the same time, he is a black, working-class Vietnam War veteran, which uniquely distinguished him from his Cuban counterparts. Similarly, Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's protagonist, Manolo Pérez, is also a Vietnam veteran; a legacy particular to Puerto Rico within the Hispanic Caribbean, due to its political condition as a Free Associated State of the United States. However, the similarities between Isabelo and Manolo end there. In Rodríguez Juliá's attempt to create a "falsification" of the detective genre in *Sol de medianoche*, he presents Manolo as broken and hopeless private investigator that is representative of a generation of Puerto Ricans that find themselves standing before a seemingly hopeless political future stuck in the ambiguous intersection between statehood and independence. Ana Lydia Vega's story represents the only female protagonist included in this project, perhaps due in part to the progressive influence of contemporary North American culture on Puerto Rican female writers, reflecting the continued dearth of female detectives in Hispanic Caribbean crime fiction. Finally, the novella *Seva* by Luis López Nieves presents a revisionist history of the American invasion of Puerto Rico and the resulting distrust of the local and United States governments, as well as distrust of the official historical discourse and documents.

The Puerto Rican texts in this thesis are informed more overtly by Puerto Rico's continuing colonial status to the United States than by its Spanish colonial legacy. Both *Sol de medianoche* and "Pasión de historia" deal with the increased violence in Puerto Rico at the end of the twentieth century, partly as a product of the island's colonial relationship to the United States and its resulting convenience a location for drug trafficking and money laundering (Trigo 46). Moreover, Ana Lydia Vega's text deals more specifically with increased violence against women in the murder case that the protagonist researches, as well as Carola's own death at the end of the story. Both *Desamores* and *Seva* portray political corruption, albeit at different levels. While *Seva* suggests a massive national scheme to suppress the truth behind the American invasion and conceal the massacre of an entire town, *Desamores* approaches the corrupt relationship between the Puerto Rican government and large, private businesses.

Lastly, two of the main inspirations for this project was my love of crime fiction and my interest in Dominican history and culture, augmented by my countless visits to and years of living in the Dominican Republic. I wondered why the detective genre was undeveloped in Dominican literature. In my pursuit to answer this question, I came across Virgilio Díaz Grullón's short story and the novels by Rey Emmanuel Andújar and Emilia Peyrera. These texts are the ones that most undo and undermine the classical detective narrative. I argue that this is due to cultural factors that are particular to the Dominican Republic. Violence has pervaded Dominican reality throughout its history; from Spanish colonization, to Haitian invasions and subsequent conflicts, to the Trujillo dictatorship, to current domestic and drug-related violence. Thus, crime fiction does not present an escapist outlet from Dominican lived experience. Nevertheless, the Dominican novels I

examined in this project explore the issues of race, violence, toxic masculinity, and political and social corruption in the Dominican Republic, much of which results from the legacies left by Trujillo and Balaguer regimes that are still deeply engrained in the contemporary Dominican reality.

Very few of the texts studied in this thesis have a happy ending in that guilty parties are seldom brought to justice and order and peace are not generally restored at the conclusion. While the nature of these crime stories reflects the distinct historical and cultural processes that are unique to each of the geopolitical entities in which they are produced, the issues of race, violence, poverty, and corruption come to the fore as themes common to the Hispanic Caribbean. Therefore, the crime stories I have studied exemplify how their authors have rewritten and transformed the medium of the detective genre to examine these concerns in a culturally relevant way. Although not within the scope of this project, it would be interesting to delve further into representations of gender and masculinity in Hispanic crime fiction, as well as to examine the glaring lack of female detectives and police officers in Hispanic Caribbean literature in comparison to crime fiction produced in other Spanish-speaking countries and the US.

As we move further into the twenty-first century, changes in global and local politics, media, and technology continue to affect culture and literary production. Reports of increased crime and poverty in Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane María, and increased reports of domestic violence and visual representation of violence in social media in the Dominican Republic provoke several intriguing questions for further research. Additionally, the recent political and social changes in Cuba prior to and after the death of Fidel Castro, have begun to open the island's economy and increase foreign

interaction. These changes will undoubtedly impact the landscape of Cuban literature and culture on a wide scale. Specific to crime fiction, it would be interesting to further explore the more recent crime fiction production (2008 to the present) in the Hispanic Caribbean resulting from these, and other, political and social changes. How has the nature of crime changed in the Hispanic Caribbean in the last two years? Finally, how will these changes affect the form and content of crime fiction produced in the future?

### Works Cited

- Andújar, Rey Emmanuel. *El hombre triángulo*. Editorial Isla Negra, 2005.
- . *Candela*. Santo Domingo: Alfaguara, 2007.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2002.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Translated by James Maranis,. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Duke UP, 1996.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Flaneur." *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Translated by Harry Zohn, Verso, 1983.
- Berroa, Robert. *La brutalidad policial en la República Dominicana*. Santuario, 2012.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2004.
- Boling, Becky. "The Reproduction of Ideology in Ana Lydia Vega's 'Pasión De Historia' and 'Caso Omiso.'" *Letras Femeninas*, vol. 17, no. 1/2, 1991, pp. 89–97.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Cuatro preguntas al gran jurado." *Asesinos de papep: Ensayos sobre narrativa policial*, edited by Jorge Lafforgue and Jorge B. Rivera, Ediciones Colihue, 1996.
- Braham, Persephone. *Crimes Against the State, Crimes Against Persons*. U of Minnesota P, 2004.
- . "Ana Lydia Vega y el género negrogótico." *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 76, no. 231, 2010, pp. 443-457.
- Brand, Dana. *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. The U of Chicago P, 1976.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall, U of California P, 1984.
- Chandler, Raymond. "The Simple Art of Murder." *The Simple Art of Murder*. W.W. Norton and Company, 1968.
- Christian, Ed, editor. *The Post-Colonial Detective*. Palgrave, 2001.

- Close, Glen S. "The Detective is Dead. Long Live the *Novela Negra*!" *Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Detective Fiction: Essay on the Género Negro Tradition*, edited by Craig-Odders, Renée W., Jacky Collins, and Glen S. Close, McFarland and Company Publishers, 2006.
- Craig-Odders, Renée W., Jacky Collins and Glen S. Close, editors. *Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Detective Fiction: Essay on the Género Negro Tradition*. McFarland and Company Publishers, 2006.
- de la Fuente, Alejandro. *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*. The U of North Carolina P, 2001.
- De Maeseneer, Rita and Fernanda Bustamante. "Cuerpos heridos en la narrativa de Rita Indiana Hernández, Rey Emmanuel Andújar y Junot Díaz." *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 79, no. 243, Apr.-Jun. 2013, pp. 395-414.
- Derby, Lauren. *The Dictator's Seduction*. Duke UP, 2009.
- Díaz Grullón, Virgilio. "Crónica policial." *Cuentos Completos*. Editora Cole, 2002.
- Di Stefano, Marialuisa. "El corazón de Voltaire and El silencio de Galileo: Neo-Historical Approach in Two Detective, Epistolary, and Postmodern Hybrid Novels." *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2016, pp. 228-245.
- Dove, George N. *The Reader and the Detective Story*. Popular P, 1997.
- Fischer, Sibylle. *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the cultures of slavery in the Age of Revolution*. Duke UP, 2004.
- Myrna García-Calderon. "'Seva' o la reinvention de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña." *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, vol. 20, no. 39, 1994, pp. 199-215.
- Giardinelli, Mempo. *El género negro: Ensayos sobre literatura policial*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1984.
- . "Introduction. The Hard-boiled Detective Novel in Latin America." *Latin American Mystery Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*, edited by Darrell B. Lockhart, Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Grenier, Yvon. "The Small Heresies of Leonardo Padura Fuentes." *The Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy*, 30 Nov. 2015, [https://www.ascecuba.org/asce\\_proceedings/the-small-heresies-of-leonardo-padura-fuentes/](https://www.ascecuba.org/asce_proceedings/the-small-heresies-of-leonardo-padura-fuentes/).

- Gunning, Tom. "The Exterior as *Intérieur*: Benjamin's Optical Detective." *boundary 2*, vol. 30 no. 1, 2003, pp. 105-130.
- Hamilton, Carrie. "Sexual Politics and Socialist Housing: Building Homes in Revolutionary Cuba." *Gender & History*, vol. 21, no. 3, Nov. 2009, pp. 608-627.
- Hernández, Elizabeth, and Consuelo López Springfield. "Women and Writing in Puerto Rico: An Interview with Ana Lydia Vega." *Callaloo*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1994, pp. 816-825.
- Horn, Maja. *Masculinity After Trujillo: The Politics of Gender in Dominican Literature*. UP of Florida, 2014.
- Hortensia R. Morell. "De Manuel Zeno Gandía a Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón: Exploraciones en torno al género negro en Puerto Rico." *Romance Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2013, pp. 236-43.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.
- Irizarry, Estelle. "La 'leyenda urbana' en la narrativa de Luis López Nieves." *Hispania*, vol. 86, no. 1, 2003, pp. 32-42.
- Johnson Gosselin, Adrienne. editor. *Multicultural Detective Fiction: Murder from the "Other" Side*. Garland Publishing, 1999.
- Krohn-Hansen, Christian. *Political Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. "Founding Statement." *Boundary 2*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1993, pp. 110-121.
- Liberato, Ana. *Joaquín Balaguer, Memory, and Diaspora: The Lasting Political Legacies of an American Protégé*. Lexington Books, 2013.
- Lopez Bao, Orosman. *Fraying at the Edges: Male Homosexuals, Female Prostitutes, and Suicides in Cuba's Post-Soviet Detective Fiction*. 2012. Emory University, PhD dissertation.
- López Nieves, Luis. *Seva: Historia de la primera invasión norteamericana de la Isla de Puerto Rico, ocurrida en mayo de 1898*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Editorial Cordillera, 2000.
- Ludmer, Josefina. *El cuerpo de delito: un manual*. Perfil Libros, 1999.
- Lunar Cardedo, Lorenzo. *Que en vez de infierno encuentres gloria*. Ediciones Unión, 2005.

- Manzari, H.J., and Emilia Pereyra. "Comenzamos a salir de la isla: Entrevista con Emilia Pereyra." *Confluencia*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2002, pp. 149–153.
- . "Un terreno literario inexplorado: una conversación con Emilia Pereyra," *Dominican Women Writers on the Edge: Alienation, Pain and Resistance*, edited by Sintia Molina, Editorial Verbum, 2014, pp. 39-44.
- Mattos Cintrón, Wilfredo. *Desamores*. Ediciones La Sierra, 2001.
- Matzke, Christine and Susanne Mühleisen, editors. *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Trascultural Perspective*. Editiones Rodopi B.V., 2006.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Expanded ed., translated by Howard Greenfeld, Beacon Press, 1991.
- Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present*. McFarland, 2006.
- Moya Pons, Frank. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010.
- Oakley, Helen. *From Revolution to Migration: A Study of Contemporary Cuban and Cuban-American Crime Fiction*. Peter Lang, 2012.
- Padura Fuentes, Leonardo. *Adiós, Hemingway*. Tusquets Editores, 2006.
- . *La neblina del ayer*. Tusquets Editores, 2005.
- . *Máscaras*. Tusquets Editores, 1997.
- . *Modernidad, posmodernidad y novela policial*. Ediciones Unión, 2000.
- . *Paisaje de otoño*. Tusquets Editores, 1998.
- . *Pasado perfecto*. Tusquets Editores, 2000.
- . *Vientos de Cuaresma*. Tusquets Editores, 2001.
- Pearson, Nels and Marc Singer, editors. *Detective Fiction in a Postcolonial and Transnational World*. Ashgate, 2009.
- Pereyra, Emilia. *El crimen verde*. MOGRAFI, S. A. Taller Gráfico, 1994.
- Pérez, Janet. "Leonardo Padura Fuentes And the Contemporary Cuban Detective Novel: Modern, Postmodern, or a Combination Thereof?" *Hispanófila*, vol. 160, 2010, pp. 61-76.

Pérez-Firmat, Gustavo. "Metafiction again." *Taller Literario*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1980, pp. 30-38.

Perez-Simon, Luis. "Crónica de un tiempo anunciado: La novela negra de Amir Valle Y Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo." *Indicios, señales y narraciones: Literatura policiaca en lengua española*, edited by Enrique Rodrigues-Moura. Innsbruck UP, 2010. 153-171.

*Perico Ripiao*. Directed by Ángel Muñiz, Cigua Films, 27 Nov. 2003.

Ramos Collazo, Jose Antonio. *La novela policiaca en Puerto Rico y Cuba: Los casos de Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón y Leonardo Padura Fuentes*. 2009. University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, PhD dissertation.

Reddy, Maureen T. *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction*. Rutgers UP, 2003.

Rodríguez Juliá, Edgardo. *Mapa de una pasión literaria*. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2003.

---. *Sol de medianoche*. 3rd ed. Libros El Navegante, Ediciones Callejón, 2014.

Rosado, José Angel. *El cuerpo del delito, el delito del cuerpo: La literatura policial de Edgar Allen Poe, Juan Carlos Onetti, Wilfredo Mattos Cintrón*. 1st ed. Libros El Navegante, Ediciones Callejón, 2012.

Salzani, Carlo. "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective." *New German Critique*, no. 100, 2007, pp. 165–187.

Simpson, Amelia S. *Detective Fiction from Latin America*. Associated University Presses, 1990.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty and Rosalind C. Morris. *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Columbia UP, 2010.

Stanley, Avelino. *La novela dominicana 1980-2009: perfil de su desarrollo*. Banco Central de la República Dominicana, 2009.

Steif, William. "Puerto Rico's Watergate." *Progressive*, vol. 56, no. 10, Oct. 1992, p. 28.

Suárez Torres, Limarys. "Lección de la justicia dominicana." *El Nuevo Día* (Puerto Rico). 29 Feb. 2012.  
<https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/seguridad/nota/lecciondelajusticiadominicana-1201528/>

- Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History*. Faber and Faber, 1972.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Typology of Detective Fiction." *The Poetics of Prose*. Translated by Richard Howard, Cornell UP, 1977, pp. 42-55.
- Torres Caballero, Benjamín. "Mattos Cintrón and Rodríguez Juliá: *Puertorriqueñidad* and the P.I." *Into the Mainstream: Essays on Spanish American and Latino Literature and Culture*, edited by Jorge Febles. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006, pp. 215-230.
- Trigo, Benigno. "Colonial Sublimations of a Noir Eros: On Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's Police Novels." *Caribe: Revista de cultura y literatura*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2010, pp. 45-68, 149-150.
- Uxó, Carlos. "Hacia una nueva poética del policial cubano: La trilogía de Leo Martín, de Lorenzo Lunar Cardedo." *Altre Modernità*, vol. 15, 2016, pp. 257-269.
- Valdez, Elena. "Masculinities in Crisis: A *Tiguere*, a Military Figure, and a *Sanky-panky* as Three Models of Being a Man in the Dominican Republic." *Queering Iberia: Iberian Masculinities at the Margins*, edited by Josep M. Armengol-Carrera, Peter Lang Publishing, 2012, pp. 113-131.
- Valle Ojeda, Amir. *Las puertas de la noche*. Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2002.
- . "Marginalidad y ética de la marginalidad en la nueva ciudad narrada por la novela negra latinoamericana/Marginality and Ethics of the Margins in the New City in the Latin American 'Black' Novel." *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, vol. 36, 2007, pp. 95-101.
- . "Yo no escribo novelas críticas; yo escribo novelas": Interview with Manuel Fernández y Emily Offerdahl, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. *Hipertexto* no. 9, 2009, pp. 153-166.
- Vega, Ana Lydia. "Pasión de historia." *Pasión de historia y otras historias de pasión*. Ediciones de la Flor, 1987.
- Villagómez Castillo, Berenice. "Contradicción y archivo negro en Puerto Rico: El caso de Seva, de Luis López Nieves." *Torre: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*, vol. 11, no. 39, Jan. 2006, pp. 49-64.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen, 1984.
- Werner, James V. "The Detective Gaze: Edgar A. Poe, the Flâneur, and the Physiognomy of Crime." *American Transcendental Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5-21.

Wilkinson, Stephen. *Detective Fiction in Cuban Society and Culture*. P. Lang, 2006.