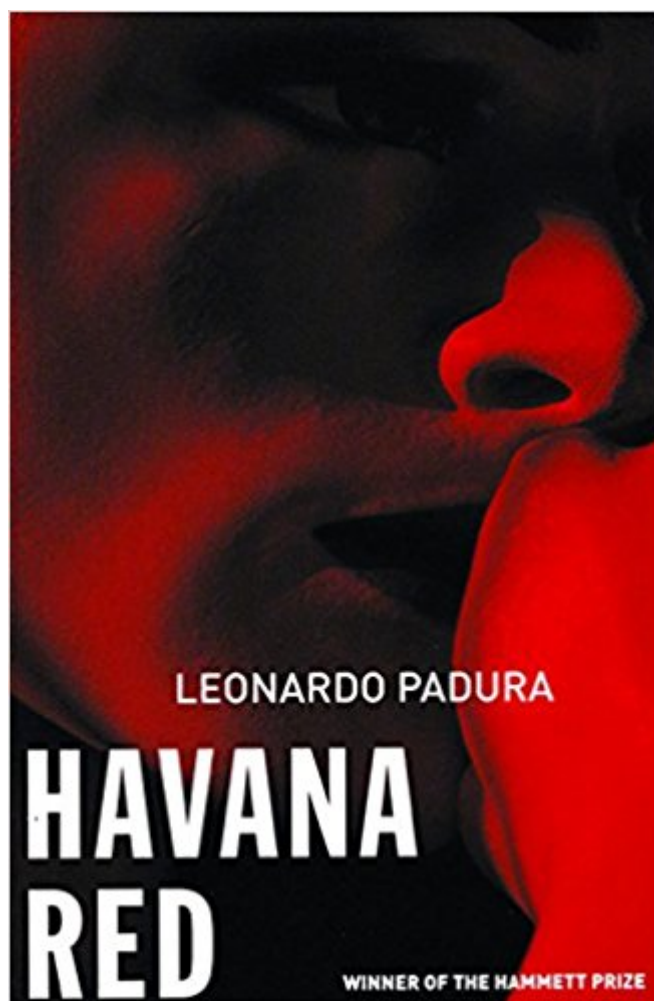


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Havana Red



Synopsis

“A magnificent novel. Haunted by the tragic story and passion of its characters.” —*Magazine Littéraire*

The first of the Havana quartet featuring Inspector Mario Conde, a tropical Marlowe. A young transvestite in a beautiful red dress is found strangled in a Havana park. Conde’s investigation into a violent murder exposes a stifling, corrupt society, a Cuban reality where nothing is what it seems. A dark and fascinating world of men and women born in the revolution who live without dreaming of exile and seek their identity in the midst of disaster.

Leonardo Padura lives in Cuba. He is a novelist, essayist, journalist and scriptwriter. Havana Red has won numerous literary prizes, including the Hammett prize in Spain.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Another winner from the same publisher, HAVANA RED is an innovative take on the traditional detective story. Marilyn Stasio -- New York Times, August 14, 2005

Leonardo Padura was born in 1955 in Havana. He is a prize winning novelist, essayist, journalist and scriptwriter. International fame came with the publication of the Havana Quartet, all featuring Lieutenant Mario Conde, of which Havana Black is the second to be available in English. The Quartet has been translated into seven languages and has won numerous prizes including Spain’s Hammett Prize. Leonardo Padura has just won the 2015 Princess of Asturias Literary prize for his work. This prize is said to be the Spanish Nobel Prize. Previous winners include

Philip Roth, John Banville, Margaret Atwood, Amin Maalouf and Ismail Kadare. Padura is most famous for his Inspector Mario Conde novels, all published in English by Bitter Lemon Press.

This is quite a complex mystery - as well as something of a political novel. Lieutenant Mario Conde of Havana Homicide has been handed a difficult case. The son of a Cuban diplomat has been murdered in Havana Woods, dressed as a woman. The case leads Mario into the gay world, which he is manfully determined to understand despite his inborn dislike of "pansies." There are a lot of elaborate internal monologues and reminiscences in the narration, which are densely written but very effective. In one Mario ponders the possible symbolism of transvestitism. Mario doesn't think like a typical policeman. He can get terrifically fanciful, but it works. Mario comes to admire a gay dramatist he initially investigates. The man showed great courage under political oppression. But to balance this softening of Mario's machismo, we are treated to an elaborate coupling with a woman picked up at a party. And there's an amusing self-pleasuring situation. We can count on Leonardo Padura for erotic scenes. I like the exotic locale of the Havana Quartet. Mario wanders among the great mansions built by rich men in Cuba's capitalist past - now turned into offices and housing. And he goes through bouts of paranoia when the Internal Investigations people start going looking into his life. Havana Red is the second book I've read in the Havana Quartet. Readers who like international crime fiction with a literary bent will appreciate this author.

Full of emotion, tension and passion that present the reader with new perspective and insights to life in fairly modern Cuba. An experience. Long, long sentences lead the reader into dark corners but it is well worth the read.

As with the other Padura novel I've read, solving the whodunit isn't really the interesting part. Instead, you read Padura for his close scrutiny of Cuban society -- the people who go along and get along, and the people who swim against the current. (And if Padura's right, there are a lot more of the latter group than US coverage of Cuba would lead you to think.) In Havana Red, our cop has his issues with government censorship and control, going back to the days when his high school literary magazine was banned. Yet he shares his society's prejudices, especially when the murder he's called on to solve is of a transvestite. In the course of solving the murder, however, he must get to know the transvestite's friend and mentor, a gay playwright whose political problems are far more serious than his have ever been. The encounter between the two -- and the slow development of their respect for each other -- are the core of the book. It's "Strawberry and Chocolate" with a much

sharper bite.

Good read, but wanted more of the flavor of Cuba. The TV series was very good based on the quartet of books.

I bought this novel for a Cuban literature class. It's not my favorite kind of book but I feel a lot gets lost in translation and that could be why. I'd like to maybe read this in Spanish one day. This novel has lots of social significance in terms of when it was written and the content of the book for LGBTQ Cubans, so that's a cool lens to look at it through!

first half of book was more engaging than the second half.....and the religious gobbleygook was irritating and long winded...the translation was lively and amusing....very literal as the english copied the spanish in such a way that the sentence structure was more spanish than english....loved that part! and always enjoy reading about havana....

Maybe reading this in Spanish would be a different experience than reading it in English, but it couldn't be any better. The story, the strange characters and most of all the detective Conde the Count are absolutely unforgettable. This is a book that you read in one sitting because you cannot put it down. The writer, Leonardo Padura, is a wonderful discovery.

Three quarters of the way into the novel I stopped. Too wordy. Lost interest in the so-called mystery.

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