



# In the Cold of the Malecon and Other Stories

*Antonio Jose Ponte, Cola Franzen*

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Departing from both the utopian-political and the romantic-baroque styles of past Cuban literature, Ponte deftly sketches a picture of a contemporary Cuba that is very different from the stereotype of Caribbean life, full of music and dance and colorful celebration. An old man and a six-year-old prodigy have a rendezvous to play chess at a forlorn railroad station. Randomly riding trains, a woman keeps company with a strange assembly of men. An unemployed historian falls in love with an enigmatic astrologer, and the two live out their tragedy in the streets of Havana as homeless vagrants. A father and son take an aimless stroll after lunch to see the whores along the Malecón, Havana's seaside promenade. A young man, one of the last Cuban students to go to the Soviet Union on a foreign-study program, returns to Havana, where he explores his identity-looking at childhood photos with his grandfather, spending time with old friends, and obsessively seeking news of a woman he had known and loved in Russia. In a style both lucid and translucent, Ponte shapes intricate stories of self-discovery and metaphysical revelation in spare and allusive prose.

### About the Authors

Antonio José Ponte was born in 1964 in Matanzas, Cuba, and studied at the University of Havana. He worked for some years as an engineer, and then as a screenwriter. In addition to writing short stories and fiction, Ponte has published prize-winning collections of poetry and essays. His work has been published in France, Germany, and Spain. This is his first book to be published in the United States.

Cola Franzen is the translator of over twenty books, including *Poems of Arab Andalusia*, *Dreams of the Abandoned Seducer* by Alicia Borinsky, and *Horses in the Air* by Jorge Guillén (recipient of the Academy of American Poets Harold Morton Landon Translation Award 2000).

### Review

"In his first book to be published in the U.S., Ponte gives readers a short collection of six elliptical stories from inside the Cuban revolutionary experience, closer in spirit to the fiction of Eastern European dissidents than to that of Caribbean fabulists, unlike exiled writers who see the island as either a mythical homeland or a political cause.

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#### **Matthew White:**

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