

# WSFA JOURNAL

March First Friday

9:16 meeting called to order by Bob.

We have money. Everyone who has not needs to pay dues so they can run for office and vote.

Trustees: Slate is wide open.

Capclave Present – Continuing to work on Capclave. We have a fan table at ReGeneration Who.

Capclave Future is looking for hotels

WSFA Press – contract is now signed. We are doing a special limited trade hardcover of “Slow Bullets” by Alastair Reynolds. Will be \$40, with special \$30 rate at Capclave.

Signed limited edition of 1000.

The WSFA website is ticking along. Unless people give them content, there will be no content to put up. Capclave twitter has 129 followers.

Policy committee is still working on procedures.

Entertivities – the Pounds are having an anniversary board game party

A get well card for Peggy Rae Sapienza was circulated for WSFAans to sign.

No one was there for their first meeting. Alethea Kontis and Leo from Chile were there for their second meeting

March Third Friday 3/21/15

Attendance: Vicki Di Santo, Cathy Green, Monica Herald, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Bob MacIntosh, Candy Madigan, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Michael Walsh, Eva Whitley, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Apollo Yeh

Meeting called to order at 9:18 by Bob MacIntosh.

Minutes were read and accepted.

No Treasurer's Report

WSFA Press Report: Subterranean has preordered 200 copies of the Alastair Reynolds book.

Capclave Present: hotel not interested in proposed room swap. Paul is working on the order page so that people already registered can preorder the book at the insider price.

Capclave future: not present

Trustees Report -slots still open on the slate

Entertivities – no report

Committee to Actually discuss science fiction announced they would discuss the March/April issue of Fantasy and Science Fiction

Policy committee is still working and will meet after the general meeting.

No old business.

New Business – there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Friday in May. Instead we will organize another dinner at Balticon. There are also 5<sup>th</sup> Fridays in July and October.

Apollo Yeh was there for his first meeting. He met Brian Lewis at a Barnes & Noble and found out about WSFA. He was looking at a number of other clubs, etc and we were the closest to him in Centerville. No one was there for their 2d or 3d meeting.

Announcements – usual secretary and house rules announcements. Mike Walsh is selling books

WSFA First Friday April notes 4/3/15

WSFA President Bob MacIntosh opened the meeting at 9:15pm. He announced the passing of long time DC area Fan Peggy Rae Sapienza and had a moment of silence in her memory. Waived reading of the minutes since the Secretary was absent.

Treasurer Sam Scheiner reported as of April 2015 the account had \$41,323.99 down 2,729.68 from last year. Bob Macintosh also explained tax items and how it might affect WSFA. Most of it went over the substitute secretary's head so she didn't follow it exactly.

Capclave present was not present, but the Capclave treasurer said memberships are trickling in and reminded everyone present to buy their memberships if they have not done so already.

The Trustees announced the slate for the 2015 elections to be held on First Friday in May. They are as follows:

President: Bob MacIntosh

Vice President: George Shaner

Treasurer: Sam Scheiner

Secretary: Cathy Green

Trustees: Brian Lewis

Barry Newton

Mark Roth

Michael Walsh

WSFA Small Press Award: Cathy Green [This was an error on Brian Lewis's part that the trustees corrected after the meeting, as she still has a year to go on her 2 year term]

Sarah Mitchell [This was an error on Brian Lewis's part that the trustees corrected after the meeting, as she still has a year to go on her 2 year term]

Rodger Burns [Rodger signed up after the business meeting]

Capclave 2017: Elizabeth Twitchell

The treasurer also reminded everyone to pay their dues \$20 so they can vote in next month's election or run for office.

Entertivities noted that the Air and Space Museum has a series of lectures on Science topics given by actual astronauts and other scientific experts. Lectures are free but the time and dates may vary.

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction will not speculate on which works will be Hugo Award finalists.

There will be a possible Lunar eclipse on Saturday morning (4/4) around 6am ish.

Bob MacIntosh on behalf of Cathy Green proposed a motion for WSFA to donate \$500 to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Emergency Medical Fund in honor of Peggy Rae. Since there were not enough members present for a quorum due to religious and convention obligations the motion was tabled for the next meeting.

One person, Apollo Yeh, was present for his second meeting. He met Trustee Brian Lewis at Barnes and Noble and Brian gave him a bookmark. He looked up WSFA and came to a meeting.

The substitute Secretary made the usual announcement, as did the hosts. Mark Roth announced his company won a multi year contract with the Federal Government giving him several years of job security. Steve Smith announced the presence of pie and it was delicious. Barry Newton did his own taxes for the first time in 8 years due to the retirement of his accountant. Bill Lawhorn and Ivy Yap say hi to everyone.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm

Attending the meeting were Sam Scheiner, Judy Scheiner, George Shaner, Aaron Pound, Angela Pound, Rodger Burns, David Keener, Bob MacIntosh, Sarah Mitchell, Ivy Yap, Mark Roth, Barry Newton, Apollo Yeh, Elizabeth Twitchell, Steve Smith.

Third Friday April 4/14/15

Meeting called to order at 9:19 by Bob MacIntosh

Minutes were read and accepted with one abstention

No Treasurer's report

Capclave present – still working on policy and procedures, bookmarks will be ready for Balticon. Will have fan tables at Ravencon and Balticon

Capclave future – working on hotel

Trustees Report: slate has been changed to fix the problems of last time.

President – Bob MacIntosh

VP – George Shaner

Secretary – Cathy Green

Treasurer – Sam Scheiner

Capclave 2017 – Elizabeth Twitchell

Trustees – Brian Lewis, Mark Roth, Barry Newton, Michael Walsh

Small Press Award – Paul Haggerty, Rodger Burns, Charity Helton

Policy Committee – will be meeting after the meeting

Entertivities – World Police and Fire Games coming to Fairfax City according to Brian Lewis; Free National Parks admission this weekend according to Elizabeth Twitchell

Web presence: Elizabeth Twitchell will be resetting the meet-up this weekend to add back meetings at the Madigan household and reflect any switched meetings. The WSFA website is status quo, the Capclave website is up to date.

Small Press Award: 87 stories this year, all are up on the site, anonymized and password protected for the committee to read. Committee will have the finalists picked by the end of May for the club to read and vote on.

WSFA Press: We have the interior art for *Slow Bullets*. We're on target for the book to be ready sufficiently in advance of the convention.

Old Business: Motion for the donation of \$500 in memory of Peggy Rae Sapienza to the SFWA Emergency Medical Fund which was tabled last time due to lack of quorum was put forth again and passed with one abstention and one objection because Peggy Rae wouldn't like anyone to just blindly follow along.

New Business: Meeting switch in July. First Friday at Madigan home, Third Friday at Scheiner home.

5th Friday in May: Will have a dinner Friday night at Balticon instead.

No one there for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Announcements: Secretary and hostess made usual announcements with slight change that the bunny is not currently free range due to having to have a leg amputated.

Everyone hoped the bunny would have a successful recovery. Mike Walsh was selling books. Mike Walsh talked a bit about having been sent to Eastercon to help out the DC17 Worldcon bid.

Meeting unanimously adjourned.

## From Colchagua to Washington: A Chilean encounter with Science Fiction.

*By Leonardo Espinoza*

Francisco Millares published in 1878 the novel considered to be the first Chilean documented work belonging to the science fiction genre. Its title, *From Jupiter: The Curious Voyage of a Magnetized Man from Santiago*; its author, *Saint Paul*.

Although I do not know the specific reasons that led the Chilean writer to opt for a pseudonym of the English tongue, the symbolism of such choice seems adequate to me to begin a personal commentary about my encounter with the marvels of the alluded genre. I myself have fallen into the temptation of using an Anglo-Saxon pen name, in that

innocuous, semi-superstitious ritual that seems to expect the invocation of the ancient masters of the north. For in Chile, in that long, slender country at the south of the world, the melodious phrases of Bradbury's poem *If Only We Had Taller Been* reach and flow through its lands as well, with their affectionate vigor and universal might, reverberating among the distant listeners as they proclaim "Short Man, Tall Dream."

Life in Chile is weaved with multiple nuances, a diverse mosaic of our own, from the most arid desert in the world to the solemn intersection of fjords that escort the lands of the south, passing through a dense capital that imposes itself as the national center, with its own internal reasons to contribute with cultural differences.

In my case, things began in San Fernando, a small city from the central valleys, in the Province of Colchagua, globally known for its wines and locally enriched by its fertile, countryside life. With childish enthusiasm I mention that Millares was born in Santa Cruz, a nearby rural locality situated in the same province, in the fruitful soil of the Chilean Huaso.

When I described San Fernando, capital of the province, as being "small," I do it having in mind the imposing colossus that Santiago turns out to be: the metropolis houses almost six million residents, a third of the country, without any other of the nation's conurbations containing more than a million inhabitants yet. As it usually happens to many people that live around here, Santiago soon extended its arms and claimed me as one of its adopted citizens. I've had the fortune to live both in the north and the south, but Santiago has never stopped demanding my return.

And where does the science fiction begin? It begins with H.G. Wells and it ends, to many, with Ray Bradbury, mandatory readings during secondary education. As somebody from Northern Virginia once told me, we may have some kind of "fixation for Mars." Perhaps the remark is correct, but I suspect the tendency in our case is toward the metaphorical and stylistic nature of the red planet, with all of its fantastic and oneiric connotation: the world that as long as it remains unexplored can be a refuge of our longings and fears. The scientific speculation regarding the fourth planet does not generate here a massive literary interest, which is totally understandable and suitable: South America oozes fantasy, mysticism, magical realism; or, with just merit, it reveals the calamities of its dictatorships and its socio-political bitterness. This is not the homeland of the industrial revolution, or the one of space travel. Minds whose dreams dwell there sometimes decide to emigrate.

It's not unusual then that "Hard Science Fiction" is, for example, a rarity hidden somewhere not easy to find. Chilean science fiction has an evident tendency to approach fantasy; or, more likely, it's confused when it comes to cataloguing itself, perhaps in the attempt to fulfill something still found in rather small quantities.

After all, this is the recognized "Country of Poets," a deserved label harvested with effort and talent, having two praiseworthy Nobel laureates in Literature, Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral, who together represent an extensive tradition. And in a more alternative, submerged facet Chile is also the home of the grandiose and abstract Alejandro Jodorowsky, acclaimed filmmaker of surrealist cinema—intensely surrealist—whom I consider in my modest opinion to be one of our most creative and daring exponents. Jodorowsky, who is also a writer and self-proclaimed "psychomagician," was in charged back in the '70s of a brilliant proposal that attempted for the first time to bring

*Dune* into the big screen, a great feat showed a few years ago in the fascinating documentary *Jodorowsky's Dune*.

*The Martian Chronicles* is thus to many the final tasting of the genre. And it could've been to me as well, had it not been, in my particular case, for a journey I took to the United States.

There was a time in San Fernando, about thirty years ago, when a series of exchange students from the U.S. arrived to that city. Certainly, the resources came from the country of the adventurous travelers, as the economic situation of the locals still tended to oscillate. That's how my father's family's house at that time, with hens in the backyards and pigs in the corral, received a student from Albany, New York. One day, my father dreamt, he would send his child to the far lands of the United States.

Three decades later, with life showing its beautiful face, I was being welcomed by an American family in Arlington, Virginia. And of all my epopee, one particular event is essential to the story I'm telling today.

It was in the Yorktown High School's library that I had the revelation. It was among its enormous shelves and aisles, at least to me back then, that by chance, or forecast, I decided to pick out a book to cushion the warmth of the American evening.

*I, Robot*, by Isaac Asimov.

Wells and Bradbury had already provided me an unequalled delight, but it was since that one special day that I could never, absolutely never stay away from science fiction anymore.

And just when you thought you were out . . . Santiago pulls you back in.

The UNESCO stated some years ago that among six Latin American countries, Chile was the one where the fewest people would "read voluntarily." To discern such reasons in a country of distinguished contributors is not the objective of my narration, yet the library at my school seemed to be the reflection of that statement. When I returned to my country, it was in that library where I searched for more material. Buried away between labyrinthine corridors, in a spot unreachable by mere eventuality, there stood the discreet shelter of books. In its interior, an old woman protected her relics by repelling the curious visitors: she would enjoy scaring them away through riddles and ambiguities in her discourse, finding errors in the common talking of whomever visited; or, simply, by dilating the request process until the student was ready to desert. All of the books were resting on the scarce shelves behind her, so she was also a physical barrier. Nevertheless, if a smile were to be kept for long enough, feigning amazement at her corrective lecture, she would eventually turn into someone accessible. Truth is she seemed to be quite a solitary person.

I succeeded in gaining entrance to her domains, and, to my bliss, I found a copy of *Fahrenheit 451*. Likewise, the main bookstores offered in a timid, unsuspected area a much decent repertoire of works translated to Spanish. Save for isolated cases in which I have come across with editions that seemed to have been rushed for a prompt distribution, the translations are admirable and entirely professional. I am still particularly impressed about a translation of Clifford D. Simak's short story *Desertion* (which, needless to say, I read in English as well) made by a translator whose identity I could never identify. Sometimes I think that Simak himself would be astonished if he were to read that perfect

result. I strongly believe that translating is a beautiful and necessary art that benefits us all as a worldwide community.

With the passing of the years, through the celerity of the University, where medicine texts would shoo away any novel that dared to implore me, it came the inevitable question: Where is the Chilean science fiction?

It was only a matter of asking to quickly discover the answer. In a time almost legendary, almost golden, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there happened to exist our greatest maestro, the magnanimous Hugo Correa, born in a small central-southern town of Chile, who was later claimed by Santiago—as it was to be expected. To my surprise, Correa had been one of the first Latin American writers to publish during the '60s in the renowned *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, after receiving the support of, as if haven't mentioned him enough already, Ray Bradbury himself, whom he met while staying in the United States. *Los Altísimos*, the sole novel to be currently reprinted after his death by Alfaguara editorial, is, without a doubt, the greatest master piece of Chilean science fiction written so far, worthy of sharing a place with its prominent peers.

However, to find the testimonies of that Classical Period is not an easy task. Although Argentinian and Spanish editorials are well versed in the translation of foreign works, including the Polish magnificence of Stanisław Lem, and though nowadays audacious Chilean editorials are paving their way with national creations, to actually encounter the nobles of the past, mystical locations must be explored throughout The Greater Santiago; locations such as the *Persa Bio-Bío*, the immense flea market of the Franklin Neighborhood, with its multiple *galpones* where sacred books of the genre have come to find a sanctuary.

The conclusion of this entire excursion: Chile *is* capable of producing quality science fiction within the dynamic canons of the genre, decorating it, naturally, with its own regional accent. Although unavoidable abysses might be argued, and even though the niche is small, and prejudice still exists toward this form of literature, a new blossoming can be achieved. I believe the only true challenge is the production of quality books, and Chile has proven its capability to do so.

As a witness from a corner at the interior of this niche I came to know after several years, I'm confident that Chilean science fiction is heading to a new summit. We are undoubtedly not too many, but motivation does exist. I wait, for example, and personally, the master piece I imagine my compeer Mario Bustos Ponce (published national author) will one day write, and as the one of his own, surely the one of others will come. And as for me, I will also continue to contribute with as much as I can.

There has never been a Chilean science fiction author to prosper by means of this profession alone, but the illusion is worthy of being preserved.

My personal narrative finds itself once again in Virginia, unfolding some kind of a cyclic aspect, yet with increasing maturity. This time I set myself to encounter those who I knew must dwell somewhere around. It is to them, to you, to whom I dedicate this brief, simple personal commentary: to the *Washington Science Fiction Association*; thanks for the amicable welcome.

To me science fiction is not a pastime. It's the artistic expression from the literary world that nourishes me in transcendental aspects; the expression in which I encounter a unique rejoicing, satisfying an elemental hunger of my personality. I concur with the words inscribed by Philip K. Dick in a May 14th, 1981 letter, and I consider he has explained it the best when saying that science fiction must be stimulant to the point of inciting the reader to co-create, "being a collaboration between author and reader, in which both create—and *enjoy* doing it."

I hold the belief that art consists of an intimate contact, in all of its diverse manifestations, attaining its meaning through each individual apprehension; an eternal subjectivity looking for the perfect receptor. As I learnt from filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, whose cinema and the one of his peers are equally indispensable to me, the ultimate purpose of any art is, in its totality, to enrich the soul in a necessarily imperfect world.

April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Virginia, USA.

## De Colchagua a Washington: un encuentro Chileno con la Ciencia Ficción.

*Por Leonardo Espinoza*

Francisco Millares publicó en el año 1878 la novela considerada como la primera obra chilena documentada perteneciente al género de la ciencia ficción. Su título, *Desde Júpiter: Curioso viaje de un santiaguino magnetizado*; su autor, *Saint Paul*.

Si bien desconozco las razones específicas que llevaron al escritor chileno a optar por un seudónimo de lengua inglesa, el simbolismo de aquella elección me parece adecuado para comenzar un comentario personal sobre mi encuentro con las maravillas del género aludido. Yo mismo he caído en ocasiones en la tentación de utilizar una firma autoral anglo-sajona, en aquel inocuo ritual supersticioso que pareciera pretender la invocación de los antiguos maestros del norte. Y es que en Chile, en aquel largo y esbelto país al sur del mundo, las cadenciosas frases del poema Bradburiano, *If Only We Had Taller Been*, se asoman y discurren también por estas tierras, con su afectuoso vigor y potencia universal, reverberando entre sus oyentes tan distantes al decir «*Short Man, Tall Dream*».

La vida en Chile es un entretejido de múltiples matices, un mosaico propio de amplia diversidad, desde el desierto más árido del mundo hasta la solemne encrucijada de fiordos que escoltan las tierras del sur, pasando por una condensada capital que se impone como centro nacional, con sus propias razones internas para aportar con diferencias culturales.

En mi caso, las cosas comenzaron en San Fernando, una pequeña ciudad de los valles centrales, en la provincia de Colchagua, conocida mundialmente por sus vinos y



enriquecida localmente por su fecunda vida campestre. Con entusiasmo pueril comento que Millares nació en Santa Cruz, una cercana localidad rural de la misma provincia, en la fructífera tierra del Huaso Chileno.

Cuando he descrito a San Fernando, capital de la provincia, con el adjetivo de «pequeña», lo hago pensando en el imponente coloso que resulta ser Santiago: la metrópolis alberga a casi seis millones de habitantes, un tercio del país, sin que exista ninguna otra conurbación en la nación que alcance todavía el millón de habitantes. Como suele ocurrir para muchos que viven por estos lados, Santiago pronto extendió sus brazos y me reclamó como uno de sus ciudadanos adoptivos. He tenido la fortuna de vivir en el norte y también en el sur, pero Santiago nunca ha dejado de exigir mi retorno.

¿Y dónde comienza la ciencia ficción? Comienza con H.G. Wells y termina, para muchos, con Ray Bradbury, ambos siendo lecturas obligatorias durante la educación secundaria. Como me dijo una vez alguien en el norte de Virginia, puede que haya en nosotros algo así como una «fijación por Marte». Quizás la observación sea acertada, pero sospecho que la inclinación en nuestro caso es hacia el carácter metafórico y estilístico del planeta rojo, con toda su connotación onírica y fantástica: aquel mundo que mientras se mantenga inexplorado puede ser un digno refugio para nuestros anhelos y para nuestros temores. La especulación científica desprendible del cuarto planeta no genera aquí un masivo interés literario, siendo aquello completamente comprensible y aceptable: Sudamérica exuda fantasía, misticismo, realismo mágico; o, con justo mérito, se embarca en los dramas de sus dictaduras y amarguras político-sociales. No es esta la tierra de la revolución industrial, ni la tierra de los valerosos viajes al espacio. Mentos que sueñan con eso muchas veces emigran.

No resulta extraño, entonces, que la «ciencia ficción dura», por ejemplo, sea una rareza escondida en recodos difíciles de alcanzar. La ciencia ficción chilena tiende a la fantasía con evidente notoriedad, o más bien se confunde al momento de catalogarse a sí misma, quizás en un intento de suplir algo que se encuentra todavía en tan poca cantidad.

A fin de cuentas, es este el citado «País de Poetas», estampa merecida y con esfuerzo cosechada, con los dignos y loables acreedores del Nobel de Literatura, Pablo Neruda y Gabriela Mistral, que junto a otros sostienen una extensa tradición. Y en su faceta más alternativa y sumergida, es Chile también el hogar del grandioso y abstracto Alejandro Jodorowsky, aclamado director de cine de la vertiente surrealista, intensamente surrealista, a quien considero, en mi sencilla opinión, uno de nuestros exponentes más creativos y atrevidos. Jodorowsky, quien también es escritor y autoproclamado «psicomago», estuvo a cargo de una brillante propuesta en los años 70 que intentó por primera vez plasmar *Dune* en la pantalla grande, hazaña que se puede encontrar en un documental apasionante de hace tan sólo un par de años atrás: *Jodorowsky's Dune*.

*Crónicas Marcianas* es por ende para muchos la última degustación del género. Y tal vez lo habría sido para mí también, de no ser, en mi caso, por un viaje a los territorios norteamericanos.

Hubo un tiempo en San Fernando, hace unos treinta años atrás, en que una serie de alumnos de intercambio proveniente de los Estados Unidos arribaron a esta ciudad. Por supuesto, los recursos provenían del país de origen de los trotamundos: las comodidades económicas de los lugareños aún tendían a oscilar. De este modo llegó a la en aquel tiempo casa de la familia de mi padre, donde las cazuelas se hacían con las

gallinas del patio trasero y las carnes provenían de los porcinos del corral, una estudiante de Albany, Nueva York. Algún día, soñó mi padre, mandaría él a su hijo a las lejanas tierras de los Estados Unidos.

Tres décadas más tarde, con la vida mostrando un buen rostro, fui recibido por una familia estadounidense en Arlington, Virginia. Y de toda mi epopeya, un evento en particular es esencial al comentario que hoy relato.

Fue en la biblioteca de Yorktown High School donde tuve la revelación. Fue entre sus enormes estantes y pasillos, a mi vista al menos, que, por casualidad, o designio, decidí sacar un libro para amortiguar la tibieza de las tardes americanas.

*Yo, Robot*, de Isaac Asimov.

Wells y Bradbury ya me habían parecido de un deleite inigualable, pero fue desde ese día en especial que nunca, absolutamente nunca, pude volver a alejarme de la ciencia ficción.

Y justo cuando piensas que le has escapado... Santiago te trae de vuelta.

La Unesco ha descrito a Chile como el país de la región donde «menos se lee voluntariamente». Elucubrar las razones en un país de notables exponentes no es el punto de mi narración, pero la biblioteca en mi colegio parecía ser reflejo de aquella conclusión. Una vez devuelta en mi país, fue en ella donde busqué más material. Arrinconada tras pasillos laberínticos, en un rincón inalcanzable por mera eventualidad, se encontraba el frugal depósito de libros. En su interior, una mujer anciana que resguardaba sus reliquias repeliendo a sus curiosos visitantes: disfrutaba amedrentarlos mediante acertijos y ambigüedades en su discurso, encontrando errores en el simple hablar de quien la visitara, o, simplemente, dilatando el proceso de solicitud a tal punto que el alumno desertara en su propósito. Todos los libros reposaban en escasos estantes detrás de la bibliotecaria, por lo que ella era, además, una barrera física. De todos modos, de mantenerse una sonrisa por tiempo suficiente, fingiendo deslumbramiento ante todas sus charlas correctivas, eventualmente se transformaba en alguien accesible. Lo cierto es que parecía ser una mujer bastante solitaria.

Logré ingresar a sus dominios y, para mi placidez, encontré un ejemplar de *Fahrenheit 451*. Y del mismo modo, las grandes librerías resultaron ofrecer en un modesto y oculto rincón un decente arsenal de obras traducidas al español. Salvo casos muy aislados que he encontrado en versiones que parecieron ser apresuradas para una pronta difusión, las traducciones son admirables y totalmente profesionales. En lo particular, me sorprende hasta el día de hoy con la traducción del cuento *Deserción* de Clifford D. Simak (que, de más está decir, también leí en inglés) por parte de un traductor cuya identidad jamás pude identificar. A veces pienso que el mismo Simak se sorprendería si leyera aquel perfecto resultado. Creo firmemente que la traducción es un arte hermoso y necesario que nos beneficia a todos como comunidad mundial.

Con el paso de los años, en la celeridad de los tiempos universitarios, donde los libros de medicina ahuyentaban todo tipo de novelas que osaran solicitarme, sobrevino la inevitable pregunta: ¿Y dónde está la ciencia ficción chilena?

Bastaba con plantear la interrogante para descubrir la respuesta. En una época casi legendaria, casi dorada, a fines de los 50 e inicios de los 60, existió nuestro más grande exponente, el magnánimo Hugo Correa, nacido en un pequeño pueblo en el centro-sur de

Chile, quien fuese reclamado más tarde por Santiago, como era de esperarse. Para mi asombro, Correa había sido uno de los primeros escritores latinoamericanos en publicar en los años 60 en la reconocida revista *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, tras el apoyo de, como si no lo hubiese ya nombrado suficiente, el mismísimo Ray Bradbury, a quien conociera en los Estados Unidos. *Los Altísimos*, la única novela de Correa reeditada en la actualidad tras su muerte por la editorial Alfaguara, es, sin duda, la más grande obra maestra de la ciencia ficción chilena escrita hasta ahora, y nada envidia del resto de las obras del género.

Sin embargo, encontrar aquellos testimonios de aquel período clásico no es un asunto sencillo. Si bien las editoriales argentinas y españolas son versadas en la traducción de obras extranjeras, incluida la magnificencia polaca de Stanisław Lem, y considerando que actualmente hay audaces editoriales chilenas que buscan hacerse un espacio con trabajos nacionales, para realmente encontrar a los próceres del pasado es necesario ir a explorar lugares místicos del gran Santiago; lugares, por ejemplo, como el Persa Bio-Bío, la enorme feria del barrio Franklin en cuyos galpones han ido a resguardarse los libros sagrados del género.

La conclusión de todo este recorrido: Chile sí es capaz de generar ciencia ficción de calidad dentro de los cánones dinámicos del género, adornándolo, por supuesto, con su propio acento regional. Aunque se argumenten abismos insoslayables, aunque el nicho sea pequeño y exista todavía el prejuicio a esta forma de literatura, el género sí puede alcanzar un nuevo florecimiento. Creo que lo único esencial en este desafío es la producción de obras de calidad, lo cual Chile ha demostrado ser capaz de generar.

Como testigo desde una esquina al interior de este nicho que luego de años vine a encontrar en mi país, estoy seguro de que la ciencia ficción chilena se encamina hacia una nueva cúspide. Es cierto que no somos tantos, pero la motivación existe. Espero, por ejemplo, y en lo personal, la obra maestra que imagino algún día escribirá mi amigo Mario Bustos Ponce (autor nacional publicado), y así como la de él, de seguro vendrán otras. Yo, por mi parte, seguiré contribuyendo también hasta donde me sea posible.

Si bien nunca ha existido un escritor chileno de ciencia ficción capaz de subsistir tan sólo con esta profesión, mantener la ilusión viva es algo que vale la pena conservar.

Mi bitácora personal encuentra su presente una vez más en Virginia, ostentado en cierto modo un aspecto cíclico, pero de creciente madurez. Esta vez me propuse encontrar a quienes sabía debían rondar en algún sitio de esta zona. Y es a ellos, a ustedes, a quienes dedico este breve y sencillo comentario personal, a la *Washington Science Fiction Association*; les agradezco el acogedor recibimiento.

Para mí la ciencia ficción no es un pasatiempo. Es la expresión artística del mundo literario que me nutre en aspectos trascendentales; la expresión en la que encuentro un regocijo único, capaz de satisfacer un hambre elemental de mi persona. Concuerdo con las palabras grabadas por Philip K. Dick en su carta del 14 de Mayo de 1981, y creo que él lo ha explicado mejor que nadie al comentar que la ciencia ficción debe ser estimulante hasta el punto de incitar al lector a co-crear, «en una colaboración entre autor y lector en la que ambos crean... y disfrutan haciéndolo».

Sostengo la creencia de que el arte consiste en un contacto íntimo, en todas sus diversas manifestaciones, encontrando su significado en cada aprehensión individual, con

un eterno subjetivismo en busca del perfecto receptor. Como aprendí del cineasta Andrei Tarkovsky, cuyo cine y el de semejantes me resulta del mismo modo imprescindible, el fin último de todo arte viene a ser, en su totalidad, el enriquecimiento del alma en un mundo necesariamente imperfecto.

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## A Brief Panorama of Chile's Science Fiction

By Marcelo Novoa\*

Translated by Leonardo Espinoza\*

Did you know, dear reader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that the Literature of Anticipation does exist in Chile? And even more, that it exists since the 19<sup>th</sup> century? And did you also know that the Science Fiction (SF) genre has at least one hundred titles and authors distinguished in our shores? I venture to say the majority has not had the opportunity to even leaf through this astounding novels and stories. For that, I intend to rescue here from oblivion and defamation a handful of such visionary authors, men and women who bring reports from parallel universes: there, where an amendable morning awaits for us. In Spanish. From Latin America.

First we must clarify that referring to this subgenre of the Fantastic Literature as “Science Fiction” is an increasingly older yet still effective way to denote it. And though the majority of its masterpieces deal with the dangers of the future or even occur in extraterrestrial landscapes, neither all of them nor the best of these speculative fictions are mere entertainment for brainless teenagers as some best sellers lists might make us believe. Rather they represent shouts of critical alert with their visionary utopias. Much of this misunderstanding finds its source in Hollywood films of interplanetary wars without context and in those of far-fetched environmental disasters which look forward to ignite in us a simple, temporary morbid fascination.

We can assure the Fantastic Literature is the matrix of great part of the best literature written in Chile, but the critics from all times with their so rational ideological resignation have made us believe otherwise. And because of that, the realistic *Costumbrismo*<sup>1</sup>, and later the *Criollismo*<sup>2</sup>, and currently a disposable journalism undermine the creative fantasy, spreading vulgarity and superficiality among the scarce readers. Think about a handful of authors, already acclaimed, such as Juan Emar, Pedro Prado, María Luisa Bombal, Carlos Droguett, José Donoso, and Roberto Bolaño; and now think about their most powerful works: *Umbral* (*Threshold*, 1948), *Alsino* (*Alsino*, 1920), *La Última Niebla* (*The Final Mist*, 1935), *Patas de Perro* (*Dog Paws*, 1965), *El obscuro pájaro de la noche* (*The obscene bird of the night*, 1970), and *2666* (*2666*, 2005), respectively. Then you may agree with me that this tapestry of prominent writers is sustained with an “inside plot” formed by hundreds of works belonging to the Fantastic genre which haven’t had enough dissemination or even recognition. Even less when they are not about Magical Realism, Supernatural Fantasies or Metaphysical Horror, but scientific speculation shaped as fiction, that is, Chilean Science Fiction. We only hope to do them justice in the following twisted lines.

Amidst the Republican Period, Juan Egaña published in London his *Ocios Filosóficos y Poéticos en la Quinta de las Delicias* (*Philosophical and Poetic Leisures in the Villa of Delights*, 1829) in which he predicts inventions and advancements still far from our present. In 1842, José Victorino Lastarria published *Don Guillermo* (*Mr. Guillermo*), allowing us to glimpse into parallel worlds communicated by the “Cave of Chivato.” This novel that has been read exclusively in the form of a political allegory (the liberal *pipiolos* against their irreconcilable enemies, the conservative *pelucones*) still awaits for a lucid critic to claim it as the perfect opening of our Fantastic Literature. Furthermore, the city of Valparaíso, main port—not just for the market and shipping—is a pioneer of local SF, for there Benjamin Tallman presented *¡Una vision del Porvenir! O el Espejo del Mundo en el año 1975* (*A vision of the Future! Or the Mirror of the World in the year 1975*, 1875). Nevertheless, Chilean Science Fiction took its first “indisputable” steps with *Desde Júpiter* (*From Jupiter*, 1878) by Francisco Millares, a clever dream of the visit to other worlds by “a magnetized man from Santiago.”

Soon, *El Dueño de los Astros* (*The Master of the Stars*, 1929) by Ernesto Silva Román compiled stories where the dangers of technology emerged, embroiled in imaginative futuristic plots (today adequate Steampunk precursors). Meanwhile Alberto Edwards created a Pan-American “super-agent”: *Julio Téllez*, who fights against the North American Foreign Policy oppression, with an accurate political premonition. We then bump into *Tierra Firme* (*Terra Firma*, 1927) by R.O. Land, Julio Assman’s pseudonym, a utopic novel written to calm down the fears of the Great War. Without knowing it the maritime novel *Thimor* (*Thimor*, 1932) by Manuel Astica Fuentes began in our literature the myth of Atlantis. It continued with the mediocre saga *En la Atlántida pervertida* (*In corrupted Atlantis*, 1934) by Luis Thayer Ojeda, and ended with *Kronios, la rebellion de los atlantes* (*Kronios, the rebellion of the atlanteans*, 1954) by the Chilean Director of Aviation, Diego Barrios Ortiz. The topic will branch off toward the mythical Golden City, El Dorado, tirelessly chased by the conquerors as it can be read in *Pacha Pulai* (*Pacha Pulai*, 1935) by Hugo Silva, a true juvenile classic of Lieutenant Bello’s adventures. The same myth reappears in *La Ciudad de los Césares* (*The City of the Caesars*, 1936), novice work of the great Manuel Rojas, followed by another utopic turn, *En la ciudad de los Césares* (*In the city of the Caesars*) by Luis Enrique Délano, written in 1939. *La taberna del perro que llora* (*The weeping dog tavern*, 1945) compiles phantasmagorical and supra-realistic stories by Jacobo Danke. *El caracol y la diosa* (*The snail and the goddess*, 1950) by Enrique Araya is an amusing, astounding book where a mother protects her son from the Third World War, becoming a provocative novel of acidic humor, placing its incidents in the disagreement of two earthlings, one from the 1950s and the other from about twenty centuries in the future. And we must not avoid mentioning here *Un angel para Chile* (*An angel for Chile*, 1959) by chronicler Enrique Bunster, a socio-political satire, quite contemporary, where a clown discovers a cure—only temporary—for baldness.

This Period (cradle of Anglo-Saxon SF classics) concludes masterfully with the publication of *Los Altísimos* (*The Superior Ones*) by Hugo Correa in 1959. This author carries out a silent and notable labor, adding SF novels and stories for 40 years, worthy of international praise and local disdain. It is a clear example of our initial thesis, for he wanders through a “sunken current” that only a few readers manage to discern.

Hugo Correa (1931 – 2007), who would publish *Los Altísimos* (1959), was ahead of classics such as Larry Niven's *Ring World* (1963) and Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973), describing an artificial planetoid submerged in social unrest, with no simplistic solutions and with thorough psychological descriptions. Afterward came *El que merodea en la lluvia* (*The Prowler in the Rain*, 1962), where he rarefies a rural environment with the presence of the essential extraterrestrial monster; *Los Títeres* (*The Puppets*, 1969), which compiles four stories about robots and their masters; arriving then to his novella *Alguien mora en el viento* (*Someone dwells in the wind*), included at the end of the collection *Cuando Pilato se opuso* (*When Pilate Said No*, 1971). Later on, with *Los ojos del diablo* (*The Eyes of the Devil*, 1972) he once again incursions in a variety of horror-magical realism set place in the Chilean countryside, a formula he repeats in *Donde acecha la serpiente* (*Where the serpent lurks*, 1988), this time with the figure of Lucifer himself as the antagonist. Only solitary reprints of *Los Altísimos* (1973 – 1983) tackled that desolate, apolitical dictatorial decade in Chile. He would then publish *El Nido de las Furias* (*The Nest of the Furies*, 1981), being his contribution to the authoritarian dystopias so esteemed by the genre. And with *La corriente sumergida* (*The sunken current*, 1993) he contradictorily ends his cycle of novels with a return to his childhood and adolescence through the Realist narrative with a touch of Santiago's picaresque, characteristic to the authors of the '50s Generation.

Out of all the possible hells to be inhabited by a talented writer, it seems the Chilean SF is one ethereal variation, yet not less categorical. Take a look, to pick a genre with almost no precursors, and even more, with disciples that would only later recognize him, or hardly ever, in a country with such a weak tendency toward diversity, tolerance or even curiosity, situating Hugo Correa these days, after his demise, as a renegade of his own future, always traveling in a colliding orbit along our reality.

Although one cannot refer to a proper golden age in Chilean SF, most of the local scholars (Roberto Pliscoff, Moisés Hasson, and Omar Vega) agree the most relevant moment occurred between 1959 and 1979. Let us then examine the main names that accompanied Hugo Correa in this solitary journey toward future readers. Elena Aldunate is the sole philo-feminist writer of the genre in our country. *Juana y la cibernética* (*Juana and Cybernetics*, 1963) and *El señor de las mariposas* (*Lord of the Butterflies*, 1967)

compile sensual and critical stories of modernity. Her most beautiful stories appear in *Angélica y el delfín* (*Angélica and the Dolphin*, 1976). We must also mention the hippie-futuristic novel that exemplifies her pacifist philosophy: *Del cosmos las quieren vírgenes* (*The cosmos wants them virginal*, 1977). And lastly this triad is complete with Antoine Montagne (pseudonym of Antonio Montero), who published the novels *Los Súperhombres* (*The Supermen*, 1967), and *Acá del tiempo* (*This side of time*, 1969) with no critical reception or evaluation whatsoever. But not so in Spain, where Domingo Santos and his respected magazine *Nueva Dimensión* (*New Dimension*) greeted him as the worthy legatee of Hugo Correa. Antonio Montero said his farewell to the genre with a fitting story collection entitled *No Morir* (*To Not Die*, 1971).

Due to exile many national authors published their works far away from their natural readers. Ariel Dorfman published *La última canción de Miguel Sendero* (*The last song of Miguel Sendero*, 1982), an experimental-futuristic novel describing a total dictatorship and a rebel leader who happens to be a fetus that refuses to be born! Another notable and progressive author in political fiction is Francisco Simón Rivas, publishing *El informe Mancini* (*The Mancini report*, 1983), in which dictator Pinochet clones himself to keep ruling forever. Another very interesting author is Claudio Jaque, who published two fundamental texts for that period: his dystopian novel *El ruido del tiempo* (*The noise of time*, 1987), a perfect crossbreed of classic SF with the Underground Comic; and his stories in *Puerta de Escape* (*Escape Gate*, 1991), revisiting futuristic Latin American settings and characters. Though it's true that very little was published within the country—during the dictatorship—there were nevertheless authors worthy of mentioning. The novels *El dios de los hielos* (*The god of ice*, 1987) and *Vagabundos* (*Tramps*, 2001) by Carlos Raúl Sepúlveda were indeed secret SF. Soon would arrive Diego Muñoz with *Flores para un cyborg* (*Flowers for a cyborg*, 1997), one of the best examples of “hard,” political SF, very well written and, to the surprise of many, published by a transnational editorial that would later reprint it, having a continuation of two more novels thus making it the first saga of such theme in our country.

Starting the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new batch of Fantastic writers stand out: Oscar Barrientos with *El diccionario de las veletas* (*The weather-vane dictionary*, 2002), a creation of a Magellanic universe that has continued through successive fantasy books;



Jorge Baradit with *Ygdrasil* (2005), an original cyber-shamanism novel; Teobaldo Mercado Pomar with a collection of stories entitled *Bajo un sol negro* (*Under a black sun*, 1995); *El número Kaifman* (*The Kaifman number*, 2006), an esoteric techno-thriller by Francisco Ortega; and, perhaps the most distinguished, Sergio Meier, with his retro-futuristic, steampunk novel *La Segunda Enciclopedia de Tlön* (*Tlön's Second Encyclopedia*, 2007). We can also mention Alberto Rojas' and Sascha Hanning's steampunk novels: *La sombra de fuego* (*The fire shadow*, 2011), and *Secretos perdidos en Allasneda* (*Lost secrets in Allasneda*, 2014), respectively. Nowadays there is a platoon of new voices looking for a place under the sun of distant worlds who we can only mention here in a quick succession, but we are confident they will claim their right place under the stars: Luis Saavedra, Sergio Amira, Pablo Castro, Armando Rosselot, Francisca Solar, Gabriel Mérida, Soledad Véliz, Michel Deb. All of their works anticipate a promising future for Chilean Science Fiction, a favorable reflection from a genre *per se* concerned with tomorrow. We should now read them and get to know them, for the pages to come . . . are already opened before us.

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Translator's Notes:

1. A literary form of Chilean Realism.
2. Considered equivalent to American Literary Regionalism.

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Chilean representative to this publication recognized in the USA and Europe. International guest of conferences and seminars, such as FIL Guayaquil 2012 and FIL Quito 2013, as a representative of Chilean Science Fiction. In his editorial, *Puerto de Escape (Escape Port)*, he published *Años Luz. Mapa Estelar de la Ciencia Ficción en Chile (Light-Years. Stellar Map of Chilean Science Fiction, 2006)*, along with about thirty novels, short stories and essays by new Chilean authors. Since 2005 he runs the website [www.puerto-de-escape.cl](http://www.puerto-de-escape.cl), making him an important reference of the Hispanic Fantastic genre.

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