

# Reading Takes Place: Reading and the Politics of Space in Leonardo Padura's Havana Quartet

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What does reading mean in Leonardo Padura's Cuban crime fiction, and how does this relate to the Cuban literary marketplace? I focus on Leonardo Padura's Havana-based crime fiction in this essay and analyze recurrent reading spaces and one text read repeatedly across all four novels to answer this question. Private and public acts and spaces of reading dominate Leonardo Padura's series of crime novels featuring the detective Mario Conde. Known in the UK as the 'Havana Quartet,' the four novels translated into English as *Havana Red* (2005, *Máscaras* 1997), *Havana Black* (2006, *Paisaje de Otoño* 1998), *Havana Blue* (2006, *Pasado Perfecto* 2000), and *Havana Gold* (2008, *Vientos de Cuaresma* 2001), and the subsequent novel *Havana Fever* (2009, *La neblina del ayer* 2005) feature detective Mario Conde, who has personality quirks like many modern literary detectives: he has a propensity to deviate, to delegate meticulous work, to get drunk, reminisce, daydream, and fall in love too easily. Unlike the majority of his Scandinavian, Southern African or British counterparts, though, Conde displays little motivation to detect crimes and prefers to read and to imagine an idealized life as a writer. Leonardo Padura is Cuba's biggest recent literary export. The Cuban novelist and essayist came to prominence globally when his Mario Conde detective novels were translated into English. Padura regularly undertakes interviews and writing engagements in the UK and Europe, and has been interviewed by major British newspapers. His "Havana Quartet" books were recently dramatized as a four-part series on BBC Radio 4. It should not be surprising that a crime writer occupies this prominent position. Following the onset of what is termed the "Special Period," the period of economic hardship in Cuba beginning in 1990 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had been Cuba's main investor and patron, Cuban writers were sought by foreign publishers—mainly in Spain—who had particular expectations about the nature of Cuban literature. As Parvathi Kumaraswami and Antoni Kapcia demonstrate in their extensive study of the Cuban literary marketplace, *Literary Culture in Cuba*, Cuban writers were suddenly being asked to write according to market forces and publishers' expectations of Cuba as exotic, erotic, decadent, and dissident (136). Exploitative and conditional contracts were offered to writers who, before 1990, had written according to Cuban determinants of literary quality and value, based on everything *but* market

forces (Kumaraswami and Kapcia 136). Havana-based Padura stayed in Cuba, and although his fiction is often marketed in the UK as representing a Cuba characterized by ragged beauty and seedy sensuality, his contribution to the crime genre is far less conventional. In this essay I suggest that Padura's representation of space contrasts with functions of space in crime fiction as identified in recent spatial approaches to the genre (see Alexander; Jenkins; Martin and Murray; and Schmid). In contrast with the emphasis on spaces of crime common to detective fiction, crime in Padura's fiction is displaced, instead foregrounding Cuba's literary marketplace. This essay extends work in two postcolonial fields that are currently very prominent: postcolonial spatial theory (Soja, Upstone, Teverson and Upstone) and the postcolonial literary marketplace (Brouillette, Huggan).<sup>1</sup> The Cuban context is uniquely placed to develop these questions in postcolonial studies by complicating them, in part because Cuba is on the cusp of change as it enters a new phase of neoimperial contact with the removal of barriers to U.S. tourism and the United States' new strategy of influence following the failure of years of aggression. It is particularly important to capture the socioeconomic and political forces impacting Cuban literature at this time of change. Using spatial analysis we can see that Padura's displacement of crime situates criminality elsewhere—in other words, outside Cuban politics and in neocolonial hands. And an analysis of instances of reading within the texts themselves offers new insight into the function of reading in contemporary Cuba and the changing nature of Cuba's literary marketplace and literary culture.

Crime fiction, and especially detective fiction, is a particularly appropriate genre to consider in relation to spatial politics because of its popular reputation as a gateway to the everyday, a way to get under the skin of a foreign culture, which is connected with the representation of foreign spaces: Jeremy Foster claims that crime fiction "goes to the heart" of human sociality to analyze spaces—nations, cities, and homes—to decode "how they work and, in particular, how people inhabit them" (175). This can be aligned with James Procter's "postcolonial everyday," explored in his important article of the same name which extends Ato Quayson's commitment to critically analyzing the everyday as part of any ethical postcolonial practice (63). In addition to this, crime writing has a tendency to privilege the spatial over the temporal. Conventionally, detective fiction is structured in such a way as to emphasize the spatial: the spaces where crimes are uncovered—the location of dead bodies, stolen goods, acts of violence—and detection spaces, such as suspects' homes and businesses, public spaces, and police premises are placed side by side in the narrative process of detection. The result of bringing these spaces together, spaces which would otherwise be inhabited by disparate social groups, is both unsettling and restorative: at the resolution of the investigation, the location of the criminal undermines the apparent safety of privileged spaces, just as it renders the dangerous margin safer because it

is no longer inhabited by an undiscovered criminal element.

In postcolonial crime fiction, the object of bringing together contrasting socioeconomic spaces is often precisely to reveal the inherent inequality in postcolonial or neocolonial contexts, and this effect has been the focus of spatial analyses of crime fiction in South Africa (Martin and Murray) and Sri Lanka (Alexander), to give just two examples. An emphasis on space in postcolonial crime fiction is not unexpected. After all, postcolonial studies has always paid close attention to matters of space, as has been noted in much recent scholarship on postcolonial spatial analysis (Upstone; Teverson and Upstone) which repeatedly cites Edward Said's assertion in *Culture and Imperialism* of the "struggle over geography," an understanding of geography that encompasses ideas, forms, images, and imaginings, as well as "soldiers and cannons" (6). Said's statement that space must be understood in the abstract as well as in the literal, and his inclusion of the word "imaginings" in a list of factors shaped by space, recalls Lefebvre's foundational spatial theory of "lived space," a space that is both literal and imagined but is also more besides. This lived space that means more than the sum of its parts is the point from which Edward Soja's *Thirdspace* (1996) embarks on an enquiry into the ways in which space is highly political with the potential not just to reflect but also to instigate societal change. In his more recent work, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010), which applies the thesis in his influential *Thirdspace* to a theory of direct action for social justice (focusing specifically on the Los Angeles area) Soja notes that "Spatial thinking [...] cannot only enrich our understanding of almost any subject but has the added potential to extend our practical knowledge into more effective actions aimed at changing the world for the better" (2). Recent collections, including *Postcolonial Spaces* (2011) edited by Andrew Teverson and Sarah Upstone, reflect the breadth of work being done in postcolonial studies in response to Soja's work and the imperative expressed therein to acknowledge the spatial alongside the temporal as a means of understanding the organization of society. This essay engages with this important work while demonstrating that Cuba justifies a new approach to postcolonial spatial analyses as it relinquishes some of its highly politicized redistribution of space in service of neoliberal global tourism.

### Postcolonial Cuba

To understand why a Cuban crime writer like Padura might employ space in crime fiction in ways that are not characteristic of the genre, it is first necessary to outline Cuba as a postcolonial location, not least because it is rarely discussed from a postcolonial perspective. Alongside Peter Hulme and Robert Young, who are among the few postcolonial theorists who confidently present Cuba as postcolonial, I argue it should be central to analysis of the

field, and particularly to studies of ongoing or neoimperialist international interventions. Cuba has a history as a Spanish colony. It was one of the first Caribbean islands to be settled by Spain, was populated by large numbers of African slaves, and remained in Spanish hands until 1898. However, Cuba experienced other periods of imperial control. Havana was an important port, and was for eleven months in 1762-1763 occupied by British naval forces. During this time, trade routes were established with England and North America. Cuba is a large and populous Caribbean territory in comparison with other islands, and settlers from Spain and the Canary Islands, as well as France, became increasingly hostile towards Spanish control. At the end of the nineteenth century, Cuba rejected Spain as imperial ruler, but instead of gaining independence it changed hands and became, for all intents and purposes, a U.S. colony. The countries were so closely tied that their capital buildings are identical—except that the National building in Havana is very slightly larger than its American counterpart—and the U.S. dollar was a circulating currency. American companies owned the utilities and took control of commerce. The revolution in 1959 reinstated U.S.-run utilities for the national benefit, and overthrew dictator Batista, upturning his intensely unequal society. The revolutionary period immediately following is not normally considered to have constituted Soviet “imperial” control in Cuba, though Russian influence was far reaching: Russian technology and industry was prominent in Cuba, Cubans learned the Russian language, and there were frequent opportunities for Cubans to travel to Russia for education and training, especially in engineering.

From 1959 to 1990, Cuba was a major contributor to anticolonial and postcolonial politics and developed strong links with African territories to support nationalist anti-imperial struggles. However, following the onset of the Special Period the shadow of neoliberalism in the form of global tourism constitutes a new imperial influence, and it is in this sense that Cuba can be considered postcolonial today. Since 1990, tourism has been developed energetically, and neoliberal global tourism has had a direct impact on Cuba’s infrastructure. Furthermore, as Robert Young argues, the United States remains an imperial power in Cuba. Young asserts Cuba’s postcolonial status so confidently that he even uses Cuba to support his argument that imperialism still exists in its most recognizable form. In their well-known *Empire*, Hardt and Negri comment, “The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the centre of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over” (xiv). Contending this statement, Robert Young states that “Hardt and Negri would never have made that claim ... if they had lived in Cuba” where, Young asserts, “one will see the continuing history of the same imperialism against which Che [Guevara] fought being played out before one’s eyes” (20). Young’s rejection of Hardt and Negri’s position in *Empire* is based on the fact that there are geographical locations in Cuba which are designated

as U.S. territories, including Guantanamo Bay, and the U.S. Interest Section in Havana, which is a small piece of land on the outskirts of New Havana occupied by a large building surrounded by barbed wire and armed Cuban guards. This is counter to the claim made by Hardt and Negri that *Empire* in their contemporary, post-imperial definition establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers (xii) and is not reliant upon the sovereign nation extending its sovereignty beyond its boundaries, which defined the imperialism of old, before globalization. It is important that Cuba remains part of a concept of postcolonial studies because if it doesn't, the false global media portrayal of Cuba as failed and as somehow criminal persists. Only postcolonial studies enables a resistance to the neoliberal attempts to undermine Cuba in new ways.

### Reading Spaces

At this point, it is necessary to turn to Padura's novels to elaborate on the way both reading and crime are presented, and to ask what this means both for postcolonial crime fiction and representations of postcolonial Cuba. Each novel begins and ends with Conde in his personal reading space. And while this space is always preferable to crime detection, the two spaces repeatedly coalesce. Preferring to read and to plan an ideal future as a writer of "squalid and moving" fiction in the style of Hemingway and Salinger, Conde considers detective work an unwelcome distraction, but a distraction that habitually leads him back to spaces of reading and writing. The private library where he studied as a teenager holds the papers that implicate a missing businessman in serious fraud. The school of a murdered teacher was also Conde's former school and the place where he first wrote fiction at the *talleres literarias* (literary workshops). And an ousted playwright's private library contains a torn fragment of a Bible passage hidden between the pages of *The Complete Plays of Virgilio Piñera* that explains the unexpected circumstances of a man's dead body: the man had been dressed as a woman (though in life he did not wear women's clothes in public), had not resisted his killer, and his body was moved after death but not hidden (Padura, *Havana Red* 158).<sup>2</sup>

There is a political significance to Padura's repeated strategy of displacing crime in repeated examples in the novels where the criminal activity or the manifestation of crime—in most cases, the body of the victim—is displaced, moved, missing, or overlooked. As Kumaraswami and Kaptcia note in *Literary Culture in Cuba*, the use of space as a conceptual tool enables an analysis of Cuban social reality that goes beyond "simplistic assumptions about power structures and their ability to determine sociocultural life" (51). Spatial analysis enables, too, analysis of the function and significance of moments of reading in Cuban fiction. Reading dominates Padura's crime fiction but it has not been discussed in previous research on the "Havana Quartet" books,

which have focused on themes such as male friendship and fraternity (de Ferrari), decay and memory (Perez), and sexual and political intolerance (Wilkinson). Stephen Wilkinson is the best known commentator on Leonardo Padura's work, but his work tends to be critical of Cuban politics and society, celebrating capitalist society as "highly developed" (255), in contrast with a Cuba that he repeatedly figures as intolerant and corrupt (182, 185, 217-250). I foreground Cuba's advanced society in comparison with neoliberal economies, particularly in regard to its literary culture, which is extensive and prevalent throughout society rather than market-driven or elite.

### The Local Literary Marketplace

In Cuba, tourism is the country's main source of income, and in a culture that has placed literature in a central position since the revolution, literary tourism plays a significant part in that market. The revolution's appropriation of residential spaces is well known, but this was a comparatively lengthy process involving negotiation with landlords, which developed in stages. The first Housing Decree in January 1959 blocked evictions, reduced rent by up to 50 percent, and implemented measures to encourage people to build their own homes and discourage the construction of rental properties. In 1960 and 1961, 3500 homes were built to replace shantytowns, and in October of 1960 the Urban Reform Law required landlords to sell rental property. Later, houses built by the government were leased with lifetime occupancy rights at a rate of 10 percent of family income (Saney 14-15).

The appropriation of public spaces, both buildings and open spaces, for the purpose of developing an open and active literary culture was a far more rapid project. The Casa de las Americas organization was founded just four months into the revolutionary period, and it inhabits an imposing and iconic modern building in Havana. In their comprehensive and insightful book *Literary Culture in Cuba*, Parvathi Kumaraswami and Antoni Kacpia note that Casa de las Americas is one of the most significant literary and cultural centres in Cuba, a hub for arts and culture in the Americas which has, since the first days of the revolution, operated as a lively space for conferences, seminars, and community engagement, reflecting the reach of literature in Cuba: "Casa, as an institution, and then its rapidly successful eponymous magazine, had significance far beyond literature, developing into an institutional and intellectual space across several genres and cultural forms" (64-5). Kumaraswami and Kacpia identify an "explosion of provincial publishing spaces" (61) as an immediate effect of the revolution, and a literary culture that was particularly alert to both metaphorical and actual spaces for both writers and readers. While literary prizes and the state both offered new spaces for writers (86), the BNJM (La Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí) aimed to socialize literature via the space of the public library (92).

To ensure that the newly positioned literary culture did not remain elite, the Literacy Campaign was initiated in those first moments of the revolution. The project involved sending one hundred thousand teachers, many of them school pupils themselves, into the homes of rural Cubans to teach them to read and write (Gott 189). In so doing, boundaries between public and private spaces became indistinct in a way that persists today: a significant part of the Cuban tourist economy relies upon *casas particulares*, rooms in private homes rented out to tourists in place of hotels, and *paladares*, restaurants set up in the front rooms of private homes and which generally contain just three or four tables for customers. The Literacy Campaign eradicated illiteracy in Cuba—which had been at 40 percent previously—within a year, and is in itself an unparalleled achievement of enormous symbolic significance (Gott 189). The Museo de la Alfabetización in Marianao displays the letters written to Castro by all those taught to read, alongside copies of the tutors' reports. But perhaps more important still as a method of establishing literature and literary culture in Cuban social reality were the *talleres literarias*, literary workshops, which ensured that not just literacy, but literature, became a part of everyday reality in Cuba. These were often spaces outside the capital and “under the radar” offering collective space, space to “breathe vocationally” (Kumaraswami and Kapcia 114-16). Aside from metaphorical spaces, the *talleres* involved yet another spatial arrangement. These workshops involved the institutionalization of existing spaces for the circulation of literary culture at mass level in a multitude of spaces (Kumaraswami and Kapcia 114, 117). They were usually held weekly in a suitable location, meaning that literary culture was instated in Cuban everyday life not only by the appropriation of buildings, or by bringing literature into the home, but by using spaces flexibly.

A pattern of increasing adaption of literary spaces to enable tourist trade involves an emphasis on the Hemingway museum and the bars where he drank as default items on the tourist's itinerary. And the books displayed in the book market in Plaza de Armas are designed to catch a tourist's gaze in English, German, Italian, and French as much as Spanish. These signal a potential danger: literary spaces originally intended for Cubans' enrichment are at risk of being given over to tourist markets. However, this is not a phenomenon that is depoliticized or disguised. Following Lefebvre, spatial theorists and human geographers identify that the assumption of neutrality, the notion of abstract space, is the means by which power is unevenly distributed. Despite the concessions made to global tourism and the increasing shift towards making space for tourists to access Cuban literary culture, there is no assumption of the abstract or neutral in the division of spaces for specific functions. Like other spatial arrangements in Cuba intended to support the tourist trade that is essential to Cuba's economic survival, such as the construction of resorts like Varadero, and

the expectation that hotel bars are intended for non-Cubans only, literary spaces are overtly identified as functioning to accommodate tourism, and Cubans are asked to adopt tourist-friendly policies to ensure that the market remains liquid. As Brouillette and Finkelstein assert in the editorial to their special issue on postcolonial print cultures, attention to the literary marketplace is necessary because “the internal dynamics of the postcolonial literary text are never quite separable from the ostensibly external world of commodity production and market relations” (4). This is especially the case when the literary marketplace plays such a prominent part in the nation’s economy, as it does in Cuba, and its significance extends further when the marketplace in question has such a distinct local character.

All of the Mario Conde detective novels engage with both public and private reading spaces, demonstrating how these spaces are intimately connected. In addition to the *talleres* and the private libraries which double as crime detection spaces, the Havana Quartet books portray Conde’s bookshelves at home as well as bookshelves and libraries belonging to his friends, colleagues, criminals, and the victims of crime. The university library from which Conde stole a copy of Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey*, the Writers’ Union Bar, poetry readings and spaces for literary events, and the municipal library where Alberto Marques was parameterized is itself another meaningful spatial aspect of Cuba’s literary context.<sup>3</sup> In the texts published after the Havana Quartet series, further literary spaces are explored: the subject of *Havana Fever* is the second-hand book trade and the narrative places an emphasis on the trade’s physical locations, and *Adios, Hemingway* takes place at Hemingway’s former home in Cuba. Hemingway is, of course, a significant literary figure driving literary and cultural tourism in Havana.

What emerges from an analysis of the literary marketplace in Cuba is an emphasis on the spatial. Spatial theory with its postcolonial and marxist approach is best equipped to identify and overcome unevenness in purportedly neutral spatial configurations in colonial and neocolonial contexts. The spaces that might be categorized as neocolonial are governed by neoliberalism. This is not yet the case in Cuba, which has, since the revolution, encountered spatial politics openly and sought to undo uneven access to literary and other spaces. As a result, spatial theories require a different application in Cuba. The Cuban context complicates a postcolonial or marxist approach to the spatial because the revolution’s declared aim was to undo the unequal distribution of space. However, in attempting to hold on to the gains made in the succeeding decades, concessions made to capitalist global trade and tourism threaten to undo the politically alert organization of literary and other spaces. By examining space in Padura’s novels, we see that space is always politicized in Cuba.

## Reading Spaces in the Havana Quartet

An increasing emphasis in recent scholarship on spatial analyses both of crime fiction (Martin and Murray; Miller and Oakley; Schmid) and in postcolonial studies (Harvey; Huggan; Mbembe; Teverson and Upstone; Upstone) lends weight to Edward Soja's robust defence in *Thirdspace*, and reasserted in *Seeking Spatial Justice*, of the spatial turn in literary and cultural studies, as a means of attaining social justice:

From local and urban contexts to the regional, national, and global scales, a new spatial consciousness is entering into public debates on such key issues as human rights, social inclusion—exclusion, citizenship, democracy, poverty, racism, economic growth, and environmental policy. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 15)

Soja's work, and those of other spatial theorists and human geographers, including David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Richard Peet, and Neil Smith, seeks to emphasize that the conception of space as apparently immobile (Foucault) and neutral disguises the ways in which spatial configurations maintain uneven power relations in contemporary neoliberalism. Here as elsewhere, though, Cuba presents a unique subject for investigation. An examination of spatial politics in contemporary Cuba involves a shift in emphasis from the basis on which postcolonial and Marxist spatial philosophy is practised by Soja, Harvey, Massey, and others. Instead of uncovering a geographical restructuring policy that exploits and increases inequality in capitalist contexts under the guise of supposedly neutral, natural, "abstract" space as explored by Lefebvre and Bourdieu, an exploration of the restructuring of Cuban social spaces must acknowledge that the politics of space has always been apparent in Cuban post-revolutionary social practices. Most of the reading is done by protagonist Mario Conde, who enters multiple reading spaces, often outside the confines of his detective work.

Lieutenant Detective Mario Conde would rather be reading than undertaking police work, and in *Havana Blue* alone there are seven separate statements asserting this preference. Twice, Conde reflects that if not for the inconvenience of the detective work, he would be at home reading (38, 68), and blames his detective work not only for a regretted lack of both reading and writing in his life (143), but also for failure to achieve a lasting romantic relationship (48), the opportunity for a fulfilling romance being equated with the time and space to read by Conde in all of the Havana Quartet books. This connection between reading and romance is the particular focus of *Havana Gold*: having begun a new relationship, Conde equates anticipating contact with his new love interest with the anticipation of reading. Over a stretch of two pages, while he waits for the phone to ring, Conde tries to read, discarding every book—Arturo Arango's novels, Lopez Sancha's

short stories, Senel Paz, Miguel Mejides—until Karina phones and forces him to acknowledge his police identity alongside his literary preoccupation by asking to speak to “Sherlock Holmes” (108). Conde’s interest in Karina cannot be separated from the discovery that she has read Salinger (16). To cement their relationship, he lends her a copy of *Franny and Zooey*, calling it the best book Salinger ever wrote and disclosing that he had stolen it from the university library (16-17)—just one example of a library that is invoked as a space of both crime and desire. Even his fantasies about Karina involve literature: “He’d make love with her in the shower when night fell, [...] while he read a novel by Hemingway or one of Salinger’s immaculate stories, she’d play her saxophone, and bring a sad sound to the blissful scene” (273). When the relationship disintegrates, the extent of his disappointment is measured by its impact on his reading: “he couldn’t read. Could almost not live” (286) because of his lost love.

Despite Conde’s insistence that he is prevented from reading by the everyday business of crime detection, *Havana Blue* opens with a reference to his bookcase, not his books, as he ponders the case he is about to tackle (5) and, even after the case concludes, his reading is less ambitious than he predicted:

He [...] went over to the mountain of books waiting their turn. He slid his finger down their spines, looked for a title or author that attracted him but gave up halfway. He stretched out a hand towards his bookcase and picked out the only book that never accumulated dust. “May it be very squalid and moving,” he repeated loudly and read the story of the man who knew all the secrets of the banana fish, which is maybe why he killed himself, and fell asleep thinking the story was pure squalor if only because of the quiet brilliance of the suicide. (244)

Among all of the fascinating and varied references to texts and authors that proliferate in the detective novels, one text demands attention: Salinger’s writing is a point of reference for Conde throughout the Havana Quartet, but the early short story, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” occupies a particularly resonant position. The story resonates with Conde’s attitude to his writing as something that is an impossible task, but which holds the promise of an idealized future. According to biographer Paul Alexander, on publication “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” immediately and significantly improved Salinger’s literary reputation. The idealized notion of authorship presented in such accounts of Salinger’s career trajectory accords with the global author figure promoted in the capitalist literary economy. The creative figure’s assumed “artistic autonomy” is, Sarah Brouillette describes, a myth, belying “the reality of conscription into proliferating state and corporate initiatives” (8, 6). Brouillette’s concern in *Literature and the Creative Economy* is to demonstrate

the intersecting discourses of neoliberalism and the creative economy, and in doing so she asserts that the writer—or creative artist or worker—has never inhabited the much-fabled position of political and economic autonomy. Brouillette's argument is made in relation to British policy and funding of creative industries. However, writers in Cuba could expect state support of their work in the form of a career in literary and cultural activity; according to Kumaraswami and Kapcia, writers had a "double existence"—a role as cultural worker in addition to their writing work, meaning they were financially solvent and their recognition was not based on financial success (61). Conde's situation is rather different from the writer in the capitalist, global literary economy, so his failure to pursue a career in literature cannot be seen as caused by economic factors.

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is typical of Salinger's works for its "squalid and moving" tone, and this is the way it is recalled throughout the Havana Quartet. There are twelve references to Conde's desire to write a "squalid and moving" story in the Quartet, the instance cited above being afforded special weight as it is the closing passage of *Havana Blue*. The story functions as more than a model for Conde's ideal, or a recurring literary allusion, though. For one thing, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" is full of references to reading—there are three discussions of reading in a text of only 4,000 words in length. While talking to her mother on the phone, Seymour Glass's wife Muriel recalls a book of German poems that Seymour has asked her to read: "He said that the poems happen to be written by the *only great* poet of the century. He said I should've bought a translation or something. Or *learned the language*, if you please" (Salinger 30). Given the choice, Muriel reads quite different texts: "an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called 'Sex Is Fun - or Hell'" (30). These instances of reading serve to heighten Seymour's distance from Muriel in terms of their priorities. Yet, asking about the book is the only part of the conversation with her mother that she instigates, and in this way Muriel acknowledges the value of literature in her relationship with Seymour. The third reference to reading is on the beach when Seymour converses with Sybil, a young girl staying at the same hotel who asks him about a children's book and Seymour attempts to initiate a literary critique of sorts. "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" emphasizes the value of literature above the everyday in a way that resonates with Conde's desire to be reading and writing, an attitude towards literature that Conde shares with the American authors he admires, but which is distinct from the revolution's aims regarding universal access to literary culture.

On its own, though, this privileging of literature only goes some way towards explaining Padura's use of this particular story rather than selecting any of Salinger's other works, many of which include descriptions of reading.<sup>4</sup> "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" resonates again because of the chain of intertextual references that it evokes, a chain that is extended

further by its positioning in *Havana Blue*. Salinger's story includes the line "Mixing memory and desire" from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a poem that is itself persistently intertextual. One instance of this is the epigraph to the poem taken from Petronius Arbiter's *Satyricon*. The little girl in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" shares her name, Sibyl, with the sibyl (or seer) in *The Satyricon* who, overwhelmed by "relentless existence" when asked "what would you?" says "I would die".<sup>5</sup> In *Havana Gold*, Conde's writing dream is exactly this—to convey "the emptiness of existence" (164). The idea of writing about emptiness is repeated twice more in the text (164, 167). In *Havana Black*, this intent shifts slightly so that the story would be about "frustration and deceit, disenchantment and futility" (Padura 15), about "youth failing" (16). The reference to the sibyl in *The Satyricon* is intertextual as well: Trimalchio assures Agammemnon in *The Satyricon* that he "studied literature for home use," and is keen to inform his audience that he has "three libraries, one Greek and the others Latin" (Arbiter). Trimalchio refers to the sibyl in this context, confirming the value of reading, first noting: "I used to read those stories in Homer" (*Satyricon*, ch 48). The function of the direct and repeated reference to this particular short story might be precisely to extend this chain of intertextual reference. Following this, we might suggest that reading in the Havana Quartet functions as an ongoing communal experience that persists in intertextual relationships *despite* local material realities, while drawing attention *to* the different meanings uncovered by those local material realities.

Evoking "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," rather than any of Salinger's other "squalid and moving" works (many of which, especially his novels, are far more widely read) sets in motion the chain of intertextual reference that inspires Conde's desire to write, speaks to the prominent space of literature in Cuba, and opposes everyday existence—in Conde's case, the everyday work of the criminal detective with its "dead bodies, suicides, murderers, smugglers, whores, pimps, rapists and raped, thieves, sadists [...] fingerprints, autopsies, digging, bullets fired, scissors, knives, crowbars, hair and teeth extracted, faces disfigured" (Padura, *Havana Blue* 49)—with the idealized occupations of reading and writing. An interpretation of this desire to shake off everyday existence that is alert to what Soja terms the "socio-spatial dialectic" (*Seeking Spatial Justice* 5) equates to a critique of the neoliberal system that results in a preponderance of time that is, for many, a "relentless existence." As Zygmunt Bauman shows us, neoliberal practices resulting in globalization mean that the local and the global come together in the form of "glocalization." Glocalization, far from the claims of those who attempt to justify neoliberalism as increasing individual liberty, results in an increased unevenness based on "globalization for some; localization for others" in which "some inhabit the globe" while "others are chained to place" (37).

Following this, David B. Clarke and Marcus A. Doel note that “the ability to use time to overcome the limitations of space is the prerogative of the globals. The locals remain tied to place—where, for many, time is increasingly abundant and redundant” (37). Tied to place with an abundant and redundant amount of time, Conde laments his relentless existence, which is the product of uneven development: though resources in Cuba are “evenly” distributed, there are fewer resources than before the dismantling of the Soviet Union.

Spaces of crime and literary spaces coalesce in the novels. Tamara’s library is the location containing the clues needed to implicate Rafael Morín Rodríguez in the fraud that resulted in his death: Tamara finds Rafael’s address book while looking in the library, out of its usual place (Padura, *Havana Red* 60-61), and copies of documents hidden in the library safe prove that Rafael and his associate Rene Maciques have offshore bank accounts and cars (204-6). These clues call for attention because either they are out of place, as in the case of the address book, or they are discoverable because they are contained in privileged spaces. In the Cuban context where space is openly political, this is especially memorable, and the center of misappropriated privilege is undone.

Inasmuch as it offers evidence of Rafael’s crimes and is a stimulus for Conde’s affair with Tamara the library is significant in that it is the locus of the transgressive activity in the text. The private library symbolizes privilege is a habitus that refers both backward to pre-revolutionary unequal wealth and space distribution, and forward to the global tourist economy unfolding at the time of the novel’s publication. “Habitus” is Pierre Bourdieu’s term for the combination of embodied dispositions—strategies for playing the “game” of social life that are distinct from the “rules”—and a negotiation of the competencies learned from education and symbolic power, both of which are wielded by the private library that instills Conde with a lasting sense of inferiority, “intellectual inadequacy” (*Havana Blue* 82). Habitus is a contingent strategy for living in space. In Tim Cresswell’s terms the private library should be a “fact of life”—a neutral and concrete place or territory (*Place* 10). Cresswell’s research has identified the power of more substantial geographical ordering devices (such as large landscapes) by exploring acts of embodied transgression including the inhabitation of those landscapes by protesters and new age travellers. Transgression is located in the library in *Havana Blue* to underscore the extent to which literary culture and political power are interdependent in Cuba, where there was a sustained effort to politicize literary space in order to make access to literature universal, including publishing, dissemination, and bookselling initiatives that were put in place at the same time as other spatial reconfigurations, such as the redistribution of living spaces.

Continued awareness of the politics of space is present in the “Havana Quartet” books. The texts’ direct political engagement with literary culture

and the constant sense of the legality or otherwise of literary spaces according to the dominant politics shows that neither neutrality nor the abstract are displacing the conscious politics of place and space. A ripped page from *The Complete Plays of Virgilio Piñera* found in the dead man's Bible in playwright Alberto Marques's hidden private library enables detective Mario Conde to establish the reason for the murder he is investigating. But the crime is not the focus, and neither is solving it. Conde only needed the clue to corroborate his instinctive response to the crime. Instead, two things emerge from the concatenation of literary and crime spaces: firstly, Conde attempts to comprehend transvestitism as a practice of transformation by borrowing Marques's book, *The Face and the Mask*, which proposes a philosophy of transvestitism in three parts: metamorphosis as a way to overcome gender and sexual subject norms, camouflage as a form of disappearance, and disguise as a means of intimidation (Padura, *Havana Red* 47). Second, and more pertinent, is the transgressive space of Marques's library that is identified as illegal—"surely inhabited by authors and works banned by certain codes and exotic publishing wonders, unimaginable to the ordinary reader" (42) and undermined by its location in Marques's house: hidden behind the toilet. The contemplation of the library is intercut and undercut by a lengthy description of urinating so that the "alluring scent of old, damp, dusty paper" gives way to unremitting stream of urine, that "ran on and on" in the "clean and organized" bathroom (42). Conde suspects Marques of watching him urinate from the library and Marques's subsequent admission of having stolen an edition of *Paradise Lost* illustrated by Dore (45)<sup>6</sup> almost seems to be offered in recompense for this act, all undertaken in the mode of mischief, accompanied by Marques's titters and smiles (42). The way in which spaces cohere in this instance provides an insight into the ways in which Padura's "Havana Quartet" rethinks the detective genre and positions it to address the literary marketplace in the context of global travel, trade, and tourism. Conde contemplates the library from the toilet, and the sound of the toilet's flush penetrates the library, undermining its distance from the everyday and the bodily, reconnecting it with the lives of others, and questioning the way in which the private space—or privately held collections—can have value: books covered with dust through lack of use invoke disdain here and elsewhere in the texts. Padura's detective fiction directly addresses the global tourist market and its effect on Cuban literary texts and spaces. This is clearest in *Havana Fever*, which examines the "dicey business" of the second-hand book trade and the sale of irreplaceable Cuban books to foreign traders for private profit. The texts might exaggerate the frequency of such transactions, but in doing so they convey the political function of literary texts and spaces. The texts' openness about tourism and the adaptation of spaces for its deployment helps maintain awareness of the recent history of unevenness and to an extent, helps guard against the neoliberal myth. Similarly, the texts

attest to the positive impact of Cubans' witting participation in the political through open critique, even as they question the Special Period's effect on the individual in a way that could be read as critical of the revolutionary project, as represented by Marques's parameterization.

Art and literature fall into Lefebvre's category of "representational spaces" of complex symbolic content, which may be linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life (33). Representational spaces form part of a triad, and with the other two factors—spatial practice, concerned with the continuity of production and reproduction in particular locations, and representations of space, tied to the knowledge and codes of relations of production—are largely equitable with the marxist base and superstructure model. The relations of reproduction in social space that this triad defines encompass both overt and covert relations, the repressed elements of which are associated, for Lefebvre, with transgressions related to sexual pleasure. The association of representational, or literary, spaces with desire and—forensic evidence of dead bodies indicating that they have been victims of sexual crimes, for instance—recur in the "Havana Quartet": as well as the literary connection that solves the murder of cross-dressed Alexis Arayan, teacher Lisette Delgado is killed soon after having sex in her home and Conde's analysis of the crime scene is restricted, for the most part, to a less than favorable assessment of her personal library, revealing that she reads little and has limited literature of quality (Padura, *Havana Gold* 37).

### Conclusion

An examination of Cuba's spatial politics must remain alert to the modification of space to meet the needs of global tourism, to consider the ways in which space continues to alter social practices and processes, what Soja refers to as the "socio-spatial dialectic" (*Thirdspace* 78). An examination of social space in Havana, and its representation in texts that provide an insight into those spaces for "global" readers, needs to be alert to the ways in which the politics of space remains foregrounded in Cuba, as well as the extent to which the accommodation of policies compatible with capitalist global trade and tourism, adopted as a means of safeguarding the benefits gained under the socialist system, begins to replicate the inequalities of capitalist spatial configurations. This approach enables a projection of the risks involved in an increased cooperation with capitalist economies and processes. Such concessions will inevitably undo the positive spatial relationships set up by revolutionary politics in literary culture, and in their place, create the kinds of spatial configurations that prevail in capitalist society, as described in the work of Soja, Harvey, Massey, and others.

Cuba's literary spaces, especially in Havana where literary and cultural tourism is most clearly targeted, are changing in response to

global tourism, and risk continued change as relations with international markets, including even the United States, continue to alter. Recent laws enable people to undertake work to earn private profit, and these are often directly related to changes in tourism laws. Tourism is now Cuba's main source of income, and most tourists have freedom to travel extensively. Cuba's local literary marketplace feels the effects of these changes keenly. Today, tourists support the literary economy including the vast second-hand book markets, especially the one in Havana's Plaza de Armas, originally set up to "subsidize state publishing and thus ensure the availability of books for Cuban readers" (Kumaraswami and Kapcia 141). Tourists take trips to the Hemingway museum in a Havana suburb as part of an expected itinerary for any stay of a few days or more in the capital. As well as the prestige afforded to literary spaces in Cuba, their prevalence, typified in the *talleres* that were established nationwide, demands attention from a spatial perspective: Lefebvre signals the instrumentality of space, indicating that something extends beyond an instrumental purpose (27). What the Havana Quartet can reveal about the instrumentality of space may go some way towards uncovering the shifting instrumental function of literary spaces in postcolonial marketplaces, and the literary texts' engagement with space may be connected with Padura's particular contribution to detective fiction.

In their article on space in Margie Orford's South African crime fiction, Martin and Murray suggest that studying representations of space in crime fiction may reveal that space is, in crime fiction, rhizomatic, implying that the spaces coexist and mutually inform one another (38). The employment of the rhizome in the manner instigated by Deleuze and Guattari inevitably opens up the possibility that there is a potential positive outcome of the concatenation of spaces in crime fiction, as the rhizome has frequently been employed to point to the ways in which colonial subjugation and diasporan marginalization can be overcome, often in connection with healing, trauma, recovery, rebirth. In the South African context as in many other postcolonial locations, the undoing of rigid boundaries is, of course, a step towards challenging imperial ideology and associated hierarchies, and is in fiction a call to resist and redefine existing spatial politics. In the Havana Quartet, the suggestion that literary spaces and crime spaces may have a dependent relationship seems at first to lead only to two possibilities: that the post-revolutionary regulation of literature is criminal, or that it is necessary to undermine the rigid boundaries separating Cuba from the U.S.-dominated international marketplace, in accordance, perhaps, with the new arrangements being discussed between Raul Castro and Barack Obama. Neither of these possibilities safeguards the Cuban literary marketplace, or recognizes its value borne in its difference from the market-driven, partial, mythologized global literary marketplace.

Padura's particular contribution to detective fiction is the displacement of crime in favor of attention to the literary marketplace, and this displacement might be the key to better understanding the ways in which literary spaces and crime spaces are codependent in the texts. The location of the dead body is often the space around which the detective story circulates, so this emblem offers a useful point of focus for considering the ways in which displacement happens in the Havana Quartet. In the Havana Quartet, the dead body is repeatedly displaced. Alexis Arayan's body is moved apparently without motive for it is poorly disguised. Lissette Delgado's body is not inspected in *Havana Gold*, and Conde sees only the traces of her presence in her apartment. Tamara's husband Rafael Rodriguez is at first assumed missing—his body is later reported as having being discovered some distance away. The only body that is found at the outset of the detective investigation is the body of a defector, a displaced Cuban, who returns to take an object of value and sell it in America. The displacement of crime's location places criminality elsewhere, and the preponderance instead on literary spaces relegates crime in the texts.

Describing the effects of global tourism on specific locations, David Harvey notes that, although there should be potential for spaces to develop unique identities based on their attempt to gain a particular market share, in reality globalization produces a recursive and serial monotony, a dependent monoculture. This is the relentless existence that is warned against in the Havana Quartet by the constant engagement with "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Meanwhile, the Quartet attests to both the uniqueness and politically alert nature of Cuba's literary culture repeatedly as it foregrounds the prestige, the prominence, and the prevalence of literature in even the unlikeliest of public and private and public-private spaces.

#### Notes

1. This essay is related to my longer ongoing monograph on reading and the local literary marketplace in Cuba, South Asia, Nigeria, and in *Black British Writing, Postcolonial Literature and the Local Literary Marketplace: Locating the Reader* (Palgrave).
2. Virgilio Piñera was a Cuban writer whose work, like that of the playwright in whose library the text was found, was marginalized in post-revolutionary Cuba.
3. Parameterization is the practice of removing a writer considered dissident from a central location and role to a more peripheral one, often to a library in an outlying district.
4. These are usually in the context of a young person struggling to marry their everyday existence in a privileged setting with a philosophy that evokes authenticity and peace. For example, in "Zooney," Zooney reads

philosophical statements in his older brothers' bedroom as a way to reconcile the statements with his older brother's suicide and in response to his confusion over his sister Franny's attachment to the Jesus Prayer she has read in *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a translation of a nineteenth-century Russian pilgrim's tale.

5. See *Satyricon*, Chapter The Forty-Eighth, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5225/5225-h/5225-h.htm>.
6. An expensive and attractive edition, not especially rare.

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