



Alambique. Revista académica de
ciencia ficción y fantasía / Jornal
acadêmico de ficção científica e
fantasia

Volume 9
Issue 2 *Central American Science Fiction*

Article 1

A Brief Look at the State of Central American Science Fiction Studies

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Recommended Citation

Severyn, Greg C. (2023) "A Brief Look at the State of Central American Science Fiction Studies," *Alambique. Revista académica de ciencia ficción y fantasía / Jornal acadêmico de ficção científica e fantasia*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/alambique/vol9/iss2/1>

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Central American science fiction (sf), as with the Latin American continent broadly, is not a recent phenomenon. Iván Molina Jiménez, in “La ciencia ficción en América Central (1896-1951)” (2020), traces the earliest sf works in the region back to Nicaraguan Rubén Darío’s short story “Verónica” (1896) and Guatemalan Máximo Soto Hall’s novel *El problema* (1899). “Verónica” tells the story of Fray Tomás de la Pasión, a man whose obsession with science leads him to stray from his religious duties. He eventually takes an X-ray photograph of the holy Eucharist where he discovers an image of Christ, an event that leads to his premature death. *El problema*, for its part, is a futuristic novel that imagines Central America during the first decades of the 20th century where an interoceanic canal has been constructed across Nicaragua and Latin Americans have effectively resigned themselves to the physical and moral superiority of the U.S. Anglo-Saxons, a dynamic that becomes allegorized through romantic and professional relationships in the novel. Given the similarities with José Enrique Rodó’s *Ariel* published just one year later, Molina Jiménez draws explicit parallels between the two texts: “¿produjo Soto Hall, en forma de novela, un vehemente manifiesto arielista o antiarielista un año antes de que *Ariel* de Rodó fuera publicado?” (25).¹ These initial incursions into the genre begin to elucidate some of the defining characteristics of Central American sf, including frequent and intimate overlap with the fantastic as well as the consistent employment of futuristic contexts. Still, the critical and aesthetic divergences between the two narratives lays bare the challenge of developing a concrete formulation of the genre as it manifests in the region, ideas to which I return below.

Molina Jiménez, in the above-mentioned publication, explores the first half of 20th century Central American sf production by identifying various tendencies, including dystopia and anti-imperialism (of which *El problema* is part), utopia and democracy (where Guatemalan Rafael Arévalo Martínez predominates), and the occult (of which “Verónica” is part). The idea of exploring the region’s sf production through tendencies makes sense within this context given the sporadic production of sf works during this period, though texts were published in each of the decades in question.² David Díaz Arias’s work “Ciencia ficción en América Central (1952-2020)” (2021) furthers the contemporary panorama of sf literature in the isthmus. In this contribution, Díaz Arias categorizes Central America’s production as either Cold War or present-day. Texts that fall under the Cold War umbrella stretch from the 1950s to the 1990s, and they enjoyed a period of maturation and further refinement during the 1960s (33). While Guatemalan poet Cristina Camacho Fahsen, Costa Rican Alfredo Cardona Peña, and Salvadoran Álvaro Menen Desleal (whose work is analyzed by both Díaz Arias and Óscar García in this special issue) are the writers that feature most prominently during these decades, many more authors certainly made contributions during this time. For example, Ligia Escribá and Francisco Javier Aguirre Batres published in

Guatemala, Hugo Lindo in El Salvador, Otto Schmidt and Lizandro Chávez Alfaro in Nicaragua along with Costa Rican writers like Alberto Cañas. Nevertheless, Honduran and Panamanian works still seem to be largely absent from this period (perhaps with the exception of limited writing by authors such as Panama's Rogelio Sinán and Honduras's Óscar Acosta and Orlando Henríquez), only finding a stronger footing around the start of the 21st century.

For Díaz Arias, the 1990s to today may be considered present-day, a period when works oftentimes reveal themes that are more global in nature, including the ecological, cultural, and scientific (64). One concrete work that exemplifies this idea is Costa Rican Anacristina Rossi's short story "Abel" (2013), which continues with "La incompleta" (2015) and concludes with "La esperada" (2019), all of which were published in various sf anthologies, compilations that have notably solidified the genre in Costa Rica in particular. In these stories, the genetically mutated protagonist, Lalia, finds herself alone in a post-apocalyptic world, seemingly the only human able to survive after life on Earth has been decimated once all of the pollinators died off: "No parecía haber más vida que un musgo anaranjado. Ni las plantas de antes, ni animales viejos o nuevos, ni humanos" (75). Such environmental destruction is the result, in large part, of "la mano humana" (78). The stories, however, push geographically beyond Central America, for Lalia (and other characters) explore Panama, Colombia, and other parts of South America, thereby calling attention to the global nature of the ecological (and sexual) issues that are raised throughout the works. Treating themes that are more global in nature, however, is not at odds with local specificity. That is, such Central American sf works can (and should) still be read within their local and regional contexts. For instance, Rossi's stories continue a long line of critical inquiry into environmental concerns as explored throughout much of Costa Rica's literary history, including her own earlier work *La loca de Gandoca* (1992).

Sf throughout the Central American isthmus, as can be observed above, has enjoyed a fairly consistent, albeit initially limited, sf production, one that is ever increasing as we move further into the 21st century. The development of the genre has necessarily occurred in parallel with other major literary trends, including various forms of realism that heavily concentrated on labor conditions, the economy, and politics, such as Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias's well-known "Banana Trilogy," as well as the later rise of the *testimonio* during the armed struggle era.³ Like works of social realism and *testimonios* throughout the region, sf also tends to examine social structures and economic and political exploitation as it takes up the struggle for a more just and equitable society. Given the imaginative nature of sf, distinct resolutions and creative ideas not permitted from the aforementioned genres are able to emerge as social concerns are narratively taken to an extreme. Thinking along these lines, Walidah Imarisha explicitly connects the concepts of social justice and sf: "Whenever we try to envision a world

without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction. All organizing is science fiction” (9). Such visions, especially those that imagine a world without capitalism and violence, are at the heart of many realist, testimonial, and sf works throughout Central America. As such, the long-standing presence of sf in the region should not come as a surprise nor should it be interpreted as an isolated phenomenon given the inherent critical overlap that the genre shares with the region’s canonical cultural production. Along these lines, Teresa López-Pellisa calls for Latin America’s literary canons to be reconceived, for realism has held a historically privileged position in such a way that the significant contributions of other, more imaginative forms of fiction have been obscured (9-10).

One of the challenges currently facing Central American sf is the question of its conceptualization, whether via a concrete definition or by way of identifying the predominant aesthetic and critical tendencies, especially as it diverges (or not) from Latin American sf broadly and from other global sf tendencies.⁴ To that end, while there is unquestionably overlap with the sf generated by the larger continental producers such as Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico, their distinct social, cultural, historical, and economic circumstances, especially when compared to Central America, inevitably differ to some degree, thereby resulting in an sf production that is not identical aesthetically or critically. In an effort to describe Central American sf, many literary and cultural critics lean towards the “softer” qualities that have been pressed upon Latin American sf broadly, where production is conceived of as much more consistently humanist-centered rather than explicitly scientifically-oriented, a presumed shift from many of the harder sf classics of Europe and North America. Despite the fact that “strong cases can be made for these generalizations,” Rachel Haywood Ferreira argues that this may be more of an illusion than a reality when we compare Latin American sf to Northern sf trends (221-22). Further complicating the question of definition is how “Latin American science fiction has a particularly strong propensity to form hybrids with neighboring genres” (Haywood 8). As seen above with “Verónica” and *El problema*, sf elements organically bleed into the fantastic, the occult, the political, the historical, and even the romantic, among other aesthetic approaches. This fluidity remains a hallmark of Central American sf production and presents difficulties for agreement on what works are and what works are not sf, a dynamic that can be frustrating indeed. At the moment, for instance, I count well over 100 Central American works of sf literature from the 20th and early 21st centuries, including entire collections of short stories and poetry as well as novels and comics. As the genre is further theorized in the region, it would come as no surprise that this tentative bibliography grows or shrinks accordingly. Not only do such concerns as those raised above present difficulties in composing definitive bibliographies for the region, but it also means that much of the existing theoretical corpus on sf,

whether globally or that focused on Latin America, may not apply directly to the Central American context, hence the pressing need for analysis and theory specifically from and about the region.

Reconciling these issues has not been straightforward, as the recent Costa Rican debate in the mid-2010s sparked by Roy Alfaro Vargas demonstrates. At its core, Alfaro Vargas turned to Darko Suvin's classic formulation of sf, in particular the concept of the *novum*, in order to argue that without any true *novums* (per Alfaro Vargas's interpretation), Costa Rican sf cannot be considered as such (135-37). This controversial perspective prompted a years-long debate primarily between Alfaro Vargas and Molina Jiménez, though it has included other writers and critics such as David Díaz Arias. Ronald Sáenz Leandro's article "El campo literario de la ciencia ficción en Costa Rica: una mirada a la polémica por la fijación de su canon" (2019) is an indispensable reference here as it examines this debate in much greater depth. What this debate brings to the forefront of sf studies in Central America are the issues mentioned above: genre and theory. That is, how do we conceive of the genre, especially in comparison with other models (such as Northern and other Latin American ones)? And, in the absence of a well-developed theoretical body on the region's sf production, what (existing) theories are most adequate for elucidating and understanding the works in question as we strive to build a Central America-based theoretical framework?

The notably incomplete nature of a comprehensive Central American sf bibliography compounds the complexity of these lines of inquiry. In this way, the study of Central American sf is stretched between the archaeological phase, where much work must still be done to (re)discover past and recent contributions, and the theoretical phase, where critical analysis and broad perspectives will deepen our understanding of the genre in this geographic region. While much work must still be done bibliographically speaking, the need to define and theorize, as the Alfaro Vargas debate makes evident, is significant. Yolanda Molina-Gavilán et al.'s now classic "Chronology of Latin American Science Fiction, 1775-2005" (2007), to which various critics contributed, including both editors of *Alambique: Revista académica de ciencia ficción y fantasía* (Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado and Juan Carlos Toledano Redondo), remains an important reference in the field. Nonetheless, dozens of Central American works have been published since its release. Critics like Molina Jiménez and Díaz Arias have undoubtedly advanced the archaeological phase since then with their recent publications cited above, for they detail the trajectory of the genre specifically within the Central America context while incorporating numerous concrete examples to flesh out the panoramic perspectives that they offer.

Still, it would be impossible to capture every single literary contribution in just a handful of academic publications, meaning that many works have inevitably been left out of existing references. Turning to Guatemala, for instance, Marilinda

Guerrero continues to publish short stories including *Trampas para bosques* (2021) and *Alas verdes* (2022), among others. Guerrero also hosts a YouTube channel where she periodically explores Guatemalan sf, including a video dedicated to writers who have written, or at least dabbled, in the genre in addition to a video on Francisco Javier Aguirre Batres's 1986 novel *Juan Chapín en el siglo 30: novela de ciencia ficción*.⁵ It's worth noting that Guerrero, in her YouTube video on Guatemalan sf writers, identifies approximately 30 authors, which represents a fairly significant incursion into the study of the genre in Guatemala. From Salvadoran writer Mauricio Orellana Suárez, we might add his novel *Cerdo duplicado* (2014) to the existing corpus, which is still fairly scant; others have already pointed to some of the writing by Menen Desleal, Jacinta Escudos, and Jorge Galán (whose novel *El sueño de Mariana* (2008) is analyzed by Emilie Boyer in this special issue) as recent contributors to the genre in El Salvador.

From Honduras, a historically overlooked country when it comes to literary production, much less sf, we can turn to Marel Alfaro Zúniga's *Hacia el espacio: Quince crónicas sobre el nacimiento del Nuevo Orden y la Revolución Galáctica* (2020), Herbert Adolfo Soriano García's fantasy-sf novel *Nosotros, El origen* (2017), as well as his related *El origen* comic series, and Víctor Pereira Galindo's novel *El protón del átomo en la piedra azul* (2020). Collectively, the works from Honduras bear many connections with Amazon's digital publishing arm, most notably the print-on-demand feature and Kindle options. Such a connection allows for the wider distribution of Central American sf literature that historically does not enjoy broad circulation internationally. Of all the Central American countries, Honduras seems to be taking advantage most of this distribution method, though other writers, like Costa Rican Laura Quijano Vincenzi, also offer some of their works via Kindle and/or Amazon's print-on-demand option. Such an approach to marketing makes the tension between the local and the global much more evident. As noted in the introduction to *Hacia el espacio* by Ecuadorian sf and fantasy writer Cristián Londoño Proaño: "Cabe señalar que la obra del escritor hondureño se aleja totalmente del provincialismo centroamericano, y de la realidad social de su país. Escribe una obra que puede ser leída y disfrutada por cualquier lector del mundo" (7).

Continuing with Nicaragua, we might recuperate Otto Schmidt's *Un vuelo a Marte* (1963) while also recalling the contemporaneous *Sputch-Nica* (1959) by William Henry Doña. As for the 21st century, Alberto Sánchez Argüello has written many short stories that conform to the sf genre, including the collections *Los García* (2015) and *Los Jiménez* (2020). Likewise, María del Carmen Pérez Cuadra continues to publish stories beyond "El microchip" (2011) and "Eva nunca duerme" (2014), including the collection *Isonauta* (2020). Nicaragua's southern neighbor, Costa Rica, is undoubtedly the most prolific producer of sf in the region and, along with the dozens of texts already identified by Díaz Arias and Molina Jiménez, has

also contributed such frequently overlooked works as Edwin Quesada Muñoz's novel *La corporación* (2010), Minor Arias Uva's novel *Viaje al planeta rojo* (2014), and Fernando Contreras Castro's short story collection *Transhumano. Demasiado transhumano* (2019) (the lattermost of which is treated in this special issue by Matthew Richey). Given Costa Rica's comparatively significant sf production, not to mention its distinct sociopolitical history that does not include armed struggle on the scale of Guatemala, El Salvador, or Nicaragua in the 20th century, its sf practically merits an examination all of its own.

Lastly, though earlier works do exist, Panamanian sf seems to primarily center around Ramón Varela Morales's four novel series beginning with *Primum: El principio* (2003) and continuing with *Cunctus: La Colectividad* (2005), *Praeter Oriens: Más allá del Este* (2006), and *Adhuc Tempus: Aún hay tiempo* (2008), some of which are also available via Amazon Kindle. While other writers have dabbled in the genre, such as Melanie Taylor Herrera and, to an extent, Carlos Oriel Wynter Melo, the recent short story collection *Top Secret (Cuentos sobre OVNI)* (2021) by Enrique Jaramillo Levi stands out, as does the futuristic short story "Solo fue por compañía" by Gerardo Bósquez Iglesias. Identifying works of Panamanian sf, along with Honduran sf, has proven more difficult than in other isthmian nations where more recognized literary histories and more canonical writers like Rubén Darío, Álvaro Menen Desleal, Franz Galich, Ligia Escribá, and Gioconda Belli have published in the genre. The study of Honduran and Panamanian sf in particular will likely present ongoing challenges (and opportunities), at least in the near future.

Many more literary works could undoubtedly be mentioned here; however, continuing in that vein would take us beyond the scope of this introduction. As is oftentimes the case, discovering additional sf texts can require collaboration. To that end, I would specifically like to thank Alberto Sánchez Argüello, Maynor Xavier Cruz, and Marilinda Guerrero for their help in identifying some of the above-mentioned works (though, to be sure, my gratitude to other writers and critics with whom I have had conversations extends well beyond this extremely concise list). Moving forward, it seems that ongoing and informal conversations with writers and scholars in the field will likely prove both fruitful and necessary in the coming years as we work to collectively compose a more comprehensive sf bibliography for Central America.

While the majority of the existing academic publications that treat Central America's sf production focus primarily on novels, short stories, and poetry, a gulf has been forming between such critical and academic publications and other forms of sf cultural production, including comics, television, film shorts, feature-length films, and web series. An extremely succinct overview of recent contributions in these formats includes the anonymous Salvadoran comic series *Oscuro* (2018) and the *El origen* (2017) fantasy-sf comic series that parallels Honduran Soriano

García's novel, the Nicaraguan television series *Concepto Merodeador* (2015), and film shorts including the undergraduate thesis project *Tierra ajena* (2018) by Costa Rican Valeria Brenes. Feature-length films have slowly been expanding, including Guatemalan Javier Borrayo's *Luz* (2019), Honduran Juan Carlos Fanconi's *El Xendra* (2012), Costa Rican Miguel Gómez's *El fin* (2012), and Panamanian Christian Wolf's *The Third Wave* (2014). As for web series, we can point towards Salvadoran Andrés Díaz's *Capitán Centroamérica* (2011), which later became a TV series, as well as Christian Wolf's *Operación Piscis* (2015). Though some critics like Vinodh Venkatesh have begun to expand the line of critical inquiry into such works as evidenced by his recent book *Capitán Latinoamérica: Superheroes in Cinema, Television, and Web Series* (2020), which includes in-depth analyses of the Salvadoran web series (and *Captain America* parody) *Capitán Centroamérica* as well as Igor Padilla's Honduran superhero Chinche Man, much work remains to be done on this front.

Academically and critically, then, Central American sf has largely been ignored altogether as the cultural production of Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico eclipse that of the smaller nations of the isthmus. Recently published edited volumes, while serving as notably valuable contributions to the sf genre in the Spanish-speaking world, also make the critical gap evident between Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, and Panamanian cultural production compared with the rest of Latin America (and Spain). The texts I have in mind include Teresa López-Pellisa and Silvia G. Kurlat Ares's *Historia de la ciencia ficción latinoamericana I: Desde los orígenes hasta la modernidad* (2020) as well as their *Historia de la ciencia ficción latinoamericana II: Desde la modernidad hasta la posmodernidad* (2021) (volumes in which we find Molina Jiménez's and Díaz Arias's work, respectively); the *Peter Lang Companion to Latin American Science Fiction* (2021) by Silvia G. Kurlat Ares and Ezequiel De Rosso, as well as Jonatán Martín Gómez and Patricio Sullivan's *Recalibrando los circuitos de la máquina: Ciencia ficción e imaginarios tecnológicos en la narrativa en español del siglo XXI* (2022). In each of these edited volumes, despite their profound contributions to the field of Latin American sf studies, only small portions are exclusively dedicated to the six Spanish-speaking Central American countries and their sf cultural production. In order to appreciate a much more Central America-focused collection, we must return to 2011 when Toledano Redondo organized a dossier for *Istmo: Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos* under the title "Literatura de ciencia-ficción en Centroamérica y el Caribe hispano." Additionally, Toledano Redondo, along with Fernández Delgado, Díaz Arias, and Verónica Ríos, has edited the Central America entry in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, an extensive online resource covering many aspects of sf globally. Though other academic publications certainly exist, the depth and breadth of Central America's corpus of sf works

demands greater attention, as the laborious work of composing a comprehensive bibliography and analyzing the works, not to mention theorizing them on a broader, overarching scale, must be undertaken by many more scholars than those currently working on the genre in the region. Since much of what has been done to date may be considered part of the archaeological phase, which is, to be sure, imperative yet incomplete, this special issue of *Alambique* intends to help fill critical gaps by collectively pushing a bit further into the analytical and theoretical phase.

The need to theorize Central America's sf production is approaching a level of urgency, for it has largely not been done in a cohesive or comprehensive manner, if at all. This need coincides with calls to theorize Latin American sf broadly that have been made for some time, such as when, in 2004, Darrell B. Lockhart asserted that "the time has come to advance the study of Latin American SF to a more theoretical level" (xv), and, in 2012, when M. Elizabeth Ginway and J. Andrew Brown expressed the desire of many scholars that "it is time to turn from historicizing to theorizing" (7). As such, it is currently difficult to discern the unique contributions of Central American sf especially *vis-à-vis* Latin American sf generally, and work still needs to be done as the region's production is compared to more global sf tendencies. What's more, the study of such a historically marginalized genre within a culturally marginalized region of the continent will allow voices to be heard as they speak to current, pressing, and relevant social issues. Nevertheless, there are challenges that we as scholars confront when moving to theorize the isthmus's body of sf: we face an ambiguous conception of the genre, which makes definitive bibliographical inclusions and exclusions more difficult; we lack a comprehensive bibliography or canon with which to work, forcing the archaeological phase to continue; and there has been a comparative lack of sustained interest from the academic community in Central America's cultural production, though this has been shifting significantly in the past couple decades.

Alambique, as "a distiller of (im)possible dreams of science fiction and fantasy," is a perfect venue for a special issue such as this one that seeks the (very possible) expansion of Central American sf studies ("About" n.p.). Furthermore, the editors have expressed their strong desire to foment such collaborations, for they speak to the necessity of developing and perpetuating a community of academics interested in sf (Fernández Delgado and Toledano Redondo 356). What's more, *Alambique* has enjoyed wide international distribution of its content, consistently reaching each continent in the journal's ten-year existence, and it achieves this impressive feat through its notably accessible online nature (Fernández Delgado and Toledano Redondo 355).⁶ The role of this special issue of *Alambique*, dedicated exclusively to Central America's sf, aims to work towards the aforementioned goal of exploring the region's sf production from a more theoretical and analytical perspective. Beyond the authors included here, many other scholars are actively working on Central American sf. To that end, the original

list of contributors for this special issue was more than double the number of final contributions that we have. It is worth noting that the ongoing personal and professional challenges of COVID-19, among other reasons, have unfortunately prevented some colleagues from participating at this time.

The special issue opens with an article by David Díaz Arias, “Narrar el final de los tiempos: misantropía y liberación en dos ‘cuentos atómicos’ del salvadoreño Álvaro Menen Desleal (1960s),” which analyzes two short stories from the 1969 collection *Una cuerda de nylon y oro y otros cuentos maravillosos*. Díaz Arias situates Menen Desleal as a writer of sf rather than exclusively as part of the ideologically-oriented Generación Comprometida with which he is oftentimes affiliated, a tension that is explored through historical, cultural, and biographical insights. The article considers how the notion of apocalypse presented in the stories “Una cuerda de nylon y oro” and “Hacer el amor en el refugio atómico” allows us to make more sense of lived reality while shedding light on the nature (and necessity) of human relationships, ideas that Díaz Arias intimately connects with more recent Central American writing treating humanity’s role in the Anthropocene. As Díaz Arias develops his analysis of Menen Desleal’s work, critics of (nuclear) apocalypse are brought into the conversation, including Jerome F. Shapiro, Kenneth D. Rose, and Frank Kermode. Continuing in this vein, Óscar García’s work, “Humanismo, empatía y un dios terrenal: un análisis de *La ilustre familia androide* de Álvaro Menen Desleal,” likewise positions Menen Desleal as a writer of sf marginalized by his contemporaries. García explicitly approaches the short story collection *La ilustre familia androide* (1972) by developing thematic categories, including those of robots, space voyages, extraterrestrial civilizations, and theological thought. These categories permit sf as a genre to become the unifying thread that cements Menen Desleal’s varied social criticisms in a cohesive manner, including critiques of religious dogma, notions of the Other, colonization, and artificial intelligence. Along the way, García dialogues with critics like Carolyn Fornoff who have recently written on Menen Desleal, as well as Mieke Bal, who contributes thoughts on narrative theory, and Daniel Goleman who speaks to questions of empathy.

Emilie Boyer’s work, “Espacios e imaginario en *El sueño de Mariana* (2008) de Jorge Galán,” explores Galán’s award-winning novel, a notably understudied sf narrative from El Salvador. While García concentrates on distinct humanist aspects in Menen Desleal’s fiction, Boyer, leaning on Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Chris Gray, and other theorists, adopts a posthuman perspective in order to approach the spatial construction of the text as well as its utilization of dream machines as prosthetic extensions of the human experience. Nevertheless, the fictional world’s class-based segregation, reflected in where the characters live and how the narrative itself is structured, carries over into the realm of technology, for the dream machines, argues Boyer, perpetuate social inequalities

and limit social mobility, thereby deepening the extant capitalistic market mentality that the novel criticizes. Finally, Matthew Richey's contribution, "The Future in Fragments: Fernando Contreras Castro's Dystopian Trilogy," analyzes three Costa Rican narratives. As Boyer makes evident in Galán's work, Richey also notes how Contreras Castro criticizes global capitalism and the militarization of the planet, especially in a post-9/11 world. Each of the texts considered – *Cantos de las guerras preventivas* (2006), *Fragmentos de la Tierra Prometida* (2013), and *Transhumano. Demasiado transhumano* (2019) – narratively plays with the notion of time, Richey suggests, making radical social, cultural, and environmental shifts seem at once quite distant yet profoundly imminent. This temporal disorientation parallels the spatial fragmentation that Richey identifies in the narratives, which serves as a mirror to the fragmented, dystopian worlds represented in the works. Pulling on the likes of thinkers like Néstor García Canclini, Richey demonstrates how Contreras Castro's texts collectively reimagine such concepts as citizenship and belonging in a social landscape dominated by capitalistic corporations, planetary plundering, and human exploitation.

Collectively, the articles gathered here call attention to both the uniqueness of the sf works they analyze as well as the critical overlap evident across the narratives, ideas that aid in the furthering of a broader theorization of Central American science fiction.

Notes

¹ Molina Jiménez throws doubt on whether the novel might be Arielist or anti-Arielist given the ambiguous nature of the text, where it has been interpreted both as pro-Yankee and anti-imperialist.

² Through 1951, Molina Jiménez mentions works from Costa Rica, such as León Fernández Guardia's "El número 13,013" (1908), Carlos Gagini's *La caída del águila* (1920), and Ramón Junoy's *El Dr. Kulmann* (1926), along with various narratives by Guatemalan Rafael Arévalo Martínez. An additional work or two may exist from El Salvador, yet Nicaragua, Panama, and Honduras do not (seemingly) contribute to the genre during this earlier period.

³ Asturias's "Banana Trilogy" is comprised of *Viento fuerte* (1950), *El Papa Verde* (1954), and *Los ojos de los enterrados* (1960) and may be considered representative of the corpus that treats United Fruit Company exploitation, U.S. intervention, and imperialism.

⁴ This is not to ignore the work of critics like Ingrid Kreksch, Antonio Córdoba, Pablo Capanna, Rachel Haywood Ferreira, Iván Molina Jiménez, Silvia G. Kurlat Ares, Teresa López-Pellisa, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Yolanda Molina-Gavilán, and Andrea Bell – among many others – who have contributed their thoughts on the sf genre in the Latin American context.

⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm6JJdksDso> for Guerrero's "Juan Chapín en el siglo 30. Francisco Javier Aguirre Batres" and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5hhRgROhnM> for "La ciencia ficción en Guatemala."

⁶ This special issue of *Alambique* was born out of an invitation that I extended to Juan Carlos to participate on a Latin American Studies Association panel that I organized in 2021 titled “Science Fiction, Dystopia & the Persistence of the Utopian Imagination in Central American Narratives.” The panel ultimately included Verónica Ríos Quesada, Hélène M. de Fays, Matthew Richey, and myself, along with María del Carmen Caña Jiménez as discussant. Though Juan Carlos had to decline the panel invitation, I am grateful for his suggestion to develop a special issue on Central American sf and for all of the hard work and support that he and Miguel Ángel have offered since the initial proposal.

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