The study of detective fiction in Latin America should begin with an analysis of the substantial amount of translated whodunits or tales of ratiocination that dominated during the first few decades of the genre. Since the late nineteenth century and well into the 1940s, Spanish and Portuguese readers are mostly exposed to translations of foreign tales of detection and to a scarce but significant native production.

The first half of the 20th century is characterized by the predominance of the classical detective fiction, also called whodunits onovelas de enigma, as a sophisticated literary genre for educated readers. Horacio Quiroga and Enrique Anderson Imbert were some of the early enthusiastic readers and practitioners of the form, which they appreciated for its intellectual challenges. Throughout the 1940s a slow but constant shift of this panorama starts to occur and the dynamics of the genre become more complex. Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares publish their Seis Problemas para Isidro Parodi in 1942, and during the 1940s Borges publishes several detection stories that resist classification. During the second part of the 20th century writers follow Borges’ example by questioning and experimenting with external models of detection. The main two formulas of the genre, the classic whodunit and the hardboiled variant, start to interact more, until the late 1960s, when the hardboiled variant rises as the privileged model. Amelia Simpson, author of a panoramic study of detective fiction in the continent published in 1990, notes:

The hard-boiled school received little exposure in Latin America until relatively recently. The notable resurgence in availability and popularity of this school in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, in Latin America (Hammett’s famous 1929 hard-boiled novel, The Maltese Falcon was the best selling detective novel of 1984 in Brazil) accompanies a recent increase in critical interest in the genre there. The hard-boiled model appears to be a much more meaningful and adaptable form of detective fiction, principally because of its critical view of society. (22)

Most literary historians and critics coincide with Simpson and identify the transition between Boom and Post-Boom in the 1960s and 1970s as the moment when detective fiction writers in Latin America abandoned the general impulse to imitate the classical tale of ratiocination and shifted their focus towards the hardboiled variant and its possible detours. Gustavo Pellón, in his analysis of key Post-Boom narratives, identifies four trends: the documentary novel (novela testimonio), the historical novel, the detective novel/story in its hardboiled variant, and a fourth trend made up of a diverse image of Latin America provided by Post-Boom writers (282). The last two trends merge in the reworking of detective fiction to create the conditions of possibility for post-1980s literatura neopolicial (neopolicia) and antipolicial (antidetective). Detective fiction is typically defined as a story concerned with the solving of a crime, in which a detective or a figure that carries out the tasks of a detective, is assigned a key role, whether positive or negative. In the Latin American literary context, the notion of the neopolicial underlines the detective’s task in relation to socio-political and communitarian concerns, while antidetection narratives focus on persistent questioning of the detective’s task in a postmodern context. The philosophical and aesthetical concerns of antidetective fiction are often set in opposition to the socially committed neopolicial. I question this division and argue for a conceptualization of antidetective fiction that includes and reflects on some of the tasks claimed by the neopolicial, while also developing them into a more complex exposure of reality.

Persephone Braham opens his recent study of detective fiction in Cuba and Mexico with the following affirmation: “Until the 1970s, the field of Latin American detective fiction was both limited and derivative. Through simulation or parody, authors engaged the marginal status and formulaic nature of detective narrative to dramatize Latin America’s peripheral position with respect to modern western culture” (ix). In Braham’s reading, literary parodies up to 1970s are associated with a minor, marginal and peripheral status in relation to the center or western cultural model, but implying at the same time a shift thereafter. According to this argument, previous to Braham’s main examples (Paco Ignacio Talbo II and Leonardo Padura Fuentes), parody in detective fiction served as a reflection of the continent’s subordination (limited and derivative) to the West, as opposed to a post-1970s period when this structure is altered. I take distance from
Braham's view of the relation between models and copies as a struggle between center and periphery. His division of the form into a limited, derivative, parodic and gestatory period, and a post 1970s overcoming of this marginal situation is, in my view, less relevant than an analysis of the bind between foreign and Latin American models. There seems to be a general post-1970s tendency to write critically and directly about this period in the history of Latin America, focusing partially on reworking and rupturing several key conventions and themes of the detection genre, but a strong connection to previous writing models is still evident. This essay discusses the following: the relation of the subject(s) or communities to the law (State), the politics of truth, the nature of knowledge, and the role of secondary characters and detectives in the narration, as well as conservative and transgressive understandings of parody. The latter, identified by Braham as a thing of the past, has guided the discussion of Latin American detective fiction in the past century.

I want to suggest that the literary history of detective fiction in Latin America up to the present is in conversation with the dual drives of conservative and revolutionary forces that Linda Hutcheon identifies as constant in her theory of parody, and that Braham identifies as separate. Whether or not we are discussing new or “independent” developments of the genre, the role of the model or the pre-text cannot be disregarded without blinding our understanding of the form as developed in relation to the realities of Latin America. Hutcheon’s definition of parody as repetition with difference applies to the new variants of detective fiction. She views her definition as a “simple” one that shares common characteristics with theories of parody of all ages, but which serves the particular need of dealing with modern and postmodern parodic art (37).

By this definition, then, parody is repetition, but repetition that includes difference (Deleuze 1968); it is imitation with critical ironic distance, whose irony can cut both ways. Ironic versions of “trans-contextualization” and inversions are its major formal operatives, and the range of pragmatic ethos is from scornful ridicule to reverential homage. (37)

In contrast to other ideologically charged definitions of parody, Hutcheon’s definitionprovides a conceptualization of parody that allows for a non-restrictive study of the multiple possibilities derived from (post) modern parodic texts. She underlines the mimetic aspect of parody, or the existence and recognition -directly or indirectly- of a pre-text which is “repeated”, as well as the repetition of the pre-text as productive and as a transgression (repetition with difference). The author argues that parody is fundamentally doubled, divided and characterized by a central paradox that I see as key in the Latin American context: “its ambivalence stems from the dual drives of conservative and revolutionary forces that are inherit in its nature as authorized transgression” (26). The two aspects of Hutcheon’s definition outlined above are always found in a contact zone where the possibilities of the collision between the pre-text and the parodic text need to be explored and argued. If parody, even with critical difference, reinforces the model or pre-text, as Hutcheon concludes, then the task of the historian, reader, critic or writer can be seen as an attempt to negotiate this central paradox. What is distinctive about Latin America detective fiction and how can these distinctions help to create a literary history/theory of genre? What aspects or combinations of these dual drives, the normative and conservative, or the provocative and revolutionary, dominate the present period or post-1980s detective fictions?

Neopolicial

Critics like Braham, and writers such as Paco Ignacio Taibo II and Leonardo Padura Fuentes, promote the notion of the neopoliciaco. This concept refers to the self-conscious appropriation of structures and elements from the detective genre and to how these appropriations can lead to the creation of original detective stories rather than literary parodies. The neopoliciaco focuses on political and social criticism of the State and society, organized in part around the events of 1968 in Mexico, the Cuban struggles, particularly after 1989, and the dictatorships in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. In the neopoliciaco the traditional central role of the detective or the criminal event is combined with an exhaustive examination of the struggles of communities and secondary characters, usually associated with marginal situations. The figure of the detective as restorer of order and executor of the law is inverted in favor of balanced questioning and exposition of all the characters or institutions involved in the crime. Simpson’s study supports this understanding of the genre in Latin America without making reference to the notion of la neopolicial.

While traditional classics, as well as more conventional and commercial duros continue to appear in the seventies, detective literature of the period is generally characterized by the use of the hard-boiled model to depict a fragmented and
reworking of the genre: from 1960-1985 points out the importance of addressing the presence of the model and the transformative dynamics necessary for any case, there is a rejection of the model and also of the policies established by the government. Elzbieta Sklodowska's study of parody model or the parodic possibilities in the texts involving new forms of detection is one of the main characteristics of the own merits, independent of models and past critical methods” (Braham 17). The downplaying and sometimes blatant negation of the "Leonardo Padura... created a version of the Hispanic detective novel with its own mythology and its own discursive spaces; it stands on to the revolution. Padura's

detective. The socialist detective novel began to develop in secondary figures. His narrations move away from the rational and positivistic solution of crimes or the marked centrality of the

detective after spending several years working for General Electric. Belascoarán Shayne’s philosophical and social concerns emphasize the corruption of the political system in Mexico, the living conditions of the lower classes, and the difficulty of adapting the hardboiled variant of detective fiction to the Latin American context. In his fiction, social denunciation and philosophical reflection serve to underline the distance between theoretical and empirical knowledge. Taibo’s fictions of detection alternate both approaches but emphasizing the social function of literature or neopolicial strategies. According to the writer, lo neopolicial is a better fit for the corrupt and chaotic socio-political atmosphere of México City (41-43). Taibo II’s response and attitude towards the question of parody in detective fiction is similar to Braham’s in that both posit the neopolicial as a new genre in the Latin American context. Interviewers have tried to link Taibo’s work with previous texts and writers, particularly with traditional practitioners of the genre like Marlowe, Hammett and Himes, and to Mexican writers like Antonio Helu, but his response has always rejected all links to parody and to any significant influence of those texts. In the Mexican context, he marks a clear distinction: “Nada, nada absolutamente. Eran, o excesivamente naifs o excesivamente paródicos. Y Belascoarán [...] tú no puedes fundar un genero a partir de la parodia” (43). In terms of a broader and traditional understanding of the genre, Taibo affirms a greater difference: “El neopolicia rompió con la tradición de una novela basada fundamentalmente en la anécdota y abrió las puertas experimentales hacia una novela cuyo eje central es la atmósfera” (43). Even if these negations are valid to some extension, Taibo II’s Belascoarán Shayne shares too many connections to previous hardboiled detectives to be ignored.

Belascoarán’s most obvious ancestors are Chandlers’ Philip Marlowe and Chester Himes’ African American detectives Grave Digger and Coffin Ed. Like Marlowe and Himes’ detectives, Belascoarán is genuinely interested in the welfare of people and the eradication of their suffering, without an economic motivation. They are all willing to risk injuries in order to rescue or help their clients. In addition, the importance of atmosphere that Taibo II points out in relation to the neopolicial is, if not central, one of the key components and main attributes of Chandlers’s and Himes’ novels. Himes’s detectives are extremely close to Belascoarán Shayne’s violent environment and his enduring of physical punishments that always threatens the well being of most hardboiled detectives. Belascoarán is shot, stabbed and drugged, while Himes’s detectives get acid thrown in their face (Coffin Ed), shot (Grave digger) and beaten. The connection to previous practitioners of the genre is downplayed by Taibo II’s analysis of the neopolicial, in favor of viewing the practice of the neopolicial genre as a place for newness and experimentation.

Cuban Leonardo Padura is another key author and spokesperson for the neopolicial turn and its identification with marginal or secondary figures. His narrations move away from the rational and positivistic solution of crimes or the marked centrality of the detective. The socialist detective novel began to develop in Cuba in the 1970s, following the well-known required policies of commitment to the revolution. Padura’s work since the late 1980s is frequently credited, by himself and other critics, with the changing of this pattern: “Leonardo Padura... created a version of the Hispanic detective novel with its own mythology and its own discursive spaces; it stands on its own merits, independent of models and past critical methods” (Braham 17). The downplaying and sometimes blatant negation of the model or the parodic possibilities in the texts involving new forms of detection is one of the main characteristics of the neopolicial. In this case, there is a rejection of the model and also of the policies established by the government. Elzbieta Sklodowska’s study of parody from 1960-1985 points out the importance of addressing the presence of the model and the transformative dynamics necessary for any reworking of the genre:

La proliferación de textos que aportan una vuelta de tuerca a la fórmula policial por medio de la transgresión de la misma debe considerarse en el marco de la evolución literaria. Visto desde la perspectiva diacrónica, el distanciamiento paródico de los autores latinoamericanos frente a la fórmula policial puede explicarse, primeramente por el carácter “prestado” de este modelo. Si bien podría plantearse lo mismo con respecto a la mayoría de las fórmulas literarias transplantadas al nuevo mundo, la rigidez formulaica es, indudablemente, un factor adicional que favorece la parodia. Según Fernando Savater, las prescripciones y prescripciones de la fórmula “se cumplen aun cuando son violadas por inversión o innovación del autor, cuya originalidad cuenta precisamente con el conocimiento previo por parte del lector de la ‘normalidad’ transgredida. (118)
Opposing Sklodowska’s attention to relating to the model is Padura’s distancing from the formula, and his suggestion that the detective genre does not exist anymore. He can only acknowledge a género negro, a genre that according to Padura represents crime, chaos and alienation, without relying on the detective fiction of the past:

Tal voluntad de violar cánones, estilos, recursos estereotipados, permite a la obra no sólo escapar de los límites habituales en los que se mueve el género, sino realizar una más profunda indagación en una época y un modo de ser [...]. (149)

Por eso, lejos al fin de la mimesis y la parodia fácil, el género posee ya carta de ciudadanía en varios países de la lengua y hoy por hoy, en los umbrales del siglo XXI, es una de las modalidades literarias con mayores aptitudes para reflejar ese lado oscuro de la sociedad que es cada vez mayor, como si la oscuridad fuera su destino. Y a un destino negro bien le viene una novela negra. (157)

The impulse to separate his fiction from the model or genre adopted, together with an emphasis on the examination of regionally localized social struggles, move Taibo II, Padura and their work closer to what is not an independent new form of the genre, but the modality practiced by writers such as Chester Himes and Michael Nava, although in a different period of time. These writers extend the boundaries of the detection genre to emphasize socio-political realities in specific racial contexts, as in lo neopolicial, but without negating or minimizing its relation with the model. This relation to the model is instead overexposed via criticism, expansion, and the reworking of its conventions. In Himes’ case, it is the study of the social and political conditions of African Americans in the chaotic Bronx that takes a central role. Nava’s narrative focuses on the struggles of Mexican Americans or Chicanos in Los Angeles, especially when dealing with race and sexuality issues.

Padura’s neopoliciaco is also characterized by its questioning of the notion of objective reality/truth proposed by the State and the social literary theorists in the 1970s. Such questioning allowed his writing to stay away from the official ideological mandate and from the dimensional characters and novels that dominated the 1970s década negra and the 1980s in Cuba. His writing can be described as a fight between ideology as defined by the State, and literary quality as defined by his view of literature as having a primordial social and critical function. As Braham notes: “The Cubans did away with the eccentric genius but replaced him with an equally improbable selfless revolutionary. Until Padura’s stories came along, rarely would evident rivalries or tensions disturb the relation among the ideally heterogeneous members of the force” (36). Two of Padura’s key maneuvers are to depict the delinquent as part of the socialist community, instead of being the typical negative influence from the outside, and to have his characters and narrators express their disappointment with the existing social and political conditions, making sure to also point out their positive aspects. This social and critical function, as well as his emphasis on the reworking of the limited socialist detective novel, are the most salient aspects of Padura’s detective fiction series Las Cuatro Estaciones, which feature Mario Conde, a police detective and aspiring writer. Padura also published two more novels featuring Conde —Adiós Hemingway and La neblina de ayer— where criticism of Cuban society is also abundant. In Adiós Hemingway, I see Padura’s work as emphasizing the social function of literature as favored by the neopolicial and in transition, nonetheless incomplete, towards an antipolicial aesthetic that embraces some aspects of the former. The text that follows my discussion of Adiós, Aguilar Camín’s Morir en el golfo, is also characterized by neopolicial and antipolicial drives, but mostly represented as the latter.

In Adiós Mario Conde comes out of retirement from the police force and now, as a private detective, investigates the events surrounding the discovery of a body in Ernest Hemingway’s property. As in previous detective novels and the latest, La neblina de ayer, Conde’s investigation and the characters around him investigate the crisis experienced by Cuban society: “Esto es lo que tú vas a averiguar. Si puedes… Mira, Conde, yo estoy hasta aquí de trabajo -e indicó a la altura de las cejas-. Esto se está poniendo cabrón: cada día hay más robos, malversaciones, asaltos, prostitutas, pornografía…” (25). Conde’s investigations also lead him to a more hybrid investigation that deals with his own writing struggles, with the recreation of a crime and Cuba’s present, with the reconstruction of Hemingway’s persona during his last years. As the novel progresses, Conde’s and Hemingway’s identities and their struggles as writers become the real purpose of the investigation. Conde becomes a biographer obsessed with the American writer and especially with his experiences while living in the Island:
Conde se preguntó qué buscaba allí. Sabía que no se trataba de alguna pista capaz de aclararle la identidad del muerto aparecido en el patio, y muchos menos la evidencia física de alguna culpabilidad asesina. Buscaba algo más distante, ya perseguido por él alguna vez y que, unos años atrás, había dejado de buscar: la verdad –o quizás la mentira verdadera– de un hombre llamado Ernest Millar Hemingway.

The novel teases key aspects of the antipolicial or antidetective fiction by providing a double end and questioning the task of the detective. Towards the end, Mario Conde has narrowed down the possible killers of the FBI agent found dead in Hemingway’s property to Hemingway and its two main employees, but antidetection uncertainties remain in his mind about the American writer persona and the origin of the shot that killed the FBI agent. Conde also rejects Manolo’s -the police officer in charge of the investigation- offer to tell him the official decision of how to interpret and process the case findings. The detective chooses to imagine the rest of the story and Hemingway’s persona. These semi-dislocations of the mystery are also negated by a simultaneous claim to have found the true Hemingway: “Ese es el verdadero Hemingway, Manolo. Ese es el mismo tipo que escribió ‘El gran río de los corazones’”, (173) by his decision to join a club of “free” Hemingway’s followers, which seemingly solves his love-hate relationship with the writer, and by the narrator’s previous disclosure via a simultaneous narration of the structure and resolution of the crime. The latter overweighs any possible ontological disintegration or antidetection gestures by providing narrative closure. In addition, Conde’s decision to join the “hemingwayanos cubanos” at the end also reemphasizes the neopolicial aesthetics and politics of the narrative, by alluding to the restrictions and impositions of the State and closing the novel with a highly critical, although subtle, note:

-Bueno para que lo sepan-siguió el Conde-, voy a pedir mi entrada en los hemingwayanos cubanos.
-¿Y qué cosa es eso?- quiso saber el Conejo.
-Una de las dos mil maneras posibles y certificadas de comer mierda, pero me gusta: no hay jefes, ni reglas, ni nadie que te vigile, y uno entra y sale cuando le da la gana.
-Si es así a mí también me gusta […] Vivan los Hemingwayanos cubanos!

To underline this neopolicial critique of the restrictions in Cuban society during the last few paragraphs, Conde drinks with his friends in front of the sea and sends a nostalgic message in a bottle, along with the bloomer of Ava Gardner stolen from Hemingway’s museum, to his friend Andrés who now lives in some place up north: “Siete años son muchos años. No sé por qué no quiere venir todavía” (178). The political comment reinforces the novel’s critical approach to the Island’s situation and the necessity of considering alternatives to the present isolationism. This subtle criticism explains Conde’s penchant for illegal activities or alternatives throughout the series (illegal book dealing) and despite the fact that he is part of the institutional apparatus that supports the present situation. The fact that Adiós tries to transgress the detective fiction genre is unquestionable. What remains to be seen, instead of forcing premature conclusions about “the independence of this neopolicial model”, is if these can lead to new independent conceptualization of the genre. Padura’s fiction focuses on lo neopolicial, as described above, but in Adiós he makes an interesting but partial transition towards antidetective fiction that is consistent with other recent adaptations of the detective genre in the Latin American context. I read Adiós as a transition from both the parameters set by the State during the black decade and the precepts of the neopolicial that dominate Padura’s adaptation of the genre.

Antipolicial

Paul Auster’s antidetective novels, The New York Trilogy, are well-known examples of writers searching for writers and slippery identities as seen in Padura’s Adiós. Auster follows the tradition of anti-detective narratives written by authors such as Thomas Pynchon or Jorge Luis Borges. In the third part of the trilogy, The Locked Room (1988), the narrator/character embarks into an investigation of the whereabouts and identity of a childhood friend who becomes a successful writer thanks to the role of the narrator/character as his literary executor. His search ends with and acceptance of Fanshawe’s history and identity as a locked room, a metaphor for the impossibility of truth and certainties that proliferate in antidetection. All three parts of the trilogy start as a detection exercise, but each of them gradually unravels, leaving only traces of the crime and the detective. The antidetective genre indicts the detective’s lack of ability in solving the crime and also casts uncertainties on the very nature of the criminal activity and the categories of right or wrong. At the
In Héctor Aguilar Camín’s antidetection novel, presented by the denunciatory American antidetective fiction allows the critic or writer to perform the primordial task of dealing with the blurring overexposure of reality and aesthetical focus on disorienting the mystery are not blind to the double movement between itself and productive when thought in reference to The models and local or domestic models. presented here in relation to post-1980s detective fiction is a variant of the old debate in Latin American studies between Eurocentric fiction with a sociological essence is therefore closer to the transitional space occupied by the Although her approach retains the common negation of the solution as key for antidetection. What Simpson describes as antidetective fiction as independent from as those found in Taibo’s Nietzschean considerations or Conde’s meditations on writing and identity, Simpson views Latin American antidetective fiction as dependent from the metaphysical concerns that predominate the broader understanding of the concept, although her approach retains the common negation of the solution as key for antidetection. What Simpson describes as antidetective fiction with a sociological essence is therefore closer to the transitional space occupied by the neopolicial in Padura’s Adiós. This conflict presented here in relation to post-1980s detective fiction is a variant of the old debate in Latin American studies between Eurocentric models and local or domestic models. The neopolicial and sociopolitical concerns and realities emphasized by Padura, Taibo, Braham and Simpson are not neglected or less productive when thought in reference to texts considered antidetective fiction. On the contrary, post-1980s antidetective fiction calls for a double movement between itself and lo neopolicial, for an intersection between both models. Antidetective fiction and its philosophical and aesthetical focus on disorienting the mystery are not blind to the sociolocal realities emphasized by the neopolicial. Instead, Latin American antidetective fiction allows the critic or writer to perform the primordial task of dealing with the blurring overexposure of reality presented by the denunciatory neopolicial.

In Héctor Aguilar Camín’s antidetection novel, Morir en el golfo (1988), the unnamed narrator searches for the true story (historia) behind
a series of politically motivated murders. As a political journalist and amateur detective, the narrator tries to help old friends Rojano and Anabela with an investigation about the murders of collective land owners (ejeditarios) and the motivations behind the crimes. As a couple, Rojano and Anabela take advantage of the long and known love of the narrator for Anabela in order to improve their chances of investing in land with potential petroleum supply in the Gulf Coast. The prospect of the federal investment in the area motivates Rojano’s run for the municipal presidency and interest in the territory. As a couple, they turn the narrator against Rojano’s political rival and oil boss Lázaro Pizarro, supposedly responsible for the murders. Pizarro is also the union leader of the petroleum workers and represents the main obstacle for the acquisition of land. The first impulse of the narrator/detective is to direct his efforts against Pizarro by publishing articles that question his integrity, while also maintaining an adulterous relation with Anabela. He later discovers, as any good detective, the machinations of the femme fatale, that Anabela and Rojano had been manipulating him and that some pictures incriminating Pizarro had been altered. After the discovery, the narrator abandons his investigation. He only returns to action when Rojano is assassinated or lynched by inhabitants of his town for which Pizarro is suspected. The narrator returns to write articles critical of the state-run Oil Corporation and Pizarro, until these are effective and negotiations are made in order to pacify Pizarro and control the narrator’s attempts at denunciation. Then Anabela, now living with the narrator in a domestic routine, disturbs the “peace” by ordering a murder attempt against Pizarro. The oil boss apparently dies, although not directly by the attempt ordered by Anabela. Each of these events recounted here and at the end of the novel lead to a more complex overexposure of corruption that undermines any possibility of solving the mystery and rather complicate the situation even more. The narrator’s moral impulses to help his friends become shattered and disoriented by a complex web of relations and versions of reality. The detective is aware that Pizarro is not innocent, but also that there are many non-innocents, and that the State, Anabela and Rojano are also corrupt.

The novel focuses on how different groups fabricate their own version of the truth and justice. “All” information available, including folders, newspapers, pictures, memorandums and many other documents related to the case are presented in the first chapter, “El archivo de Rojano.” The second chapter, “El archivo de Pizarro”, is also presented as a possible source for answers, but turns out to be quite the opposite. The attempts to find those answers to the questions fail when the credibility of every single character, including the narrator/detective, together with their archival material, are undermined by what Roberto González Echevarría describes as a novel-archive that “unleashes a ghostly procession of figures of negation” (32).

This basic paradigm is followed by most recent texts that deal with the antidetection processes and the multiplicity of information available in order to find out a particular version of the truth. Instead of employing detection to provide answers to: Who? What? How? When? Where? *Morir en el golfo* investigates how truth is constructed or how the official history of an event is legitimized or overexposed. The antidetection process in these texts does not defend private property or the State by reestablishing the law, as in the dominant variants of typical detective stories from the classical period and the 1920s hard-boiled variant, but instead it questions the way in which a particular historical moment produces knowledge. “El archivo de Rojano”, for example, does not contain the truth but a particular version of the event that the narrator constantly questions. The archive is not the accumulation of documents related to the case, but a particular configuration and a particular order that produces truth and maintains the detective in an undecidable situation or facing, as Alberto Moreiras puts it in his analysis of *Morir*, an “uncontainable reality”:

> The truth of that which the detective ascertains is excessive with respect to the truth—the truth exceeds itself by casting aside an uncontainable reality with respect to which any construction of subjectivity is false or illusory. The detective “traverses his fantasy,” and he renounces not only the object of his desire, but more profoundly, his pathological will; but now he has no recourse to any moral law that lies outside of pathology. The detective has lost the place of honor, and with it everything else. (77)

Antidetection fiction in contemporary Latin American fiction displaces the detective from that “place of honor” that still seems possible in the neopolicial as discussed above. Even if the detective of the neopolicial fails to solve the case, he retains the honor of having pointed out a sociological reality of the oppressed and the oppressor. Mario Conde and Belascoarán Shayne face many doubts that remain unsolved in their cases, but they constantly manage to provide an ethical and sociological version of reality which is essential for the neopolicial even if it involves leaving some loose ends. Antidetection as narrative device in *Morir en el golfo* functions as a critique of
truth, ethics and politics that recognizes and leaves open the dispersive quality of the novel-archive. Moreiras reads Morir as carrying out a process of infrapolitical affirmation: “The infrapolitical is the political interruption of all ethical sovereignty and simultaneously the ethical interruption of all political sovereignty” (77). The actions of Rojano, Annabela, Pizzaro and the narrator always fail to secure a solid ground and remain trapped in the double movement between political and ethical interruptions that properly defines antidetection narratives within a sociopolitical and ethical framework.

Knowledge in Morir en el golfo is always postponed. Aguilar Camín, a historian and journalist, creates a history/novel where knowledge is part of a constant reading of the past, in the present and for the future. The narrator’s attempt to speak for and represent those murdered to turn his stance against violence and corruption into a positive effect for the affected community fails. There is an impossibility, as Moreiras explains, of obtaining a clear narrative and an impossibility of believing that is sufficient to be in opposition to violence and corruption in order to defeat and minimize violence and corruption (78). The overexposure of reality, as addressed in antidetective fiction, is not concerned with denunciation or showing the truth, which is already evident, but with the analysis of the relation of intersecting discourses and versions of reality. Antidetection testifies to this overexposure of reality as shown in Morir en el Golfo and also to the bind between the readable exposures of lo social in the neopolicial and the blurring overexposure of the same. Antidetective novels in the context of Latin American detective fiction destruct and reconstruct the received structure of the model they address, without negating the model to the point of elimination, but to the point of exhaustion and mutual transformation.

Works Cited


The uncanny resemblance between stories entered for a local newspaper competition and the circumstances of two sudden disappearances attracts the attention of Mid-Yorkshire Police. Superintendent Andy Dalziel realises they may have a dangerous criminal on their hands – one the media are soon calling the Wordman.  

22. a gripping book which introduces an impressive main character.  
23. a character whose intuition is challenged.  
24. the disturbing similarity between reality and fiction within a novel.  
25. an original and provocative line in storytelling.  
26. the main character having a personal connection which brings disturbing revelations.  
27. the completion of an outstanding series of works.