



# International Speculative Fiction

#3 January 2013



**Crystal Koo**  
**Simon Jones**  
**Fernando Pina**  
**Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro**  
**Article by Jess Nevins**



# Editorial

A New Year and a new ISF issue. The world recession is still with us and dark times loom on the horizon. Some claim that it's when despair is darkest that the mind seeks refuge from the mundane and from the arbitrary injustices of day-to-day living, and what better than to give fodder to the brain by reading intricate worlds of speculation and braving mazes of imagination.

To help you on that journey to faraway lands of the mind, we bring you not one but two authors writing in Portuguese. One is already known to followers of ISF: Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro once again brings his special voice to an elaborate alternative history that amply demonstrates why he is one of the top Brazilian speculative authors. Be sure to read the explanatory text at the end *after* you've read *Patriotic Crimes*.

The other is Fernando Pina with *Fever*, a very, very weird—but somehow alluring—tale of oneiric proportions. With two poetry awards under his belt, Pina makes his debut in genre writing. Personally I hope to have more from him in the future.

Simon Jones is an Australian author and as you can guess by the title, *A Soldier and Her Ark* is another spin on the old SF trope of the generation ship. Full of tension and with a kinetic pace, this story grabs us by the neck and never lets go until the very end.

Almost at the closing of the press (not the most accurate expression in this digital age, but nonetheless it conveys the idea) I came by Crystal Koo and her earth-shattering—in more ways than one—*The Man in the Moon*, a story for all the lovers, for all the dreamers, and fitting to the end-of-times feeling that affects us all.

In this issue you will also find an interview conducted by the ever-resourceful Cristian Tamas with Arielle Saiber focusing on Italian SF.

This is also the issue in which we begin to publish brief reviews of short stories and novels, starting with three reviews written by Jorge Candeias, a Portuguese speculative writer, translator, bibliographer, and editor. If you're fluent in Portuguese, you can follow his blog [Lâmpada Mágica](http://lampamagicablogspot.com) <<http://lampamagicablogspot.com>>. Plus Sean Wright reviews two anthologies from Singapore.

Last, but not least, we gathered four parts of a long essay by Jess Nevins under one title that, I suppose, is self-explanatory, *Pulp SciFi under German, Russian, Japanese and Spanish Totalitarianism*. Being myself a sucker for pulp fiction (the written kind, not the movie by Tarantino), my only complaint with this essay is that it's just too short.

So, this is all for now. This month we celebrate six months of publishing ISF. Be sure to join us for the rest of this voyage.

Portugal, January, 2013

Ricardo Loureiro

Fiction Editor

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# FEVER



*Fernando Pina*



# FEVER

Fernando Pina

Originally published here, translated by Mary Ashton

I know I'm on a train and this all I know. I deduce it from the cyclic clickety-clack of the wheels as they cross the expansion joints of the rails and from the way the long, disguised curves push my body from one side to the other on the wooden bench and this is all—everything else is strangeness.

The carriage walls are made of whitewashed masonry, with no visible doors, just one small, unreachably high stained glass window portraying the four faces of the cherubim, hidden behind a colorless curtain, hanging loose like tattooed skin tanned by time and boredom. Hanging from the center of the ceiling, at the end of a once-white wire, a solitary pendulous bulb strives to fill the void with an eerie, anemic light. I'm all alone.

Suddenly, someone draws the curtain open. With a familiar sound, the brassy curtain rings slide along the iron rod. The conductor is leaning out of the window, staring into the void. He addresses me most politely: Pardon me for interrupting your thoughts, sir, but I must notify you that you're dead, in case you haven't noticed it yet.

Out of his sight and hidden by the curtain, almost melting into her own shadow, which is distorted by the comforting volume of the ceiling joists, a woman is floating—this expression comes to mind: in *aerial ventral decubitus*—her arms perfectly outstretched, her long hair casting shadows over her face and breasts. A woman wearing nothing but a high heeled shoe on her left foot.

From the vertex of the coating of tiny green algae, soft as humble December moss, covering her pubis, a translucent thread of honey flows to the floor, feeding a corrosive pool on the pavement, making an unfathomable hole in the well-worn slate slabs. I kneel down to take a better look inside while my mother, who's just appeared out of thin air, rests her hand on my forehead.

There is a sound, similar to the high-pitched whine of a dentist's drill, somewhere above. I raise my head: the heel of the woman's shoe had become lodged in a crack in the wall and her body is spinning vertiginously around the major axis of the living crucifixion, reducing her anatomy to a long spiral strip, like that of orange peel taken with one single cut, from pole to pole. Only when the movement ceased could I see that all along the garland of skin, chance had written, in blood, the eight times table.

Out of curiosity, I take a second look at the hole in the floor. Cautious, I kneel down by its rim and dive into it up to my shoulders, straining to see through the oil-thick darkness beneath.

The room, of which only one corner is visible, vanishes into the distance, exhaling a stale breath of sullen decay and there I am, my face unfamiliar, seated, unflappable, upon a purple velvet sofa, holding a black wax candle in my trembling right hand.

To the north of me, with ragged sails like pennons of dried skin hanging from brownish, barren bones, a Spanish galleon lies on its port side, raising the checkered marble pavement under its dead weight in a shattered, frozen wave of stone. Through a breach in the wooden hulk pours out a torrent of emeralds and golden doubloons with the unrecognizable effigy of the one and only true god.



The master of the ship, sole survivor of the wreck, his legs crushed by the fallen mizzen, creeps up to me leaving behind a trail of blood and—coming within the reach of my hand that promised the resurrection of the flesh—solemnly chants: *Et in arcadia ego*.

The candle is melted away, but the wick is still burning in the shell of my hand, draining its light from my flesh and blood. Its heat consumes my entrails. I'm sweating. My clothes glued to my skin and my tongue dry as a monolith of salt in a barren cave, I drag myself along in the endless queue of those just arrived in hell. Between two lashes of a whip the guards ask me my name.

I can't recall, I answer, but it's something like the sentence opposite to the handrail of the stairways.

*A prophet!* They exclaim in fury, bursting into a convulsive cry. *Summon the Collectors!*

This is my room, I think, while praying mantises sew—between their green ulnas—pearls of sweat, making a rosary from which are hanging the three fingers of childhood. My bed is in the center of an infinite snooker table. Balls, huge as planets, pass by me, swirling, colliding with hollow sounds of doom. They all bear strange symbols which I happen to know to be the ancient dimple whole numbers that formerly orbited between six and seven in the fruitful days of creation.

And then he came. All the others bow down and make way to give him passage. He sits by my side and listens to the kettle of my chest with the blank stare of a blind man. One hundred and seven. He mutters, while dropping the ambrosia into my mouth, a dust whose label proclaims it to be extracted from the ground clavicles of Adam and Eve. I swallow the white, diluted essence. In spite of its having the ultimate sour taste, which welds my eyelids tight, the liquid brings me an ephemeral relief.

When I open them again I find myself back in school, seated in the front row. Behind a table, on a high wooden dais, both elbows planted on the glass top, the teacher is reading a Hebrew text. Over his head, slowly rotating, hovers the letter aleph.

Concluding his lecture, he carefully wraps up the parchment in a piece of silk that he hides in a hole in the wall. Then he stands up holding a spear, which he throws in my direction. The rusty iron head penetrates my right flank without pain or discomfort. It's the Spear of Destiny.

Trying in vain to stanch the bleeding by pressing with my hand, I make my way out, heralded by the insistent sound of a bell.

Beyond the door a light blue breeze caresses my pallid face. The sea is somewhere near. I wander erratically along the dunes. Among the derelicts given birth by the tides of delirium, I see my bedside table lamp, my bookshelf, and one or two familiar faces half-buried in the hot humid sands of nightmares.

Echoing in the distance, friendly voices call me by my name. With effort I manage to move my lips and whisper the word "water" and, like a spell, the liquid syllables cause a cramp in time, intertwining all its threads again in one single cord.

I am lying in bed, in my bedroom. In the mirror, where a while ago the square of the hypotenuse was masturbating, I can see nothing but my reflection and I slowly break loose of the maddening tangle of dreams and reality.

Dressed in feathers and placenta I find myself reborn out of the demented entrails of the womb engendered by the fever, free from the solar furnace of the horoscope carved in molten lead and cinnabar on the red hot sponge of my brain.

I'm lying in bed. In my bedroom. A cool blessing descends upon me as I contemplate, once more, my exhausted portrait in the mirror and I say to myself: it is I.

And, like an anchor, that solitary word sinks into the deepest part of me, rebuilding the circle and the center.



### ABOUT THE STORY

*Reality is a balanced mix of many ingredients. Once that balance is broken, the world as we know it collapses like a house of cards, soon to be shuffled and rearranged according to the blueprints of unsuspected logic. Fever is my first incursion into the realm of speculative fiction and I would like to register my thanks to Mary Ashton for her help in translating the text.*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Fernando Pina was born in 1954, in Fronteira, Portugal. He was awarded the 2002 Poetry Revelation Prize and the Hernâni Cidade Prize (Poetry). "Fever" is his first work in this genre.*



*Fernando Lourenço Pina*



# THE MAN ON THE MOON



*Crystal Koo*



# THE MAN ON THE MOON

Crystal Koo

Originally published in "The Dragon and the Stars", edited by Derwin Mak, Eric Choi and Martin H Greenberg, May 2010

The Man on the Moon carried a small suitcase with him to Earth and checked in at a hotel.

While he was away at a press conference the next morning, the cleaning lady who came to make his bed and replace the empty plastic bottles in the shower indulged her curiosity regarding the suitcase that lay on the luggage rack with its lid open. The bundles of red silk cords in it disappeared from sight when she touched them, which was a little too odd for her, so she pulled out the Book from underneath them instead.

Two columns divided each page, filled with names that were matched neatly by row in the Man on the Moon's tiny cursive. The cleaning lady found her parents' names next to each other. Her grandparents weren't matched, but then her grandfather had been a philanderer. When she discovered that the name next to hers didn't belong to her husband, she spent some time crying at the foot of the bed and wiping her tears by pulling out the sheets that she had stuffed into the corner earlier.

After she had put the sheets into order once again, she found her husband's name and a blank space in the column next to his. Excitedly she tried to fill it with her name using a pen from the desk drawer. The pen wouldn't write on the Book but worked perfectly when she scribbled impatiently on the slip of cardboard reminding guests to reuse the towels. Finally she hurled the pen away and vainly tried to tear out the pages.

They found her huddled against the foot of the bed again, crying over the Book, and had a housekeeping boy watch her as the floor manager was informed. The boy sat next to the middle-aged cleaning lady, awkwardly crossing and un-crossing his arms. There's never anything comforting to say about being disappointed by destiny.



The hotel's address was printed below a picture of the Man on the Moon's ageless face in all the newspapers the next day. If a young man were to pick up the newspaper, he would discover that the Man on the Moon was looking for contestants to enter a beauty pageant he would be holding at the hotel's grand ballroom. Once the winner was decided, the Man on the Moon would write his name next to hers on the Book of Matches and tie one of his red cords between his and her ankles, as he had done for thousands of years to all the couples that he had predestined. When the Man on the Moon left Earth to resume his matchmaking duties, he would compensate her with eternal youth while she waits for the end of the world, when he will return to bring her away and marry her.

After reading this, the young man would put the newspaper down to finish his cereal and prepare for his shift at the appliance store. It is possible that he would cut the article out and shove it into the back pocket of his jeans to show to his friends later on at the pub. It is also possible that he would keep it as a talisman, hoping that he and the girl who always fishes the lime out of her drink with a spoon and slips it into his are matched in the Moon's Book. Anything is possible for young people. Even if she has told him that she will be leaving the country at the end of the year when her studies finish, he would still hope that he had not misunderstood the choice of her microwave oven to break down on his shift when they first met a year ago. He might wait for a revelation or decide to act. Anything is possible for young people.





Sad songs and poetry had been written about the Man on the Moon but he had stopped reading them a long time ago. When the journalist asked why, he said that they distracted him from his duties. Like the prayers that lovers offered him from mountaintops or temples during the mid-autumn festival, they were remarkable in their variation but ultimately none of his responsibility.



The general manager of the hotel began to run out of rooms for prospective contestants who wanted to preserve their youth for one reason or another and had made reservations too late. Tickets for the contest audience sold out for exorbitant prices and news networks set up tents around the building.

When asked by philosophers if he was responsible for wrong circumstances that plague lovers, the Man on the Moon replied that there were no such things as wrong circumstances.

When asked by psychologists about how to fix a broken heart, he insisted that it can only be prevented by learning to wait instead of gratifying every momentary impulse that besets the heart.

When asked by human rights advocates on what grounds he made each matchmaking decision, he answered that he only followed the forces that trace across the world in intricate, ordained patterns which they would not comprehend.

When asked by religious groups about the end of the world, he answered that only his bride would be able to survive the collapse of all the patterns in the universe. In the hubbub that this produced, the general manager of the hotel, who hovered solicitously wherever the Man on the Moon went, announced that they had only one question left.

When asked when the world would end, the Man on the Moon said that even he has to wait for its occurrence. This answer brought a bigger slew of organizations that flooded the hotel's restaurants and coffee shops, much to the general manager's delight.



From the balcony of his suite, the Man on the Moon watched the vague figure of a young woman on the street below lean over to kiss the young man standing next to her under the lamp.

The Man on the Moon lit a stick from a cigarette pack that the general manager had given him to help him relax.

The young man picked the young woman up in his arms, their laughter rising up as briefly as the smoke from his cigarette. They was too far away to see if they had cords around their ankles that led to one another, but the Man on the Moon noticed that they held each other in a tight, too-fierce embrace, which meant that they were aware something was wrong. Perhaps it was too little time or too much space in between. Perhaps there was another person. Anything was possible. Precarious lovers were all alike in their desperation, and the Man on the Moon assumed that there was something written in the Book of Matches which would eventually cause a breaking of hearts and more sad songs and poetry.

The couple on the street walked away arm in arm and the street lamp seemed to dim in their absence. The Man on the Moon took a puff, coughed violently, and decided he didn't like the taste of it.



For each contestant who preened and wriggled before him, the Man on the Moon would look at her feet and consult the Book of Matches to check whether he had already predestined her to someone else. Then he would study her face to see if it was something that deserved to survive for eternity. No one knew which one it was that prompted him to tell her to stand at the back of the stage or to step down.



This angered many of those who had bought tickets to the contest to gather information on their own destinies. Some of the audience heckled him. Others tried to grab his Book. Most of them dissected the lack of excitement on the Man on the Moon's face, which was shown on closed-circuit television screens in the hotel building.

Groups of people stood outside the hotel every day. Those waving bullhorns shouted that the Man on the Moon should be responsible for saving everyone when the world ends. Those waving bulky cardboard props of his Book shouted that he should not be given the freedom to choose his lover if everyone else can't. A small group was cheering on the most significant beauty pageant in history, but because they weren't waving anything they were largely ignored.



Many of the contestants offered to aid him in making up his mind. They behaved so spiritedly in his bed that when he refused afterwards to promise them victory, they could not help but turn against him with insults about his performance.

Some of them said nothing at all, choosing only to slap his face. Surprised at their reactions, he held the door open for them and repeated that a week was really not too long a time to wait for results.



Just pick one. Toss a coin, if you want. Toss a thousand coins. You do it so easily for us, don't you? Why can't you do it for yourself?

Annoyed with his impatience, the Man on the Moon did not answer the general manager. The suite where he stayed was papered with photographs of women. They smirked, they simpered, they leered, depending on the light. They watched him tally their attributes against each other and spend many hours trying to tell their glaring smiles apart. At the end of the day, he always felt that if he chose one, he would be choosing all of them.

The Man on the Moon learned to smoke and kept the curtains open to air the room. His Book of Matches lay forgotten on top of the bureau. From the street that his balcony overlooked, he was often seen knotting his red cords together in irritation until they looked like a tangle of hair that clung on the shower drain.



In an effort to clear his mind, he put on the croak and hobble of an old man and walked unnoticed through the news tents and the groups of waving people.

He went to the park first, where lovers sat together exploring fingers and lips and the prospect of staying in that moment for eternity. In that sea of red silk that only he could see, cords twisted around to look as if they linked with each other, but the Man on the Moon knew that most of the couples were either bound to no one or to someone else. Although he could not blame them for being blind, their happy ignorance upset him all the same. Frequently he had to stop himself from telling the truth by choking back his words and coughing in a manner that made his disguise even more believable.

He hastily set off for somewhere with fewer provocations and soon passed by a block of old, brick apartments.

She was seated on the apartment stoop, waiting for someone. She drummed her fingers absently against her knees, watching a bird that had alighted on top of a grated air shaft on the pavement, and looked at him politely as he intruded upon her line of sight.

It was when her eyes veered away to return to the bird that the Man on the Moon, in one moment of astonishment, suddenly found himself wishing that she was waiting for him.





She sat on the edge of time, between past and future, and it was not called the present because the present was a word that humans used only to deceive themselves into thinking that they could learn from the past to prepare themselves for the future. There was no point in panicking about the end of the world when it was inevitable. Humans compelled themselves to go through exercises in choice, thrashing like epileptics, grasping at the wrong threads and knotting them this way and that. Who would not be irritated to find his handiwork treated in such a manner?

But she sat so coolly on her seat in the arena of the city. She wanted nothing; she only waited to know what it was that she would want. The stoop steps could crumble at her feet, the moon could come crashing down from the sky, and she would only bend down to pluck a piece of debris off her sandals. She would listen to the sound of the wind blowing through his gigantic web of silk as the world plunges upside-down, twisting within itself, as she waits for him.



He realized he was terrified of speaking to her so he let the old man do so while he listened anxiously at the clumsiness of his words. He asked her what time the library closed. He asked if he may sit with her. He asked, in a studied way that ensured he appeared wistful rather than overly curious, for her name.

She answered him everything and added that she was waiting for a male friend, the light tone that tinted her voice implying that she was trying to keep him from embarrassing himself. A look of horror crossed the old man's face, but when he looked at her ankles it immediately vanished. Then the old man smiled brilliantly at her, as though all the light of the world was in him to do with as he pleased.

She responded with a quick smile of her own that showed her awareness of an incoming lull in the conversation. As she waited in silence, the Man on the Moon felt an urge to burst out of his disguise and store each impression of her deep in the hollows of his elbows and knees, where no one would find it.

He sat placidly with her instead, imagining how he would tie a red cord around her ankle, and left only when he realized that he could wait no longer.



The news that the Book of Matches had been stolen appeared in all the papers the next day.

The Man on the Moon hunched on the sofa, head in his hands, mindless of the flashing cameras around him. He smoked and emptied his ashtray frequently. Sometimes he wept. He would not answer questions about the end of the world. He would not offer speculations of what would happen to new predestined couples without the Book. Only when asked about the contest results did he say that he had already chosen the winner, but without the Book he could not write his name on the empty space next to hers. When the reporters pointed at the photographs on his wall, he would not tell them which one she was.

Advertisements for the missing Book were sent out.

Many came to his suite, and their demands for a reward were just as diverse as the Books they claimed to be his. Some wanted to survive the end of the world. Some asked to be transformed into a demigod. Some wanted to be accorded the same power in matchmaking. They were easy demands to turn down in their impossibility. As the days wore on, the Man on the Moon refused to even look at the Books they brought. None of them had given him the right reason to steal it.



He dreamed for the first time. He was in a hotel and a soft, warm hand was touching his, but he was blind and could not see who she was. He could hear the silent wail of a world ending but he had to search with his hands to remove the veil from her head.



Desperately he prayed that it was her. His fingers groped for her face but he was already bowing to the disintegrating heavens and turning around to bow to her. Wait, wait, he screamed, and he reached out and pulled at her clothes so violently that they tore. They felt like paper and he ripped off the pages a fistful at a time until his hands burned.

He awoke in the darkness and for a moment thought that he was still blind.



A man aware of the danger of being separated from his lover can choose to wait or choose to act. If he chooses to wait, he will force himself not to think what will happen after the year is over. He will use all his paid leaves from work to take her to the coast, because that is all he can do to distract himself. Afterwards he will keep her microwave oven and the beach kitsch she bought from the man whose board shorts had too many pockets and help her pack her books before taking her to the airport. They will talk again about her career goals and family obligations in vague terms and he will watch her leave. He will spend the following years waiting for a revelation, which he hopes will come in a neatly-wrapped package, and which he knows will arrive as a sack of uncertainties that will slowly crush him.

If he chooses to act, he will sit his lover down and talk about possibilities. He will talk about how the Man on the Moon's balcony overlooks the street where they usually walk and how its guest likes to keep his curtains drawn during the day. He will talk about how a friend of his who works as a linen keeper in the hotel knows that the Book of Matches lies on the bureau, its ash-littered pages flipped only by an inquisitive breeze.

Then the young man will tell her to wait for him at his apartment. If all goes well, he will return with the Book, flushed youthfully with more triumph than apprehension, and they will leaf through the pages on a small desk stacked with photographs of her and her limeless drinks. They will look for their names and discover that both of them are destined for no one.

Then the two choices will spread before them again, but by this time it will be too late to change paths.



A documentary about the end of the world began with an assortment of possible ways in which the world could be destroyed. This was followed by footage of the beauty pageant where the Man on the Moon was caught pursing his lips fastidiously as a contestant mounted the stage. Instead of showing how he turned around to shush the man who was whistling at the contestant, they cut to a review that contrasted the Man on the Moon with more heroic messianic figures that the world had seen so far.

Surrounded by cigarette butts, the Man on the Moon sat on the sofa in front of the television and waited for dawn to break.



The last person to come to the suite was dressed in a gray, collared T-shirt with the name of an appliance store printed on his left chest. He brought only a curious calm and an offer to exchange the Book of Matches for one request regarding a girl whom he loved.

The Man on the Moon hid his elation. A shrewd negotiator, he asked the young man to bring him to the Book first.



The Man on the Moon opened his suitcase and packed his belongings, which consisted of only a tangled ball of red cords. He quickly removed the photographs from his walls and threw them into the wastebasket. Beside him, the general manager clamored for the name of the future bride. He told him to wait.





The taxi halted and the Man on the Moon looked up from untangling his cords to see a block of brick apartments outside the window. The young man unbuckled himself and opened the door, saying that the girl was keeping watch over the Book.



This is how the world will end.

In the chaos, the Man on the Moon will return to where a hotel used to stand. There he will watch the universe unravel the web of red silk he had crosshatched from one side of the Earth to the other.

He will be holding the Book of Matches, where sad songs and poetry will have been scrawled on each of its pages.

He will be writing one at that moment, about a young woman who sits on the steps with her eyes focused on the horizon.

As he writes, he will see her face before him, smiling as the object of her waiting arrives. He will return the smile, as though it is him she is looking at. But then her eyes will move away to follow the other man behind him and he will have to turn around and see nothing but the debris.

Alone, the Man on the Moon will finish his poem while the world is crushed under its own weight.

#### ABOUT THE STORY

*I first wrote this story when I was invited to submit to [The Dragon and the Stars](#), an anthology edited by Derwin Mak and Eric Choi that aimed to collect speculative fiction written by the Chinese diaspora. I had always been interested in the figure of Yue Lao, the Chinese matchmaking deity who lived in the moon, and I wanted to turn the myth on its head. I wanted to explore how a deity would deal with the daily, human affliction of having no control over our circumstances and explore the role of choices when you have limited options to start with.*

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Crystal Koo was born and raised in Manila and is currently working in Hong Kong. Her latest stories have been published in venues such as [Abyss & Apex](#), [Shanghai Steam](#), and the [World SF Blog](#), and she has a forthcoming story in [Philippine Speculative Fiction 8](#). She maintains a blog called [Breaking Camp](#) and can be found on Twitter at [@crys-talkoo](#).*





A SOLDIER AND  
HER ARK



*Simon Jones*



# A SOLDIER AND HER ARK

Simon Jones

Originally published here

Murphy's been staring at me for the last half hour. He knows I don't like it. He knows what it does to me. We're here tearing through the stratosphere and he's gazing at my chest like a drunk pining after one more shot of whiskey. Ever since that night it's been the same. He knows I don't like it.

Even with my helmet retracted I can barely see out of the transporter. The force of the thrusters grinds me against my seat and I feel as if my eyes are going to shoot straight through the back of my head. I'm trying to spot the facility through the diamond-shaped aperture, but only a slit of sparsely dotted space stares back. He's still watching me.

I sigh and shut my eyes, think about the mission. It's been so long since I've transported weapons to one of the prison colonies orbiting Earth. Topping up supplies, collecting damaged weapons for repair. Simple, honest work. At least it used to be.

I try to push the thought from my mind, force his face to disappear, but the sweet relief of sedation is now thousands of miles behind me, locked inside my medicine cabinet. All I can see behind my eyelids is my husband's face and I know that this particular memory won't soon retreat.

It's been almost a year to the day since they took him from me. We were pulling a routine shift, running merch to half a dozen facilities in the lifer ring and looking to get back to Sydney by dawn. I'd been working with Jory for the previous seven months, just the two of us most of the time as there was only ever need of a pilot and commanding officer. I'd never seen anyone fly like he could.

We made it to the Ark ahead of schedule that day, damn near got ourselves shot out of the sky because the gatekeeper wasn't expecting us so soon. I should have seen that as a harbinger of things to come.

The riot broke out almost as soon as we touched down. The Ark in lockdown is nothing if not terrifying. I've seen a man's flesh sizzle and peel off his body from electrocution but nothing is quite as chilling as the silent darkness of a lifer facility in total lockdown.

One of the escapees managed to make his way into the docking bay through an open ventilation shaft. I should have had my gun. Jory should have had his rifle. But we weren't thinking. Too consumed with lust and the thought of home.

He took me in the darkness and I screamed out. Jory didn't answer. He just waited, watching the man work his thick forearm around my neck, forcing me to arch my neck in order to breathe. The three of us stood for minutes that felt like days until Jory finally spoke.

"You sleeping, Commander?"

Murphy's voice tears me away from my reverie and I'm not sure whether to punch him or thank him.

I open my eyes after what feels like hours. Murphy looks back and I can see his green eyes boring into my own. Even through his tinted visor I can see the striking emerald, just like Jory's. I want to fall into them, just for a moment. As if hearing my thoughts he smirks. *Bastard.*



The thrusters have waned now and most of the crew are retracting their helmets, trusting the cabin's stale air to keep them alive. I'm able to lean forward a little and look out through the aperture again. The belts stopping me from floating away are loose and I'm able to see a vague blur of grey in the distance. I don't have a soldier's body anymore. Hospital beds will do that.

I watch the grey mass slowly take shape as we approach. First I see the outline of three separate structures, then the familiar teal lights of the docking bay. After a few more minutes I can see the cracks and wear of the prison's exterior, inflicted by the passing of time and lack of any regular upkeep.

The Ark is pure filth. Standard lifer facility with no hope of seeing any upgrades in the short-term—at least not while the current government is in power. It's a fifty-thousand-tonne junkyard floating in space. A junkyard for the worst type of scum to rot away in.

I've been to the Ark dozens of times, but today—this journey—is anything but typical. I despise this place with every piece of me. My hands tremble just thinking about what it represents and the secrets it still holds. But I have to come back. I need to let go.

I feel the transporter begin to grumble. Autopilot. It should be a smooth ride from here, but you never know with the sort of unreliable ships Execorp brings in. In the months I was confined to the hospital, three transporters fell out of the sky. At least Connor's a decent pilot.

Murphy finally stops staring at me. He's transfixed by the sheer size of the Ark now. I remind myself that he's never been here before, barely a full-timer. He's been working with us so long without actually going off-world that I'd forgotten. I just hope he doesn't do anything stupid.

I consider telling him to keep his mouth in check but think better of it. No need to start something while we're on the job—especially in front of Connor, Lance, and Astrid. I'm the commanding officer on this trip and I'll be damned if Murphy is going to make me look like an ass on his first prison run.

The interior lights switch off and soon the darkness is replaced by a startling shade of teal. The docking bay is tiny compared to some of the other lifer facilities. The Ark got the short end of the stick when it came to funding. Still, our transporter isn't much bigger than a Cessna so it slides into the bay with ease.

We pass through the gravity field and I brace for impact. My tailbone screams as metal smashes against my spine. I grind my teeth and turn my head away. I know he's looking at me again.

Connor is the first to stand up. He's so accustomed to zero grav that it's almost as if the sharp transition from floating to standard Earth pressure doesn't affect him. The tingling in my legs begins to abate and I release the four nylon straps across my body and take a few tentative steps away from my seat. My legs are on fire only a few seconds before they adapt to standing upright.

"After you, Commander," Connor says after opening the transporter doors. I smile and nod and step out onto grated steel floor.

"See that the crew start unloading the crates as fast as possible. I don't want to stay here a moment longer than necessary."

"Yes, ma'am," my pilot replies. He's a boy scout. Not the brightest spark but someone you can trust to do the job right.

"Oh and Gail," Connor says as I'm already ten feet from the transporter. "Adrian Velasquez is the new gatekeeper."

I don't turn around, just raise my voice. "Another one? Christ, the Ark goes through more staff than we do ships."



I think I hear Connor laugh. I'm already at the doors that lead into the facility. The massive white steel gates greet me and all at once the wave of emotion I was expecting crashes over me. *Calm yourself, Gail.* I know my hands are shaking but I keep my eyes forward, act like nothing is affecting me. I don't want Connor or—God forbid—Murphy treating me with any sort of pity. I take a few short breaths before reaching for the small intercom button by the doors. I can feel my outstretched index finger trembling.

"Adrian Velasquez? Gail Fisher with Execorp. We've got a payload here just waiting for your signature. Open up so we can get the hell out of here. You may enjoy this place, but I've got better things to do back on Earth so hurry it up."

A few seconds pass before a strange-looking man scurries into the docking bay office. Five inches of polycarbonate separates him from the rest of the dock. He looks at me, smiles and waves like we're old friends before reaching for the microphone and saying, "Miss Fisher. Welcome! I heard you were back." He waits for me to reply. I just stare back. "Um, yes. Just one moment please and I'll unlock the doors."

As I wait for the familiar whistle that heralds the doors opening, the bay suddenly shudders and goes dark. Then just as fast there's light again—this time accompanied by a sharp tattoo of red light and a siren that seems to howl from miles away. *No, I tell myself. Not now. Not again.*

I look into the docking bay office and see Velasquez scrambling from end to end, searching for something important. He can't find it and quickly grabs the microphone.

"Hostil—" The docking bay shudders again—this time I'm sure it's an explosion. I can't hear it, but I know that feeling like I know the smell of my own blood. A bomb. Homemade, no doubt. Another attempted escape.

My breathing is becoming shallower by the second. If I let my thoughts linger I won't be of any use to anyone. *Take control, Commander.* I make a decision.

I shake my head and concentrate all my attention on Velasquez. He looks like he's going to crap his pants. He seems to be caught in two minds whether to call for help or curl up in a ball and wish the nightmare away.

I need to get into the office. Maybe I can figure out what the hell's going on and how long this stunt is going to last. I don't even want to think about the possibility of being stuck on the Ark. Trapped in the docking bay again.

The door is still shut. A small scarlet alarm flickers from above, indicating that nobody is getting through unless the gatekeeper overrides the system. I try to find Velasquez but he's disappeared from view—hiding, most likely. I curse quietly.

"Murphy," I call out with as much spirit as I can muster, "continue unloading the merchandise. I wager this is just a simple escape attempt. Nothing to worry about. By the time we've finished moving the weapons the guards will have dealt with it."

He hears the lack of confidence in my words but nods all the same. I exhale and wonder if even I believe what I'm saying. *Prison escapes are typical,* I tell myself. *Especially on the Ark.* I can't shake the feeling that this is history repeating, though. It's been a long time since a prisoner got their hands on an explosive. The last time was—

I shake off the thought and return to the bay doors. Intercom button. "Velasquez, get your arse out from under your desk. What's the situation?"

Half a head pops up. His eyes seek me out before he speaks. "I, um. We—" I can barely decipher a phrase amongst all his spluttering.

"Dammit, open the door!" I lose my patience only for a moment, but it seems to shake Velasquez back to his senses.

"Ma'am. Systems are indicating that Cell Block H is black."



“Everything?”

“Power, yes. Prisoners and guards, I can’t tell. Life sensors are offline. At least, I hope they’re offline. The whole back-up grid in sector two is down. I can’t divert any power to H. Something’s blocking my attempts to reroute power. It could be nothing, just a glitch in the system.”

“Or it could be deliberate.” I look back to my ship and crew and see them working like ants. Heads down, eyes straight. Except Murphy. That sonofabitch is heading straight for me. Suddenly he’s right in front of me and asking what the hell is going on. Soon Lance and Astrid follow suit and even dim little Connor wanders over to see what all the fuss is about. I know what they want. They’re looking for action. It’s been too long since any of them had a reason to shoot someone. But I’ve only been back on duty a fortnight—I can’t afford to risk anyone’s life just because a few ex-soldiers have a taste for blood. I tell myself that’s the real reason, but I know it’s because I’m barely holding myself together.

“We stay here until the situation is contained,” I tell them. “Velasquez is in direct communication with the warden and will notify us when it’s safe to move our supplies into the facility. Understood?” I look over to the gatekeeper and see his shoulders unclench. He knows I’m in control now.

The rest of the crew grumbles something resembling acknowledgement and return to their work. Everyone but Murphy. He’s staring at me again. Green eyes watching everything. He knows I don’t like what they do to me.

“You got a problem, Murphy?” I ask. He hears the weakness in my words.

“Don’t you want to see what’s happening down there? Help, if possible?”

“No.”

He doesn’t accept my dismissal. Instead he steps closer and lowers his voice, as if he’s sharing some profound secret with me. “Don’t you want this, Gail? Isn’t this *exactly* what you’ve been waiting for? A chance to get them back? You and I both know the shit’s about to hit the fan. No way in hell this is a routine breakout. Anyone who’s able to get their hands on software that can black out a facility grid like this has to have had help from outside.”

I try to speak but he barely stops to take a breath.

“You should know better than anyone that if a prisoner has the ability to get something like that in here, they must have weapons.” He sighs but keeps his eyes locked on mine. “This isn’t about our job anymore, there could be people dying down there. And we have the resources to help them.”

He’s breaking down my resolve. He knows my weakness and he’s exploiting it. He’s staring into me and searching for an answer I don’t want to give.

“Dammit, Gail. Are we just going to sit on our arses because you don’t want to deal with your emotions?”

My right fist clenches and I’m about two blinks away from knocking Murphy’s head clean off. But I don’t. I don’t do anything because I know he’s right.

I don’t waste any more time. “Velasquez, if you don’t open this door right now I’m going to put that bulletproof glass in front of you to the test.”

Something in my tone makes him realise I’m not kidding. The familiar whistle hisses out from under the doors and soon I’m able to see down the long darkened hallways into the Ark once more.

“You’re not going to leave me here alone are you?” Velasquez may be a prison worker but I can tell he’s not a man of courage.

I consider leaving just Connor behind but think of something better. “Murphy. You’re the rook. You’re in charge of



protecting the supplies. Connor and Velasquez are at your disposal.”

I don't give him a chance to respond. “Astrid, Lance, find your weapons now. Connor, you know where to find mine. Bring it to me.” My pilot shoots Murphy a half-grin before scuttling back to the transporter in search of my rifle.

I'm kitted up within three minutes. Lance and Astrid don't take much longer. There's something in their eyes that I don't like but I don't have time to figure it out. Maybe it's bloodlust, maybe it's fear. Whatever it is I just hope to hell it helps if the bullets start flying.

I tell Connor to stay with the merchandise, Velasquez that he should remain in his office, and only give Murphy a passing glance. His eyes have drifted now—they no longer seek me out. I can see his resentment. I shake my head and hope that the memory of last Saturday—that stupid drunken night—is flung out into the deepness of space, where it can never follow me again.

The three of us walk into the prison. “Visors down. Activate night vision. It's about to get dark in here.”

The shadows of the prison consume our bodies and my vision dissolves into a monochromatic blackness flecked with shades of green. We're just over a click from Cell Block H and the rhythmic sound of my team's breathing sends my thoughts wandering, back to that night.

I was never one to fraternise with co-workers, especially after I was promoted to Commander. Getting drunk with colleagues ultimately led to other things, whether that be gossiping, fighting, or screwing. I wanted nothing to do with any of those things, but that night turned into something I never expected.

I found myself in my local joint, circling a finger around the rim of a dirty glass of gin and tonic and arguing with Pep the bartender about how Arsenal were good for only two things: pleading and diving. He flexed his lopsided grin and flipped me off as usual. I smiled and was ready to go back to my drink when wouldn't-you-know-it Mr. Murphy pulls up a pew right next to me—despite the bar being half empty—and orders “two of whatever she's having”.

Murphy's been a pain in my ass since I left hospital and started training at Execorp again. He was a typical recruit: former soldier, kicked out for one reason or another, but still felt the need to serve his country. Whatever the hell that meant anymore. He was certain I was infatuated with him because he caught me staring at him one day. He mistook my fascination with his eyes—eyes just like Jory's—for lust. He felt the need to watch me ever since. That I could deal with, but showing up at my bar, ordering a drink like he was my goddamn boyfriend? Who did he think he was? I told him where to go, finished my drink, and went home.

At least that's how I wish that night had ended. I drank too much, said too many things, and ended up sleeping with him. Sure, I could blame it on the medication. Blame it on the stress of what happened to me. But it wouldn't be true. It was his eyes.

“Gail, get down!”

Lance's voice wrenches me out of my reverie and all of a sudden I'm ducking behind an overturned steel table as bullets whizz overhead. Astrid is pointing her gun at something while Lance shakes me like a ragdoll.

Sounds return like a bolt of lightning and immediately I'm in a war zone. My senses return and training takes over. I raise my head slightly while my visor describes the height and weight of three armed prisoners, their distance from my current position and advisory locations to shoot should I wish to incapacitate or neutralise them.

It takes all of four seconds for the men to fall, their stolen weapons now immobilised and their lifeless bodies spilling blood through the grated floor.

I'm on my feet and walking toward the massacre before the rest of my team knows the fight is over. I hear Astrid curse. Lance says nothing. As I stand over one of the men, an emaciated twentysomething with ugly tattoos and two bullets in his neck, I begin to feel the rush. It's like a wave of euphoria crashing over me and I jump into its splendour to escape



the Ark's terror. I savour the moment, knowing it is fleeting.

"We should keep moving," I tell the others after a few moments. I'm glad I left Murphy behind. I've been in worse situations with Lance and Astrid before. Those two know how to use a gun. They know what it feels like to kill a man. They know the ecstasy of taking a life and they know the crashing depression that follows it. I can already feel my heart begin to slow. The fear is returning and it won't take long.

We leave the corpses where they lie. The guards can decide what to do with them once this is all over. I say a meaningless prayer for the dead and tell the others to fall in line.

We're almost at Cell Block H. The lights begin to shudder on and off and I ask Velasquez what the hell is going on.

"I was able to block one of the hacking protocols for a few moments," the gatekeeper says. "Give me a few more minutes and I'll have power and life scanners back online."

"Good job. Does that mean we'll be able to tell how many more prisoners are roaming free?"

"Yes, ma'am." The line goes silent for a moment, then I hear Velasquez smashing his chubby fingers against switches and buttons. "Yes! I just need to put this here and then this over—"

Another explosion. This time through my radio. Not a bomb. A gun.

"Velasquez?" Two more shots are fired. No reply. "Velasquez, report! What the hell is going on up there?"

"Gail!" It's Murphy. I've never heard fear in his voice before. "Commander, you need to get back here. Someone just blew Velasquez's head off!"

I don't miss a beat. My feet are already launching me back towards the dock. I don't have time to think or feel. Lance and Astrid are right behind me. Their short rasps of breath indicate they are struggling to keep up—I pick up the pace.

Through long dark corridors and past empty chambers that would make a grown man shudder, I force one heavy boot in front of the other. The radio has gone dead now and I hope to whatever god is listening that Velasquez is the only casualty. I don't even try to make contact with Murphy or Connor in case whoever killed the gatekeeper is listening in on our frequency.

*Just a few more steps, I tell myself. Then you can figure out what to do.* The assault rifle is still warm from battle and my only thought is whether to keep sprinting or reload a full clip. I choose speed.

Sprinting clears my head. I'm empty, a solider again. In this moment I'm no longer consumed by fear or hatred, only a target at the other end of this facility.

But just when I think I'm composed, just when I think I have control of my emotions, he comes flooding into my thoughts again. Jory. I'm back in the grip of my captor and Jory is just watching in the darkness, waiting for something to happen. My legs keep pumping but I can't keep the memory away anymore.

The three of us—Jory, the prisoner, and me—stood like statues in a museum until Jory finally spoke. He offered the prisoner our ship and himself in exchange for my safety. I tried to protest but my cries were quickly muffled with a tighter grip around my throat.

The bastard kept his promise—let me go and walked onto our ship and away forever. He wasn't supposed to do that.

The craft was barely past the gravity field when it erupted in flames, deathly silent.

I was going to surprise Jory that night. Tell him he was going to be a father. I still torment myself with the question of whether that day would have ended any differently had I told him about his daughter.



I'm back now, the memory finally gone—at least for now.

I round the final corner and see the white docking gates at the far end of the corridor are shut. No time to moan. My feet keep moving and within seconds I'm standing in the doorway to Velasquez's office, looking down at what's left of his mangled face. It looks like someone blew his head off with a shotgun.

The murderer isn't here. I dare myself to look out through the bulletproof glass. I dare myself to see Connor and Murphy, dead and slumped against the docking bay floor, my stolen ship disappearing into space before flames consume the Ark.

That's not what I see. My ship is exactly where Connor landed it and Murphy is staring at me through the tinted window. There's a gun—a guard's pistol, just like the ones we transport—pointed at the back of his skull. He's trying to smile despite it all. *Crazy bastard.*

A bald man with indecipherable symbols scrawled into the left side of his face is flanked by two other men, each bigger and more inked than the other. The bald one, right hand wrapped around Murphy's neck while his left grips the pistol, taps the outside of his hostage's helmet. I hear the low thud through my radio and acknowledge that I can hear him.

"Good," an odd voice drawls. Australian, but not quite. Maybe he's been up here too long. "What's your name, beautiful?"

I say nothing, just look deep into his cold black eyes. Eyes I'm not afraid to stare into.

He smiles. "We want your ship. Nothing else. No one else has to get hurt. You understand?"

My mind is racing. I'm trying to think how this all ends. Best case scenario: these three morons take my transporter, can't disable the tracker, and are picked up by Feds wherever they are stupid enough to land. Worst case: they kill Murphy and Connor, steal the ship and take out the docking bay—if not the entire facility. If they managed to get their hands on two bombs there's no reason why they can't have another.

"You understand, woman?" I wince as the leader's voice roars in my ears. He's not smiling anymore.

"Yes." I hear the anger in my voice, try to quell it. "Yes, I understand."

"Good."

The other two prisoners begin moving about the dock. I breathe out and consider how stupid a lifer has to be to steal a government vessel from a max security prison. They'll be back on the Ark within twenty-four hours.

"Oh and one more thing," the bald man says, his grip around Murphy's neck visibly tightening. "Your pretty boyfriend is going to join us."

I resist the urge to raise my rifle and put a bullet between his eyes. *Bulletproof glass*, I remind myself. And his two minions are armed to the teeth. Even if I managed to penetrate the glass Murphy and Connor wouldn't last five seconds unarmed.

Lance and Astrid are still behind me. Still silent. I know what they want. I know they want to smash down those white steel gates and end those bastards. If it was a simple hostage situation I'd have no qualms about letting them get their fill. But this is Connor and Murphy—I can't risk it. *Not again.*

I open my left palm, still by my side, and flick it swiftly, silently instructing them to stay put. I can fix this myself.

"I have a better idea," I say as the leader begins to turn. He stops, cranes his neck back towards the glass. I've piqued his interest. "Take me instead."



His grin is almost as vile as his black, rotten teeth. His laugh raises the hairs on the back of my neck. "You think I'm an idiot, right? I'm not going to play your little games. You want me to let him go then shoot me in the back as soon as I open that door."

"No weapons. Here," I raise my rifle and indicate for Lance and Astrid to do the same. They hesitate for only a moment before letting their weapons crash to the floor with mine. I kneel down and remove two pistols from either boot before raising them high enough for the leader to see. He nods and they join the rifles on the floor.

"That's it."

He thinks for a moment, smiles, then motions for one of his lackeys to wait at the door. "Your two mates will stay in there where I can see them. When you get to the door, my friend Loch will make certain you haven't 'forgotten' anything."

"Fine." He lets out another sickening cackle. I turn to Lance and Astrid and say, "Open the door and do as he says," before exiting the room and waiting in front of the docking bay door.

One of the leader's brutes manhandles me as soon as the white gates swing open. At first his hands seek out any weapons I may be hiding, but soon they begin to wander, slowly up towards my breasts. I snatch one of his hands and consider breaking a finger. I only stop when I see the leader still has his gun pointed at Murphy's neck.

He clicks his tongue and smirks. "That might not be too smart, beautiful."

I release the burly man's fat fingers and am rewarded with an elbow to the temple. Dazed, the prisoner shoves me towards his leader whose grin has not left his face.

"I'm here now," I say when I reach him. "Let him go."

"Gail, I—" A pistol whip to the back of Murphy's head stops him from finishing that thought. I see Connor at the edge of my vision. He's cowering in the corner, staring at me, waiting for me to do something. Waiting for me to take this bastard's gun and put a bullet in his head. *Poor Connor. He shouldn't have to see this.*

I stow my pity and follow the three men into the back of my transporter. I keep my eyes forward, trained on the back of the leader's head. I hear someone crying out—maybe Connor, maybe Murphy. I don't look back. The cold metal of Loch's gun trained on the back of my neck keeps me from turning around.

I tell myself I don't need to look back. I know what I have to do.

The leader sends the smaller of his minions to the pilot's seat, where he casually starts up the ship. *Smart. He managed to break out a pilot.*

As if hearing my thoughts the leader turns and raises his hands in a questioning fashion. "What? You didn't think I could get this thing off the Ark?"

I keep my mouth shut, eyes straight. When I sit down, Loch stands above me and reaches for my harnesses. I break three fingers on his right hand. His screeching howls are muffled by the instant roar of the ship's thrusters. Loch looks back at his leader who only shrugs and smiles. "You know you shouldn't touch pretty girls, Lochie."

Loch sends me a cold stare and I meet it. After a few moments his eyes dart back to his mangled hand and he moves to the back of the ship, searching for healing salve no doubt.

As we lift off, a burning teal fills the ship once more and I feel myself begin to rise. I keep my harnesses tight against my body but do not secure them. To do so now would mean I would have to break the emergency seal should I need to leave my seat during the journey. I don't intend to do that. I need the element of surprise.



The leader spends a few minutes clutching at his seat handles. It must be years since he's flown, and I very much doubt he's ever been in a craft so small. But after a while his nerves settle and he appears comfortable enough to release his death grip on the seat—he still keeps his harnesses tight.

Loch is still at the far end of the ship, but his protestations have diminished. He either found what he was looking for or the release of gravity on his joints has eased the pain in his hand. His round body floats effortlessly in zero grav and he even seems to be enjoying it.

A spate of laughter from the brute draws the leader's gaze—only for a moment. A moment is what I've been waiting for.

As I shoot out of my seat both hands work independently of one another. My right palm slams hard against a piece of armour jutting out from my shoulder blade. The suit heeds my request immediately and my head is all at once encased in a self-sustaining helmet—fresh oxygen flowing freely. At that same moment my left hand moves sharply behind. I don't need to look; I know exactly where I'm aiming.

The emergency release blasts the door out into the vast blackness of space. The atmosphere within the ship is immediately compromised and I can see the look of sheer terror on my captor's face. No oxygen, no warmth. Only death now. Loch's fat body shoots past me and within a blink he has disappeared completely.

I watch the leader, watch the light in his eyes diminish before turning towards the cockpit, my left hand grasping the door hinge while my right still grips tightly to one of my seat's harnesses. The prisoner is looking straight at me with cold, dead eyes and I almost don't notice the object in his hand, now frozen by the hard vacuum of space.

I don't waste any time searching for the loose pin, just turn towards the exit and launch myself out of the transporter with as much force as my arms can muster before the explosion. I don't hear the grenade, only feel it. The strange silence of space is a terrifying soundtrack as my body is tossed and twisted as freely as a child's doll. Orange licks at the edge of my visor and I shut my eyes, only hearing the heavy, horrific sounds of my breathing. *It's over*, I tell myself once the worst of it ends. *Let go*.

But I don't let go. The madness is gone as quickly as it arrived and though my body is broken I can still feel life pulsing through my veins. My neck shudders as every heartbeat carries waves of blood to and from my brain. *Still here*.

I don't dare open my eyes. I don't dare wake and find myself alive, doomed to drift through the nothingness, abandoned until my wounds or starvation extinguishes the final flicker of life within.

I know what I have to do to be with him again.

I can't feel my right arm so I force my left to bend slowly towards the helmet. The visor's release valve is under my right ear—I fight through the pain, urging myself to let it all go. The agony is overwhelming and I know that if I can just reach the valve the pain will leave for good. My cries of agony fill the helmet and I can't hear anything but my screams. I can almost touch death.

“G—”

My cries are stifled. I wait, wondering whether my mind has lost all capacity for reason.

“G—Gail, can you—Can you hear me, Gail? Are you there?” The voice says something away from the speaker before coming back clearer. “I heard you, Gail. I could hear you just now. We're coming. Just wait for me, okay? We're coming to get you.”

The numbness in my bones swells and I'm not quite sure I can feel anything anymore. I think I might be smiling. My eyelids are heavy. I feel weary. I can see something in the blackness, something beyond the greyness of the Ark. I force



### ABOUT THE STORY

*The idea of isolation, and particularly the human reaction to such remoteness, has always fascinated me. No matter how much desire a person may have for seclusion, most would trade permanent isolation for some form of companionship. I wanted to create a story about the desire to be alone coupled with the very human need to seek comfort in others—with a few shoot-outs thrown in for good measure. While the environment is of course fanciful, I see shades of Gail and Murphy every day of my life.*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Simon Jones is an Australian journalist who has worked across a range of subjects, from science to sport, video games to politics, for over seven years. His most recent piece of speculative fiction to be accepted for publishing is “Tourist Regulator,” which will be featured in the October edition of Antipodean SF.*



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.



# PRATIOTIC CRIMES

A CHRONICLE OF LOST WARS



*Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro*



# PRATIOTIC CRIMES

## A CHRONICLE OF LOST WARS

Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro

Originally published in Portuguese in the anthology “O Vampiro da Nova Holanda” (Editorial Caminho, 1998)

*“Brazil expects every man to do his duty.”*

*(Admiral<sup>1</sup> Francisco Manoel Barroso da Silva —Sept. 29, 1804 —June 6, 1865)*

In January 1873, on a sweltering summer afternoon in Rio de Janeiro, a young dark-bearded man with hair graying at the temples squatted behind the trunk of one of the many wide-canopied trees on the ample grounds surrounding the Palácio de São Cristóvão.

He was waiting and the wait was pure torture. It reminded him of the suffering and uncertainties he had endured in the dungeons of a military prison in Asunción.

In the intense, humid heat, the linen shirt stuck to his sweaty chest. Burs clung to his trousers and pricked his calves.

A loaded Spencer weighed heavily in his lap. An additional magazine, complete with seven bullets, dragged down the deep pocket of his jacket. The spirit of this former officer from the once-proud Brazilian Imperial Navy had been broken during his years spent as a prisoner in Paraguay.

Ill at ease in his new civilian clothing, he now found himself some 50 feet away from the edge of a stone-paved road that began at the great iron gate and led to the square directly in front of the grand Imperial Palace. At that moment, the square was replete with eight carriages. The coachmen spoke in low, solemn tones as if they, and not their masters, were in a position to decide the fate of the agonized Empire.

Meanwhile, twelve soldiers of the Paraguayan Army kept watch at their posts under the unforgiving sun. In spite of their sweaty foreheads and glistening faces, they seemed undisturbed by the heat. They remained serene in their thick red overcoats, darkened by perspiration.

Another conference day finally came to its end. He wondered if he could perform his patriotic mission this day.

Keeping close watch on the two delegations as they descended the palace steps, he searched among the many men in full-dress uniform for the face of Brazil’s greatest traitor.

He easily recognized at a distance the man who considered himself so dignified, but whose weak character was manifest in his very face. How could he fail to identify his target at first glance?

<sup>1</sup> Posthumous promotion awarded by Imperial Armada Decree no. 111 on March 31, 1866.



Admittedly, Brazil's supreme leader did seem quite a bit older than in his official portraits, and in visibly lower spirits. "Just a broken old man wearing a dark-blue, full-dress uniform covered with medals," he observed crouching behind the tree. "No!" A sudden flow of guilt ran through his soul, as thick as the mud of the bed of the Paraná. He should save his pity for the many comrades massacred in the shallow, muddy waters of that river, where the lot of Empire changed from destiny to doom.

How could he have felt sorry for this Pedro de Alcântara; an emperor who had remained safe and sound within his court in Rio de Janeiro, thousands of miles away from the battlefield? A sovereign who, although he had never fought a war, didn't waver one single moment over capitulating before *El Presidente* Solano López? In so doing, this Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil had agreed to put the yoke of occupation over his nation, while many of his subjects had yet remained eager to defend the country against the vile Paraguayan invaders.

No! There could be no pity for Pedro de Alcântara, the most ignoble traitor Brazil had ever had.



The fair-haired foreigner dismounted carefully from his horse in a vain attempt to avoid feeling the familiar twinge in his hip that had bothered him for years. He had the impression that that dull ache had originated during the Battle of Five Forks, when he earned the rather dubious privilege of surviving a terrible battle *again*, while losing the entire division under his command.

He tied the reins of his robust bay around the trunk of an oak, a European tree even more alien than he was in this warm tropical land. After twisting the tip of his bushy, gray-blond mustache, he removed his Sharp from the holster tied to the saddle.

Thoughtful, he caressed the butt of his old rifle, a faithful companion, not in the two long wars he had fought, but in the cherished times he had spent hunting buffalo on the Western Plains or tracking cougars down in the valleys at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

Placing the rifle butt under his left armpit and keeping it steady with his left hand, the foreigner opened up the gun in the middle with a nimble movement of his free hand. He removed a long, thick cartridge from the inside pocket of his gray jacket and introduced it into the gun's breech. Then he closed it up again.

After taking his gold-rimmed spectacles from the pocket of his faded shirt and putting them on, he unfolded his rifle's sight and checked its accuracy by steadying the focus on the branch of a faraway tree.

The foreigner released a biting laugh, a little like a dry cough, as he recalled a rumor about him once rampant in Virginia that he could shoot down a buffalo half a mile away on the first try with this ole Sharp.

He hoped the target would not be so far away this time, especially because he wouldn't be aiming at a buffalo.

This was the first time he was planning to use his Sharp to kill a man. Did arms perchance have a conscience—a soul, maybe? If so, how would his ole friend react upon discovering it was being used to take away the life of a human being?

The blond man stroked his gray goatee. Absent-mindedly, he straightened the showy red scarf he always wore tied around his neck.

Notwithstanding all the legends and exaggerated stories surrounding his name, he had actually never killed a man in peacetime. He assumed that he had killed several enemy soldiers during the War of Southern Independence and, later, in the War of the Triple Alliance. Of course, he could never be certain of how many soldiers were killed by the many, many shots he fired. Because wars were different now. They were not like they used to be. Where was the romantic spirit that had inspired the great battles of the past he had studied at West Point?



Anyway, at war killing is not exactly an act of murder. Rather, it should be considered an act of self-defense. Civilians often don't realize that in wartime things work differently. A soldier is often left with no other choice but to kill or be killed.

However, his worries were of an entirely different kind now. This was the first time he had ever planned to kill a man in cold blood. His future victim was not even an enemy, equally bent on killing him, but a man who almost certainly believed that he had long ago returned to New Orleans along with most of the other former Confederate Army officers and men.

He stroked the red and white hairs of his goatee again and muttered, "May God be with me" under his breath. He then began searching for a sign of the misguided Brazilian patriot. He'd better find the man before it was too late.



At the very beginning of the War, before the tragedy at Riachuelo, he had heard that the Imperial Army was expecting a large shipment of Spencer repeating carbines from the United States of America. North American military advisers had recommended the adoption of that carbine as the best cavalry weapon because of its incredible stopping power and renowned reliability in battle. Those weapons were very similar to the one he now gripped in his hands. Thanks to its astonishingly swift loading system, and a firing speed unsurpassed by any other weapon of its kind, the Spencer had become the last word in small arms.

As the tide of the War turned against the Empire, those repeating carbines had found their way into the hands of the Paraguayans.

Not that he had been worried about the latest advances in weaponry at the beginning of the war against López. He was then a young first lieutenant just appointed captain of the gunboat *Ipiranga*, the first propeller-driven ship ever built in the Imperial Navy shipyard. He was convinced that the conflict would be just one more small, brief war. Just like all the others the Empire had begun to win in the muddy waters of one of the La Plata rivers.

He proved to be dead wrong on both counts.

Riachuelo.

On the morning of June 11, 1865, on the Paraná River in Argentine territory, where the course of the river bends as it welcomes the waters of the Paraguay, its largest tributary, and close to the mouth of the smaller, streamlike Riachuelo, the dreams of glory of Lieutenant Álvaro Augusto de Carvalho turned into a bitter nightmare that would torment him for an eternity of eight full years.



Straying farther from his horse, the mercenary strode stealthily through the tall grass. His riding boots protected his shins and calves from the sharp blades of wild grass. He hit his stride, steadily tracing the trail left by the patriot. All the way he kept the long barrel of his faithful Sharp '69 resting over his shoulder.

It was easy for him to follow the traces that the Imperial Navy veteran left behind. In his youth, he had followed the trails of partridges and rabbits on hunting trips with his friends in the forests and fields of his beloved Virginia.

While continuing to follow the Brazilian's tracks, he contemplated the mistakes and tragedies that wars inflict on the men who fight in them.

Against his will, he remembered the heroic assault on Chapultepec in April 1847 during the Mexican War. He had been a young lieutenant then, newly graduated from West Point. He had been serving in the glorious 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry when they attacked that fortified hill. In the Battle of Chapultepec, he had had to grab the banner out of the hands of Lieutenant Longstreet, a good friend who'd been injured minutes before.



He interrupted his tracking for a few moments to light a cigarette. Damn Paraguayan matches! How he missed those Yankee matches. You wouldn't need to worry about this stupid little box. You could always strike up a Yankee match on the sole of your own boot!

Longstreet.

Where could his good friend Jim Longstreet be?

They had met up again during the War of Southern Independence. He had served under his friend's command in the Southeastern Virginia campaign and, later, in the invasion of Pennsylvania, up to the Battle of Gettysburg, during those three fateful days at the beginning of July 1863.

A couple of hours before the decisive attack, on Gettysburg's third day, Jim had confessed that he had had serious reservations regarding the viability of a frontal attack on the fortified trenches that the Yankees had dug on Cemetery Hill. He had even quarreled with Lee about it. However, orders are orders and, so they were obeyed to the letter.

He remembered Jim's question, "George, are you sure you can take that hill?" His affirmative answer was conveyed by a nod and confident smile, together with a perfect salute on horseback to his friend and superior officer.

His division had been fresh and rested when the bugle call to march was sounded. His troops had not taken part in the great Confederate victory at Chancellorsville. Thus, after spending their first two days in Gettysburg defending the supply wagons, it was natural that both he and his men were itching to conquer their own fair blaze of glory.

Jim had understood their longing perfectly. So, at the beginning of that decisive battle, he had ordered three brigades of the Virginian's division to carry out the frontal attack, while determining that Ewell's division should attack the Union's right flank, and J.E.B. Stuart should flank the enemy's positions to the left in order to attack its rearguard.

Both Stuart and Ewell failed to accomplish their missions.

Tactical failures followed by well-executed retreats: Stuart's and Ewell's divisions had very few casualties. While those two bastards had succeeded in escaping from battle unscathed, his own division was utterly obliterated while trying to execute Lee's absurd plan.

When his three brigades had commenced their cadenced march in an irrepressible step over the remaining three-fourths of a mile separating his boys from the enemy, there had been a moment he even thought that Old Man Lee might be right after all: the Army of Northern Virginia was a tidal wave that simply could not be stopped! They would demolish the Army of the Potomac! After that bloody victory, if Lincoln didn't plead for peace, in a matter of a day they would be marching down the very streets of Washington! After two years of war, the Confederacy would finally win its independence.

Suddenly, a barrage of Northern artillery had begun firing without warning. That same artillery he himself had sworn dead a few minutes before. A dense shower of bullets and incandescent cannonballs fell over the Confederate regiments. They were implacably massacred while moving forward. His binoculars had brought before his very eyes the vivid scenes of slaughter that consumed his troops.

Only then had he come to his senses and realized how insane Lee's orders had really been. His boys had been the very best Virginia had had to offer, but not even they could have advanced unharmed in the open field and overtaken the enemy's positions on that hilltop defended by entrenched Union infantry and covered by artillery fire.

He lost more than two-thirds of his soldiers in that charge, along with all the high officers of his division. A heroic, but entirely futile attack.

Six years and one war later, Robles, one of the most capable and well-educated generals in the Paraguayan Army, would confess that he considered the gallant charge carried out by the Confederate officer's division as a kind of mi-



crocoscopic representation of the War of Southern Independence itself: a heroic effort of unsurpassed valor marked by apparent initial success but which ended in sweeping disaster.

“That old man... had my division massacred!” he sighed in a bitter tone. His thoughts returned to the present at last. Somewhat relieved, he kept on the trail of the patriot who belonged to the Radical Republican Resistance.

He got a chill up his spine as he recalled those worthless Richmond politicians who had wanted to blame Jim for the fiasco at Gettysburg, just because his friend had been the only commanding officer in that Army who wasn't a native-born Virginian.

After taking a last drag on his cigarette, he threw the butt on the ground and crushed it out with the sole of his boot. Even if he lived forever, he'd never forgive Lee for ordering that frontal attack.



Pedro de Alcântara stood motionless while staring in attentive silence at a loquacious but deliberately severe López.

Unlike the other dignitaries, the Paraguayan tyrant was not in full-dress uniform. He wore his battlefield attire, instead. No medals at all—just a red overcoat with a marshal's insignia over dark blue trousers. His staff had probably suggested adopting this stark attire to contrast with the pompous solemnity exhibited in the regalia of the defeated emperor.

The veteran tried to aim at His Majesty's chest, but Estigarribia—former general and present Paraguayan ambassador to Brazil—insisted on eclipsing the monarch, either by employing his thin body or his big head, adorned by an imposing North American top hat.

Of course, it was easy for the emperor to play the role of the resolute nobleman in extremely adverse circumstances when it was not he who had gone through hell and back in the Battle of Riachuelo.

This would be the first attempt sponsored by the Resistance against Pedro de Alcântara's life.

There had been three attempts on López's life. Three complete failures. In the third assassination attempt, however, *el Presidente* suffered a scratch on his face. Hundreds of Brazilian civilians had been executed in reprisal for this small scar!

So the Resistance leaders decided to adopt a new strategy. The movement couldn't afford the decline in the popular support that would surely result from a new retaliatory massacre inflicted on the Empire's subjects. There was only one man whom the patriots hated almost as much as the Paraguayan dictator: the collaborationist emperor who had agreed to surrender after so many men had died for the nation, when so many others were yet willing to sacrifice their lives for it.

An infiltrator brought the information that the Paraguayan High Command would probably be much more lenient toward any attempt on Dom Pedro II's life. After all, the Paraguayans had always loathed the Empire's monarchical institutions. Moreover, with their temperament and sense of duty, they would tend to accept as fair any hypothetical attempt on a ruler considered responsible for the most disastrous military defeat in the Brazilian history.

Thus, the plans of the Resistance were altered. A new agent with wide military experience was assigned for this patriotic mission.





At times, he guessed the war deities themselves had conspired in favor of Paraguay on that clear winter morning at Riachuelo. There was no other way to explain how those first volleys discharged by the batteries of the Paraguayan cannons and rockets were able to damage the starboard wheel of the *Amazonas*, the Imperial Navy's flagship.

That fortuitous hit was the single greatest misfortune of the Brazilian cause. Because the very first volley smote Captain Barroso da Silva, the commander-in-chief of the imperial task force, struck while carrying out the final inspection of the two wheel gears. Barroso died at once. He was a brilliant strategist. If he had survived unharmed, perhaps the Imperial Navy might have been able to avert the tragic outcome.

Clumsily maneuvering in the shallow waters, the grand steam frigate kept navigating, propelled solely by her port wheel. But even under perfect nautical conditions, with her deep draft, an ocean-going ship like the frigate would have come up against enormous difficulties making its way through the sinuously narrow navigable section of the channel formed by the Paraná, close to the mouth of the Riachuelo. Maybe Barroso could have done it. Maybe not.

However, without her skillful commander and deprived of one of her paddle wheels, the flagship soon ran aground near the channel's steep left bank, becoming easy prey for the enemy batteries. Unfortunately, the grounding had taken place at a spot that was dangerously close to where the Paraguayan Marines had been quartered in order to board Brazilian ships that might get stuck on the low-lying riverbeds.

The tragic loss of both the *Amazonas* and Barroso sealed the fate of the Imperial Navy.

About the same time, the Paraguayan naval force sped down the river with the flagship *Tacuary* in the lead. Having a lower draw than the Brazilian ships, and sailing on a favorable current, the Paraguayan vessels easily navigated in single file to a position in front of the imperial fleet, whose crews were still immobilized by the shock of the loss of the *Amazonas*.

Meanwhile, in the Brazilian task force, the captain of the gunboat *Jequitinhonha* assumed command of the rest of imperial flotilla and led a vain attempt to escape the punishing bombardment launched from the enemy ships and the Paraguayan military positions on the banks of the Paraná.

However, chaos and desperation had already taken hold aboard the remaining ships of the Imperial Navy. Relentlessly punished by concentrated enemy firepower, the steamboat *Belmonte* had also suffered serious damage and her crew was forced to run the ship aground to avoid sinking, so that she remained out of action only to be taken over by the Paraguayan crews aboard the *Tacuary* and *Salto Oriental* four hours later.

Soon afterward, the *Jequitinhonha* herself ran aground right in front of the Paraguayan batteries installed near the mouth of the Riachuelo. While attempting to come help her, *INS Paraíba* had her helm destroyed by enemy firepower.

The Imperial steamships *Mearim* and *Beberibe* had been cornered and forced through a narrow passageway between the left bank and a chain of islets. After four hours of bombardment from the enemy batteries and gunned flatboats, the few survivors of the inferno could no longer resist the fiery attack of the Paraguayan Marines.

Realizing that the battle had already been lost, and counting on the fact that their ships were more agile than the larger vessels of the imperial flotilla, the captains of the Brazilian gunboats *Araguari* and *Iguatemi* ordered a retreat. Much later, while in captivity, he had heard that these cowards had escaped unharmed. Instead of being court-martialed, they had been greeted in Corrientes with naval honors.

At the same time, on the bridge of the *Ipiranga*, he was leading an attack on the enemy's gunned flatboats. Having their cannons mounted on high decks, the larger ships of the imperial fleet were not able to hit the low flatboats. *Ipiranga* sank her first flatboat at the very beginning of combat. The Paraguayan captains soon discovered his plan and centered their ships' firepower on *Ipiranga's* broadside.



Wrenched off by discharges fired at point blank, slivers of wood from *Ipiranga's* rail flew all over her main deck, taking a greater number of victims than the direct hits from the cannonballs. Raining mercilessly over the quarterdeck, shrapnel fire from the flatboats and artillery barrages from the riverbanks left no survivors on the main deck.

The mingled blood of sailors and officers flowed together, soaking the main deck's wooden flooring, making it treacherously slippery. In the throes of death, more than a dozen mutilated men groaned amidst the acrid smoke emanating from the mouths of the cannons and the piercing smell of burning gunpowder, as the guns of the *Ipiranga* incessantly riposted the attack. Makeshift cannoneers didn't hesitate for a second to substitute for their former comrades-in-arms, who were either dead or dying—both whole bodies and mere bloody pieces were scattered all over the deck.

Half of *Ipiranga's* garrison already lay prostrate when her guns hit the second flatboat. The explosion was followed by a brief jubilant cry ringing out from bow to stern in commemoration of what the remaining crewmembers supposed would be their last victory.

As captain, of course, he had considered the possibility of retreating, but a sudden impact astern followed by the quartermaster's cry reverberating throughout the ship—"We just lost the propeller, captain!"—decided the matter otherwise.

He recalled the feeling of serenity that had overcome him then. The certainty of imminent death seemed to have filled the spirit of all those still able to fight with the iron will to take along with them as many enemy combatants as they could.

Without any hope of retreat, his remaining crew was able to sink yet a third flatboat.

He was convinced his life would end that very afternoon. The mud of the Paraná riverbed would be his tomb. Instead, he was to survive his ship and his men.

His last conscious memory of the battle was the thunderous explosion of a cannonball on the bulkhead behind him, two palms away from his own station.

Then, the nightmare that would haunt him till the end of his days had begun. He had just to close his eyes to get it started again. The memories of terror would be with him forever. The crackle of burning wood, the moans of the wounded, the diminishing shouts of triumph from his men, the screams begotten of rage and impotence.

A sensation of lying prone, wet-faced—the stench of blood. The roar of cannonry from the *Ipiranga* that made the gunboat shake from her hold to what was left of her bulkhead could be heard at longer and longer intervals. The memory of increasingly frequent echoes of enemy cannonry hammering more and more insistently, frenetically, against the hull of the ship he had been entrusted with. His first and last command.

Then, darkness. Oblivion.

He regained consciousness five days later, only to find himself lying on an infected cot, manacled to two other prisoners with the rings of a thick chain in a loathsome military prison. There were seventeen other men with him in that dank, dark cell: fourteen Brazilians and three Argentineans, as well as a large number of rats.

He shook his head to get rid of the bitter memories and bring his mind back to the present.

Damn Estigarribia! Hadn't the defeats the Paraguayan general inflicted on the remnants of the Imperial Army in the Province of Rio Grande do Sul been enough? Was it possible that even after discarding military discipline and a general's regalia in favor of cutaways and diplomatic deference, the man could continue to undermine the Brazilian cause?



Indifferent to his curses, the notorious Paraguayan hero never stopped jabbering with *el Presidente* Solano López and Emperor Dom Pedro II.

The fact that Pedro de Alcântara acted as if his interlocutors were old friends paying him a visit in his palace reinvigorated the resolve that had threatened to leave him a few minutes before. His sweating hands fingered the rough edge of the trigger as he mused, “Your time has come, Pedro de Alcântara!”



He had finally spotted the veteran.

It had been hard to make him out against the green of the tall grass and the brown of the tree trunks. His prey was squatted next to a leafy oak in the midst of some especially thick vegetation.

A fleeting reflection of the sun’s rays on the Brazilian’s gun barrel had betrayed him.

The Virginian confirmed his initial suspicion, looking through the sight of his Sharp. Yep, that was the Brazilian in the flesh!

It seemed he had arrived just in time to accomplish his mission.

He was still about 100 meters away from where the veteran was hiding. He chose the path that would most quickly lead him to his prey. Taking long, cautious strides in the direction of the man behind the tree, he mulled over what he knew about Lieutenant Commander Álvaro Augusto de Carvalho.

The Paraguayans had told him that at the beginning of the War of the Triple Alliance, Carvalho commanded the small gunboat *Ipiranga*. In the company of eight larger Imperial Navy vessels, the gunboat had sailed up the Paraná River to on a search and destroy mission to find the enemy fleet and establish a blockade of Paraguay.

He smiled, recalling Lincoln’s futile attempt to impose a blockade on the Confederacy. Unlike the Southern States, however, Paraguay could not count on thousands of miles of coastline. As a country without direct access to the sea, it was imperative that it exercise absolute control over the Paraná and the Paraguay Rivers to keep them open to shipments of weapons and aid from foreign nations.

The decisive confrontation between two naval forces took place at the mouth of the Riachuelo, a minor tributary of the Paraná. A well-planned strategy enabled the Paraguayans to render the imperial flagship helpless within the first few minutes of battle.

According to the official version of the event announced in Asunción, the eight remaining ships of the Brazilian flotilla were then lured into the treacherously shallow waters bordering a riverbank where the Army had hidden batteries of cannons and rockets. After running aground, most of the Brazilian boats soon became easy prey for a cruel bombardment. After a large number of the crew had already fallen aboard the Brazilian ships and fire had spread to many of their hulls and decks, the Paraguayan Marines boarded them. The Brazilians surrendered without resistance.

Privately, he always viewed this version of the battle with suspicion, taking into account the low number of captured survivors. Anyway, as that damn Sherman had said, “War is hell.” Moreover, did he really have the moral authority to judge Paraguayan attitudes in that long, bloody war?

Three warships of the Imperial Navy had managed to survive that terrible initial confrontation. Two of them had withdrawn and taken refuge in the temporary safety of the Argentinean port city of Corrientes, while the smallest of the three vessels, Carvalho’s *Ipiranga*, had continued to engage the enemy in spite of her inferior numbers and the certainty of defeat.



Before being boarded, however, the small but courageous *Ipiranga* had sunk three *chatas*, small flatboats armed with cannons, in addition to seriously damaging the much bigger *Salto Oriental* and blowing up four enemy artillery positions on the banks of the river.

Carvalho survived the Paraguayan assault and was taken prisoner by the Army. After a brief period, he was transferred to a detention camp reserved for enemy officers in Asunción. It appeared that even the Paraguayans considered him a hero.

“He is a true hero, indeed!” thought the mercenary with admiration.

Having won at Riachuelo, Paraguay could control its access to the Atlantic and thereby maintain a steady flow of weapons and ships purchased in Europe. Thanks to that crucial victory, Paraguay garnered the support of two of the wealthiest provinces within the Confederación Argentina. So, little by little, the tides of the war began to change. Finally, an event the Brazilians had deemed impossible actually came to pass: the conflict was transferred from Paraguayan and Corrientine soils to the territory of the Empire.

After winning on both the Argentinean and Uruguayan fronts, the Paraguayans were able to concentrate their efforts on the invasion of southern Brazil. In fact, he had arrived to an already conquered Buenos Aires in July of 1867 as commander of 5,000 men from the former Army of Northern Virginia, to help the Paraguayans to overthrow the tyrannical Empire of Brazil.

He had never forgotten that first meeting with Solano López in Corrientes. Obviously testing the seriousness of his commitment, *el Presidente* announced that Paraguay was in the process of organizing Negro battalions composed of deserters from the Imperial Army and runaway slaves from Brazilian plantations. López asked if a general who had fought to maintain slavery would mind fighting side by side with newly-freed slaves.

He replied in pidgin Spanish while stroking his goatee: “I did not fight to defend slavery. I enlisted as a Virginian to free my homeland from the political and economic oppression of the North. Our fight was similar to that of your own people. We also longed for independence.”

“I understand. This concept of self-determination of yours is a very beautiful thing,” replied López while shrewdly scrutinizing his face. “But, what about the Negroes?”

“I don’t care about the Negroes. We fought against whole platoons of Negroes sent by the Union. Experience has proven that, if efficiently led by white officers, they know how to obey orders and, therefore, they make good soldiers. In the name of your country and of your noble cause, as well for the gold you have promised, I would not mind training or commanding them one bit.”

And he kept his promise. Over the next two years, invading Paraguayan troops conquered the Empire’s southern provinces, bringing chaos to the Brazilian slave economy in their wake, as more and more Negroes fled from the farms and swelled the ranks of the occupying troops. He and his veterans of the A.N.V. personally trained many of those same black soldiers.

Meanwhile, Carvalho was still a prisoner of war in Asunción. He was finally released on Christmas Eve 1869, more than a month after the signature of the armistice between *la Gran República* and the dying Brazilian Empire.

Upon returning to the remaining imperial lands, amidst massive Negro flight, economic chaos, and the executions of abolitionists in the Imperial Square, during a time when republican rebellions were breaking out in every Brazilian province even without Paraguayan support, Carvalho thought it would be wise to join one of the many resistance movements opposed to the Paraguayan occupation forces.



The mercenary then opened his lips slightly, in a sad, weary smile. He admired the valor and courage of the Brazilian veteran. He knew that a man of Carvalho's caliber would feel like a traitor if he were ever to turn his back on the futile efforts of the Resistance.

He had waged the two bloodiest wars ever fought in the Americas, having known both heinous defeat fighting for his beloved Virginia in the War of Southern Independence and glorious victory as a soldier of fortune employed at the Paraguayan Army in the War of the Triple Alliance. Throughout the harrowing years of those two gargantuan conflicts, so similar yet so profoundly different, he had met very few men with the integrity of a Lieutenant Commander Carvalho.

*Courage under fire...*

Is there a similar expression in either Spanish or Portuguese? Never mind.

He firmly believed in the old military maxim that the true character of a soldier can only be known under fire, in the very heat of battle. It is precisely in that critical situation that a man will be forever defined as either a hero or a coward—an occasion when the truly fortunate soldier finally perceives that death has no importance at all, if one fights for a great principle or ideal.

Ever since he had crossed the equator in response to López's invitation, he'd thought perhaps he might have forgotten a few of the things he had been taught at West Point about honor and patriotism. However, there remained a bitter certainty in his heart: if Valhalla really existed, that naval officer's noble soul deserved entry into those glorious evergreen pastures more than his own broken one did.

*Gettysburg... Riachuelo...* It was hard to imagine two more different battles, though each in its own way clearly represented a pivotal turning point in the tides of a war, actually determining the outcomes of subsequent battles which would ultimately shape the very destiny of the nations involved.

Notwithstanding the defeat of the Imperial Fleet, no one doubted that the greatest Brazilian hero at Riachuelo was Lieutenant Commander Carvalho. On the other hand, many believed that he was the hero at Gettysburg, albeit a defeated one. He had always adamantly contested this thesis.

Despite Carvalho's heroic deeds, Brazil lost the Battle of Riachuelo and, consequently, the very war.

It was a whole different story at Gettysburg. The Army of Northern Virginia was defeated and lost the war *because of him* and his personal failure to take that goddamn hill.

*Some defeats bear heroes; some don't.*



Estigarribia insisted on remaining squarely in front of the veteran's Imperial target. Still hidden behind an oak, he leaned his left shoulder against the rough tree trunk and held the walnut butt of the Spencer on his right shoulder. Squinting with his left eye, he took aim with the right.

If the past could be relived, he would gladly place his gunboat between the *Amazonas* and those killing rockets, so that he could receive to his own chest the shot that took Barroso's life. Perhaps Brazil would be a better place then.

His former captors seemed to view him as a kind of celebrity. Only later did he understand their philosophy. By appreciating their adversaries' deeds, the Paraguayans made their victories seem even more imposing than they might have been when viewed otherwise.

As soon as news of the Paraguayan victory at Riachuelo reached Corrientes, General Urquiza, president of that prosperous Argentine province, switched to López's side. He and his 10,000 cavalymen didn't hesitate to swear oaths of allegiance to their former enemy's cause. A month later the militias of the Entre-Rios Province and the Uruguayan par-



tisans of López also abandoned the Triple Alliance and converted to Paraguay's cause. Reinforced by the formidable power of the Corrientine cavalry, Robles' armies surrounded the Brazilian and Argentinean forces in Concórdia.

At the beginning of August, Estigarribia's troops took the Brazilian town of Uruguaiana. The battleships Paraguay had ordered from European shipyards had dropped anchor in the Paraná River during October and November. At about the same time, Robles' troops disembarked in Montevideo and captured the Uruguayan capital with no resistance. Toward the end of that fateful year, 100,000 rifles manufactured in Europe, and more than 500 modern, high-caliber steel cannons that Solano López had ordered from Prussian Krupp *Waffefabrik*, arrived at La Plata.

In the first few days of 1866, Estigarribia's combined Paraguayan and Uruguayan troops advanced victoriously overland into Rio Grande do Sul, repelling the badly-equipped forces the Empire had rushed to the front. Within a month, Robles had routed the Brazilian and Argentinean armies garrisoned in Concórdia and had captured General Osório, the Imperial Army's commander-in-chief. The official Paraguayan statement claimed that General Bartolomé Mitre, the president of Confederación Argentina, had fallen in combat. The defeat in Concórdia signaled the end of the Empire's struggle to halt the Paraguayan advance in foreign territory.

In March, the Paraguayans occupied Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul's provincial capital. In the same period, Negro soldiers captured by the Paraguayan Army swore allegiance to *la República* and to López and were enlisted into the Army's first Negro platoons. At the same time, the dictator's emissaries succeeded in signing commercial treaties in both Paris and Washington, providing the credit necessary to enable the Paraguayans to acquire those amazing American repeating carbines and order the speedy construction of modern battleships built in French shipyards.

According to his captors, the Empire had first begun to fear losing the war after Buenos Aires surrendered to General Robles' forces. As soon as the influence of that great metropolis over the *Confederación Argentina* had been neutralized, it became relatively easy for López to persuade the remaining provinces to sign an armistice with *la Gran República del Paraguay*—the first time they had referred to the amalgamation of their own nation with Uruguay and the two northernmost Argentine provinces in this way.

Ah! At last the infamous Estigarribia, the so-called *Butcher of Porto Alegre*, removed his top hat with a bow. As the ambassador took a step backward, the chest of the emperor came plainly into view.

He took aim at that chest full of medals, not in the least intimidated by the vast constellation of laurels now utterly devoid of meaning. He knew that the shiny medals on the traitor's chest would offer no armor against his Spencer's high-caliber bullets.

He suddenly heard the crackling sound of someone stepping on kindling wood. Startled, he instinctively jerked his head around to find himself facing a tall man wearing strange gray uniform with the insignias of a Paraguayan Brigadier General on the shoulders. The man was aiming a long rifle at him with a strange type of sighting system on the top of the barrel.

"Son, I wouldn't do that if I were you."

The older man spoke those words in poor Portuguese, with an odd, slow drawl. He did not see the slightest hesitation in the man's eyes. There was only a faint, almost imperceptible sign of amusement mixed with sorrow and weariness.

He recognized the *gringo* at once, though they had definitely never met before. How often he had come across drawings and political cartoons about the older man, both in Paraguayan and Brazilian newspapers? How could he not have remembered hearing about the Confederate general who, after being defeated in the American Civil War, had sold his own and his men's honor to López for gold? The man whose name was always linked to the horror and killings of the campaigns waged in Paraná and São Paulo.

The black soldiers whom this *gringo* had trained wore the red overcoats of the Paraguayan Army and killed and imprisoned whites, including civilians, at the gunpoint of those dreaded repeating carbines furnished by the North Americans.



What did the Paraguayans call him? Oh, yes...

“*Estaca... ¡El General Estaca!*”



Acknowledging his nickname, the former Confederate general pronounced in loud, clear English, “You’re dead right, son.”

Disgusted, Álvaro spit out: “This isn’t your business at all. The war is over. We’ve decided not to take any action against your boss’ life. If that’s what’s bothering you, you have nothing to worry about. Now you can go right back where you came from.”

“I know. The Emperor Pedro is your target this time, right?”

“Exactly. Pedro de Alcântara is *our* problem! It has nothing to do with your Paraguayan bosses.”

“I know. I know,” the Virginian smiled as he straightened the red scarf tied around his neck while keeping his rifle aimed straight at the Brazilian’s forehead. “But—stop talking! Stand up and drop the carbine, *very* slowly. All right. Now: *¡Venga!*”

As the Brazilian considered his chances, the Virginian stroked his mustache, then took his gun firmly with both hands. He gently pulled the trigger backward until he heard its click. The Virginian’s cold, resolute demeanor convinced the Brazilian, because he ended up propping his Spencer up against the trunk of the oak and stepping slightly away.

The mercenary glanced at the military carbine. “That’s a very fine weapon indeed. I would say it’s the most reliable one for a cavalryman. But, I don’t think it’s fit for killing people, especially at a distance like this.”

In response to the inquisitive expression on the Lieutenant’s face, the older man gestured with the barrel of his Sharp rifle, without taking his eyes off his target, and said, “This one would be much better!”

The certainty of disaster was stamped on the Brazilian’s face as he stared at the Virginian in silence.

“Now, lie down. *Boca abajo*. Slowly. That’s good. All right.”

The mercenary pressed the sole of his heavy boot onto the veteran’s back causing him to catch his breath. The older man felt oddly proud as he noticed that Carvalho did not make the slightest noise.

Estigarribia was moving in the direction of the Emperor again. The time was ripe. He raised his Sharp away from the nape of the Brazilian’s neck. It was fairly easy for him to make out his target among the crowd, given that his victim’s uniform was in sharp contrast to the clothes that the others were wearing. He took aim and fired swiftly.

The shot echoed throughout the terrain of the Quinta da Boa Vista.

The victim fell to the ground, mortally wounded. Ruby blood gushed from his chest, soaking and darkening the campaign uniform-- already red—that his subordinates had insisted he should wear to distinguish himself from his former antagonist’s showy attire.



He struggled under the *gringo*’s boot. But the terrible weight on his back forced him to remain motionless on the ground. He was only able to let out a muffled groan.

“What have you done, *Estaca?*”

“*He muerto al Presidente.*”



“What?”

“López is dead!”

The Brazilian heard an uproar in the distance. Orders being shouted nervously in harsh Spanish. Someone screaming out for a doctor. The hammering of the heels of Paraguayan boots on the flagstones of the palace square. Horses whinnying in response to their coachmen’s agitation. Loud voices trying to be heard above the din that reverberated far away.

He reflected on the heinous consequences of this act. For years, they had longed for the assassination of the self-aggrandizing “Napoleon of the Americas”. Many attempts on his life had been made, to no avail. In reprisal, the punishments meted out to the civilian population had been so severe that the Resistance was forced to abandon any further attempts on the dictator’s life.

For better or worse, López was dead now.

Ironically, he had been killed by the hand of one of his most faithful allies.

“But, why?”

“*Democracia...*” the mercenary murmured by way of explanation as he removed his boot from the Brazilian’s backbone.

While he was turning over, he heard the older man reloading his rifle. The Brazilian stared at the long barrel of the Sharp pointed at his forehead.

“What do you mean?”

“The Paraguayans long for democracy. After winning the war, López has become the greatest hero in South America.” The Virginian tried to explain, mixing his broken Portuguese with phrases in Spanish and English. “But López was also a tyrant... even worse than Napoleon. He was literally worshipped by his people. It would be impossible to remove him from office. *El presidente no quería elección libre...*”

“Are you saying that the Paraguayans paid you to kill López?”

“No, no. *La Gran República del Paraguay* is a great nation now. It needs to become a democracy in order to consolidate its military conquests. It would be impossible to establish a democracy with López in power, don’t you see?”

“Yes, of course.”

The Paraguayan plan finally became clear to him. He would be found holding the Spencer and the assassination would be ascribed to the Resistance. Paraguay would get rid of López, a perfect military leader to fight against the Triple Alliance, but a serious obstacle to the realization of the democratic ideals that had so long been defended by the more liberal segments of society, both in the Paraguayan Army and in society at large.

The murder of the greatest national hero would serve as an excellent pretext for the imposition of more severe laws of occupation. After all, had not a particularly repressive occupation force been the greatest desire of *el Presidente* himself since the signing of the armistice four years before?

He felt, more than he actually heard, a tramping of footsteps that made the ground shake. The boots of soldiers coming closer and closer. He watched as the Confederate glanced at him with an air of resignation, raised his arm, and made a sign.

“Do you understand everything now?”



He did not answer, but the intensity of the hatred in his eyes revealed a perfect understanding of the punishment that would be given to both him and his country.

“Absolutely nothing personal. You’re a soldier, like me. You understand, I had to carry out this mission.”

“You had just caused the ruin of the Empire, you son-of-a-bitch! Bloody mercenary.”

“No, no, no!” Expressions of indignation and surprise danced all over the older man’s face. “I was not paid to kill López. I was not paid at all!”

“What the hell do you mean?”

“I did it for my friends, the true Paraguayan patriots. I did it also to make amends for something that I should have done in my own country but could not. A failure I committed far from here, a long time ago—in another war. It’s a long story. There isn’t enough time to tell you now.”

At last, the Paraguayans arrived and surrounded the two men—a lieutenant, a sergeant, and five soldiers. The officer had a Colt revolver in a black holster attached to a leather belt. The sergeant and the soldiers, two of whom were Negroes, aimed their Winchesters at the Brazilian.

Without taking his eyes or his rifle off the Brazilian, the Confederate addressed the officer in a Spanish much more fluent than his Portuguese.

“I got here too late, *Teniente*. The criminal had already pulled the trigger. I heard the shot, but—I’m sorry.”

“*¡Asesino!*” The lieutenant howled beside himself with rage. “*¡Mataste al presidente!*”

Certain that he could count on his officer’s tacit approval, the sergeant kicked the Brazilian in the head, leaving him unconscious.



“No!” the Virginian screamed as he turned his Sharp in the direction of the Paraguayan sergeant who was just about to give the Brazilian a second kick in the head. “We cannot kill him in cold blood. The assassin must be tried in a court of law.”

The infuriated lieutenant stared at the tall *gringo* standing before him and tried to stem his anger. Then he finally noticed the insignias sewn onto the strange, pale gray uniform designating the Confederate a general in the Paraguayan Army. The officer swallowed hard and ordered the sergeant to refrain from any further violence. At last, he gave a perfect salute to the Virginian and asked:

“*¿Sus ordenes, mi general?*”

“Take this man away. We’re going to take him to the palace. Find the local police commissioner, and notify Governor Robles we have arrested the killer.”

“*¡Si, mi general!*”

Resting the Sharp over his shoulder, he walked a few steps behind the soldiers who were dragging the Brazilian away. Desolate but solicitous, the lieutenant tried to strike up a conversation.

“*Mi general, what will become of la República sin el Presidente?*”

The Confederate absently replied that this would be a matter to be decided by the Army and the Congress.

He provided the officer with no further details.



Obviously, he had pictured what was about to happen to Paraguay. The winds of change were about to blow, heralding difficult and tumultuous times to come, no doubt. *La Gran República del Paraguay* would either emerge from this transitional period as the most powerful genuine democracy south of the Rio Grande or it would succumb once and for all to a reign of political chaos, as seemed to be the destiny of so much of the South America.

He tried hard to hide his sorrow for Lieutenant Commander Carvalho from the Paraguayans. He was fully aware that the Brazilian hero would most certainly be convicted of high treason and executed by a firing squad within the next few days. Moreover, he had a strong suspicion that the veteran naval officer would soon become the greatest martyr of the Resistance and an eternal source of inspiration for new recruits. To some extent, he almost envied the Brazilian, because he knew he would never be remembered in such glorious terms, neither by his comrades-in-arms nor by posterity.

It seemed odd that the Resistance reviled the old emperor, a man who, in his own peculiar style, had once symbolized the yearnings of the Brazilian nation in the same way that Robert E. Lee had personified Virginia's longing for independence. Would the Brazilian infantrymen have been so willing to sacrifice their lives for Dom Pedro II as the young Virginian soldiers had when they followed Lee's orders to their deaths? He didn't think so.

Right or wrong, Lee had always remained at the front of his troops, rallying them on, celebrating their every victory and commiserating with them in every defeat. How could anyone have expected Brazilians to die for an emperor who was not only far removed from them, but also superbly indifferent to their plight on the battlefield?

Anyway, that was all history now. The future would be challenging for these South Americans. He hoped with all his heart that they would come out of this terrible struggle the better for it.

As for himself, he suddenly felt very old, much older than his almost 48 years. Old, yet six years younger than General Lee had been when the War of Southern Independence had broken out in the long-ago year of 1861.

Funny, he thought. For the first time since Gettysburg, he realized that he no longer harbored much hatred for Old Man Lee.

That realization, however, was not much of a consolation for him.

After having fought in two long wars and participated in the defeat of the Confederacy's dream of freedom, as well as in this epic victory against tyranny in South America, he felt exhausted and debilitated.

He knew that the time had come for him to return to his beloved Virginia.

He felt the time was right, even if it meant having to see again, with his own eyes, the devastating destruction wrought by the damn Yankees on the fields, towns, and cities of the only country he had ever called home.



## ABOUT THE STORY

Also known as *War of the Triple Alliance*, the *Paraguayan War* was the greatest military conflict ever fought in South America. It was fought from 1864 to 1870 between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance of the Argentine Confederation, the Empire of Brazil, and the Republic of Uruguay. It caused more deaths proportionally than any other war in modern history, and particularly devastated Paraguay, killing most of its male population.

There are several theories about the origins of the war. The traditional view emphasizes the expansionist ambitions of Paraguayan president Solano López toward the territories of his country's neighbors. Conversely, the Paraguayan traditional view attributes a preponderant role to the interests of the British Empire. The war began in late 1864 with combat operations between Brazil and Paraguay. From 1865 onwards, one can properly refer to the "War of the Triple Alliance".

The outcome of the war was the utter defeat of Paraguay. After the Triple Alliance defeated Paraguay in conventional warfare, the conflict turned into a protracted guerrilla-style resistance that devastated the Paraguayan military and civilian population. The guerrilla warfare lasted until López was killed on March 1, 1870. The war killed more than 60% of the population of Paraguay, making it proportionally the most destructive war in modern times.

In spite of the long duration of the Paraguayan War, in a sense its outcome was decided in its very first months, at the Battle of Riachuelo on June 11, 1865. In that naval engagement, the Brazilian fleet commanded by Admiral Barroso da Silva won, destroying the powerful Paraguayan navy and preventing the Paraguayans from permanently occupying Argentine territory. In the long run, this single victory virtually decided the outcome of the war in favor of the Triple Alliance, which from that point on controlled the waters of the Río de la Plata basin up to the entrance to Paraguay.

My novelette "Patriotic Crimes" proposes a Paraguayan victory in the War of the Triple Alliance. The point of divergence is the defeat of Imperial Navy at the Battle of Riachuelo. In our own history, the Paraguayan War began at the same time that the Union was finishing off the Confederacy at the end of the American Civil War. So, in this alternative timeline, it's possible that a hypothetical victorious López could rely on the aid of a few thousand Confederate veterans to help Paraguay invade and occupy the southern provinces of the Empire of Brazil.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro has had two novelettes published in the *Brazilian Asimov's*: "Mythic Aliens", a hard SF story, and "The Ethics of Treason". The latter was the first alternative history story in Brazilian and Portuguese science fiction.





INTERNATIONAL  
SPECULATIVE  
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*Non-fiction*



## PULP SCIFI

## UNDER GERMAN, RUSSIAN, JAPANESE AND SPANISH TOTALITARISM

Jess Nevins

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## PART ONE: GERMANY

Pulp science fiction—used in this case to mean both serial magazines and stories and films which emphasized action, adventure, and plot at the expense of character and aspirations to Art—has been popular in Germany from the beginning. While never the most popular genre—mysteries and action/adventure were #1 and #2—science fiction was consistently popular with the German pulp-reading public. From 1901, when *Aus dem Reiche der Phantasie*, the first German SF pulp, appeared, to 1926, when the situation for German pulp publishers changed permanently for the worse, pulp science fiction consistently appeared in Germany.

Even during World War One, when the German government attempted to aggressively regulate and censor the pulp press, pulp SF appeared, both as ongoing series and as recurring concepts and themes in non-SF pulps. Two of the more popular science fiction pulps were the anonymously-written *Hans Stark, Der Fliegerteufel* #1-30 (1914), about a German teenager who uses a high-tech submersible plane to fight evil, and the anonymously-written *Detektiv John Spurlock* #1-36 (1915), whose star fights an invasion of H.G. Wells' Martians and discovers the formula that turned Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde. But many of the most popular pulps in other genres had a significant amount of science fiction. The boys' adventure pulp *Horst Kraft der Pfadfinder* (150 issues, 1913-1916) had the titular teenaged explorer encounter lost races, hidden cities, and mad scientists, in addition to science fictional catastrophes like the flooding of the Brazilian pampas. C.L. Pankin's French Foreign Legion pulp *Erlebnisse Deutscher Fremdenlegionäre* (40 issues, 1914-1915) had its Legionnaire hero fight vampires, lost race Romans in the Sahara, and Muslim rebels with high-tech explosives in Algiers. Even the propaganda pulps used SF tropes; the anonymously-written *General Villa, der Mexikanische Rebellenführer* #1-12 (1914-1916), a fictionalization of the exploits of Pancho Villa (1878-1923), had Villa finding lost race Mayans and fighting witches and death-ray-wielding Japanese spies.

Nor did German films stint on the pulp fantastic. Popular filmmaker Joe May (1880-1954) had two popular series about detectives modeled on Sherlock Holmes and Nick Carter: the 50-film Stuart Webbs series and the 28-film Joe Deeb's series. Both Webbs and Deeb's had an array of James Bondian gadgets of their own design, from phials of oxygen to miniature acetylene torches to bullet-proof vests.

When the war ended, the German pulp industry bloomed, with seven new science fiction pulps appearing from 1919-1922 and fantastic tropes and concepts appearing in numerous other non-SF pulps. But as the economic situation in Germany worsened in the early 1920s, the number of pulps being published declined, both science fiction pulps and the overall number. Then, in 1926, an academic- and educator-led drive against *schund und schmutz* (trash and smut) literature — that is, pulps and other cheap, sensational literature — became the “Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor



Schund- und Schmutzschriften,” a law allowing for regulation and censorship of popular literature. This led to a two-year slump in the German pulps, and while the pulp publishers began to recover in 1928, increasing amounts of external pressure were placed on pulp publishers. This was not the first time the German government had tried to pressure pulp publishers. During the first three years of World War One the government wanted the pulps to be more patriotic and German-oriented and tried to force the pulp publishers to change the heroes—many of the pulp heroes weren’t German. The pulp publishers’ response was to change the titles of the pulps, so that they sounded more Germanic, but not the contents of the pulps. The German government, preoccupied with the war, didn’t notice that only the title of the pulps had changed and was satisfied with the pulp publishers’ actions.

But the German government during World War One had been that of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Nazis, who came to power in 1933, were not so easily fooled or so relatively mild in their demands. Almost immediately after taking power the Nazis began pressuring German publishers to make their magazines and heroes more properly German and more properly fascist. Most publishers ordered only minor changes to their pulps; the pulps were profitable during a time of economic hardship, so why change a good thing? And some publishers refused outright. Walther Kabel’s detective character Harald Harst, a prosecutor-turned-Holmesian consulting detective, was among the two or three most popular characters in the German pulps, the German equivalent to British detective icon Sexton Blake. Harst’s pulp, *Der Detektiv*, had been running since 1919, and had featured ample amounts of science fiction with its mysteries. Everything from mad scientist-bio-engineered giant foxes to air pirates to a “sand clock” made of cosmic crystals which, when held, visualized thoughts and allowed for clairvoyance appeared in *Der Detektiv*.

But the German government deemed Harst too “intellectual” and pressured Verlag Moderner Lektüre, the publisher of *Der Detektiv*, to change Harst. Kabel refused to do so, and Verlag Moderner Lektüre ordered Kabel to kill Harst, which Kabel abruptly did in *Der Detektiv* #372, the pulp’s final issue. The American pulp comparison would have been the American government ordering the death of The Shadow.

During this initial phase of the Nazi government, the degree to which the Nazi ideology manifested itself in the pulps was sometimes the product of the publishers and sometimes the product of the writers. But just as often pulp SF remained relatively free of fascist ideology. Interestingly, some of the most popular SF pulps were as free of fascist ideology as it was possible to be in Germany in 1933, 1934, and 1935. Three of the most popular pulps in Germany during these years were Elisabeth von Aspern’s *Tom Shark, der König der Detektivs* (#1-553, 1928-1939), about a Sexton Blake-like German Great Detective; Alfred Bienengraber’s *John Kling’s Erinnerungen* (#1-215, 1931-1939), about another Sexton Blake-like German Great Detective; and Wilhelm and Hans Reinhard’s *Rolf Torrings Abenteuer* (#1-446, 1930-1939), about a German Great White Hunter. All regularly featured fantastic tropes, themes, and plotlines: Tom Shark tangled with mad scientists and plague-weapon-wielding Yellow Perils; John Kling fought Satan, Madame Satan, and the Three Eyed Buddha, an atomic-powered city on whose walls appear the words “mene mene tekel,” a mad scientist whose robot goes on a killing rampage in Berlin, a Chinese Yellow Peril with an atomic-powered submarine, and a city of lost race Mayans; and Rolf Tarring is given a magic belt which grants him control over wild animals, discovers a hidden city whose inhabitants have a variety of psychic powers and whose servants are mummies they have reanimated. During the 1933-1935 period fascist ideology made no appearance in any of these pulps.

On the other hand, two of the most popular series during this time period were Edmund Kiss’s four-novel series (1930-1939) about the Ases, a group of Stone Age Aryans, and Paul Alfred Müller-Murnau’s *Sun Koh, Die Erbe von Atlantis* (#1-150, 1933-1936), and both were deeply saturated with fascist ideology. Kiss’ novels describe the rise of an Aryan Atlantis in pre-history, with “slant-eyed brown skins” serving the “blonds with narrow skulls” as slaves, the eventual destruction of Atlantis because of the appearance of a new moon, and the founding of Germany by the survivors of the Ases, with a final message about the fitness of fascist expansion. The hero of *Sun Koh*—a direct lift of Doc Savage—is the direct descendant of the “Mayan Kings” who is found, amnesiac, in the ruins of the last Mayan city and raised in secret to be the savior of the world. Sun Koh is the subject of many prophecies in the older cultures of the



world, and natives around the world worship him as the “son of the sun.” The series works toward the climax of Atlantis rising from its grave at the center of the hollow earth, and Sun Koh uses the science of alien astronauts, including Martian anti-gravity material and weapons made from lethal sound waves, to lead the Aryan race into the future.

And many of those SF pulps which were not overtly fascist still had fascist or pro-Nazi overtones. Hans Heuer’s *Herr Seltrup Braucht Geld* (1933), about a Dr. Mabuse-like crime lord seeking to corner the world market in gold, had anti-Semitism (Seltrup is Jewish) accompanying its science fictional aspects. Hans Mahner-Mons series of novels, which ran from 1927 to 1951, about a German private detective investigating séances, voodoo, and mad scientists, repeatedly emphasizes the superiority of Aryans to the “dirty” races. And Wilhelm and Hans Reinhard’s *Jörn Farrow’s U-Boot Abenteuer* (#1-357, 1932-1937), about the teenaged captain of a technologically-advanced submarine, had the requisite encounters with giant squid, Kraken, Yellow Perils, and alien slavers, as well as a meeting with Captain Mors and Rolf Tarring. But *Jörn Farrow* also repeated the stabbed-in-the-back myth beloved of German soldiers after World War One and emphasized the nobility of the German war effort—it was revealed in *Rolf Tarring* #92 that Jörn’s father is a U-boat captain named Hans Farrow. Following World War One, Hans Farrow retreated from the victorious Allied forces and hid, with his crew, in a South Sea atoll which Jules Verne’s Captain Nemo had formerly used.

In 1935 the government passed a strict preventative censorship law which required that all magazines be submitted to the government for approval before publication. The pulp publishers’ response was to try their trick of twenty years’ previous: change the names of the pulps but not the content of the pulps. The government’s censors were not fooled, and the government, angered, put much greater pressure on the publishers. And in 1936 the government proclaimed 1936 to be “the Year of the German Jungvolk,” with the aims that all of the German children and teenagers who were not already part of Hitler Youth would join it, and that all youth dissidence and all causes of youth dissidence would be eliminated.

The publishers grudgingly went along with the government’s demands. Some of the pulps became more overtly pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist, while others didn’t mention Jews, Communists, gays, Slavs, or other enemies of the State but did take a generally more reactionary position. In 1939, after the beginning of World War Two, a new law forced pulp publishers to make both the titles and the contents of their magazines more ideologically correct—heroes with English-sounding names were outlawed. The very popular *Alaska-Jim* (written by Willi Richard Sachse, Fritz Barthel, and Lisa Barthel Winkler), of *Alaska-Jim, Ein Held der Kanadischen Polizei* #1-227 (1935-1939), was a frontiersman in Canada in the 1880s. But *Alaska-Jim* was Canadian with a real name of “Jim Hoover,” which violated the new law, so Verlagshaus Freya, the publisher of *Alaska-Jim*, cancelled *Alaska-Jim* and replaced it with *Sturmvögel* (#1-82, 1939-1941), about Rolf Rauhaar, a.k.a. “Rolf Kraft,” a German adventuring in Canada and demonstrating the superiority of German immigrants and the inferiority of British and Canadians.

Not every German pulp with fantastic content turned fascist. Up until their end, in 1939, both *Tom Shark* and *John Kling* remained as free as realistically possible of fascist content. (The lack of pro-Nazi ideology is what got *Tom Shark* cancelled, in fact—the German government ordered its cancellation on those grounds). Otto Neitsch’s very popular series of Westerns (at least fifteen novels published during the 1930s), about German-American cowboy William Hay, was pure Western without any contemporary politics. And the anonymously-written *Die Abenteuer Des Billy Jenkins* (#1-264, 1934-1939), about the famous circus rider and animal trainer Billy Jenkins (1885-1954), told stories about Jenkins—a secret agent of the U.S. government posing as a wanted criminal and wandering cowboy and investigating haunted houses, decayed graveyards, zombies, and mad scientists using killer plagues to wipe out gold mines—without indulging in pro-Nazi propaganda.

But most German SF pulps were at least partially infected with fascist ideology. *Rolf Torrings Abenteuer* became increasingly racist (as well as increasingly fantastic) and repeatedly expressed the message, through Tarring, that Germany needed to colonize Africa for the good of the natives. Crime thrillers like Peter Matthews’ *Seespinne am Abend* (1938) made the gangster terrorizing the North Sea with his high-tech ship Jewish. And Westerns like Lisa Barthel Winkler’s *Bob Hunter auf Indianerpfaden* (#1-111, 1937-1939) included the usual lost race Aztecs and black Amazon



tribes, but also stressed the racial superiority of Hunter (a German-American), the racial inferiority of other ethnicities, and the moral necessity for Germany to spread its civilization.

Even more common during these years was for pulps to become outright mouthpieces for fascist ideology. Emblematic of them was the sequel to *Sun Koh*, Paul Alfred Müller-Murnau's *Jan Mayen, Der Herr der Atomkraft* (#1-120, 1936-1938). Mayen is the heir of Thule (Greenland), and after the requisite adventures (including a trip into the Hollow Earth via a tunnel in Greenland) and meeting with Sun Koh, Mayen discovers that his destiny is to lead the Aryan race into the future. Mayen and Koh use an orbital solar mirror to turn Greenland into arable land, and help raise Atlantis from the sea. To an even greater degree than *Sun Koh*, *Jan Mayen* advocates for eugenics and portrays non-whites as being cravenly welcoming of a strong, Aryan, fascist figure to lead them. Karl Richard's *Frank Fabers Abenteuer* (#1-52, 1939-1940), about a German-American adventurer who finds hidden cities in Mexico and occult warlords (known as the "White Devil") in Kurdistan, was deemed not ideologically pure enough and was replaced by *Fred Faber's Abenteuer* (#53-124, 1940-1941), about a German explorer and adventurer fighting high-tech Communists in Spain and Jewish-backed Ovambo rebels in German South-West Africa. *John Kling* was replaced by Paul Oskar Erttmann's *Hein Class* (#1-158, 1936-1937, 1939-1941), about a sailor in the German navy who finds adventure, often fantastic, in every port, and whose triumphs are often explained as being the result of his Aryan superiority. And *Tom Shark* was replaced by Elisabeth von Aspern's *Wolf Greif* (#1-61, 1939-1941), about a German member of the Rio de Janeiro police force. In that role Greif and his German reporter Watson, Peter Strunz, find monster sharks, lost race Inca, and Jewish serial killers.

Most of the German pulps were cancelled in the months following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941, but a few kept going until the end of the war, when Allied press laws forced the cancellation of the German pulps. Twenty-one pulps were published in Germany in 1940, 17 in 1941, 9 in 1942, 6 in 1943, 6 in 1944, and 4 in 1945. Of these, only six were hero pulps: *Bob Hill* (24 issues, 1940-1941), a western; *Frank Fabers Abenteuer*; *Fred Fabers Abenteuer*; *Hein Class*; *Wolf Greif*; *Sturmvögel*; and *Robert Ramm* (10 issues, 1939-1940), the government-ordered replacement for *Billy Jenkins*. None of these were published after the German invasion of the U.S.S.R. Those pulps which were published were adventure, general fiction, and war pulps, but even in those the fantastic occasionally appeared, although not with any regular frequency, and not after mid-1944.

## PART TWO: TSARIST RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION

Science fiction has a long tradition in Russian fiction. Fantastic voyages, utopias, and dystopias exist throughout 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature, with interplanetary voyages appearing as early as 1784, in Vassily Lyovshin's *Noveisheye Puteshestviye*. And Russia has a long tradition of popular literature, in *luboks* (prints made from woodcuts and engravings) and chapbooks in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and in newspapers and *kopeck* novels (dime novels) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But the twain of science fiction and popular literature never met. The most popular genres in Russian popular literature were bandits/crime, fairy tales, adventure, and war, while science fiction in Russian literature before the 20<sup>th</sup> century was serious fiction, written to be Art. Even works with elements which might have been pulp in other writers' hands, like Rakhmetov, the proto-Doc Savage of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *Chto Delat?* (1862-1863), were handled in a serious and humorless manner. The more popular form of the fantastic in Russian literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the occult, was similarly somber. Even those works of science fiction with overtly pulp trappings and characters, like Valerii Iakovlevich Briusov's "Respublika Yuzhnavo Kresta" (1905), go in decidedly un-pulpish directions. Briusov's utopian Republic of the Southern Cross, a republic of working men whose capital, Star City, is a domed city in the Antarctic, is stricken by a psychological disease which ends up killing most of the city's population and ruining the city. Briusov's *The Earth: A Tragedy of Future Times* (1905), with its extinction of a future techno-utopia, is similarly unblinkingly, unhumorously serious.



This division between popular literature and science fiction disappeared in 1907, when the first Russian translations of American, British, and European pulp fiction appeared. (“Pulp” is used here in the broadest sense). These translations were not of science fiction, but of Westerns (the American dime novel *Buffalo Bill Stories*) and of detective stories (the German dime novel *Nat Pinkerton, der König der Detectivs*), and they were enormously influential on Russian popular fiction.

The most immediate influence was in the creation of the detective genre in Russian pulps. There was no tradition in Russian pulp literature before 1907 of detective/mystery fiction, but thanks to these translations, and a new translation of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories—the previous translation, in 1903, had been badly flawed—detective fiction quickly became the most popular of all genres. Numerous unauthorized sequels of *Nat Pinkerton* and Sherlock Holmes stories, and copies of those characters, appeared in *kopeck* novels and detective serials. These stories were all solidly in the detective genre. However, a large number of these stories imitated *Nat Pinkerton* in featuring science fictional characters (mad scientists, Yellow Perils with man-killing-plants, lethal mesmerists, etc.) and science fictional tropes (death rays, rockets, etc.).

This intrusion of pulp science fiction into Russian pulp literature did not result in the creation of science fiction pulps, as it did in Europe. The nearest Russia came to a science fiction pulp was *Tref, the First Detective in Russia* #1-? (1910), a fictionalization and exaggeration of the exploits of Tref, a famous Moscow police dog. The fictional Tref has near-human intelligence and is known as “the four-legged Sherlock Holmes.” But the increase in pulp science fiction did result in the increasing appearance of pulp science fiction stories and novels and in the increase in science fiction in non-science fiction pulps.

From 1907 to 1913 F.K. Sologub published a series of novels under the title of “Tvorimaia Legenda” about Grigorii Trirodov, a Satanist magus and mad scientist. Trirodov experiments on dead children and raises them from the dead to serve as his assistants in a series of psychic experiments. When he is finally attacked by his neighbors he activates his anti-gravity machine and flies his entire estate to the Kingdom of the United Islands, where his lover, Queen Ortruda, lives.

Alexander Bogdanov wrote two novels, *Krasnaya Zvezda* (1908) and *Inzhener Menni* (1913), set in the future, on Mars. In the first, an engineer, Menni, helps bring about a communist utopia on Mars, and in the second he helps mine Venus.

Alexei Tolstoi is best known for his *Aelita* and *Giperboloid Inzhenera Garina* (see below), but in 1910 he published the serial novel “The Tsars of the World” in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Kopeika*. The novel is about a Russian mad scientist who uses his knowledge of electricity to invent a ray which can explode mines and destroy enemy fortresses from long distances away. He attempts to use his device to conquer the world but ultimately fails.

And the anonymously-written serial novel *Russian Warrior* (1909) features a Russian strongman who has achieved superhuman strength and athletic ability by following the physical culture theories of the internationally famous Prussian strongman Eugen Sandow (1867-1925). The strongman tours Europe defeating all challengers.

As mentioned, pulp science fiction also began appearing in non-science fiction pulp literature. At this time one of the most popular genres with the Russian reading public was the bandit genre. One of the most popular fictional bandits was Anton Krechet, who appeared in over 800 stories in *Kopeika* from 1909 to 1916. Krechet is a cultured Russian aristocrat who leads a gang of bandits from his hideaway, the Wolf’s Lair, and adventures across Western Europe and the entire Russian empire and even, during the Russo-Japanese War, behind enemy lines. In one later story Krechet encounters a Robur-like mad scientist whom Krechet aids in developing his maneuverable airship. Similarly, another popular genre was the master criminal genre, heavily influenced by the Fantômas novels (1911-1963) of Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain. Most Fantômas-style master criminal pulps at least flirted with the fantastic, but the 1914 film *The Phantom*, about a Fantômas-style crimelord in Moscow, openly embraced it with several high-tech deathtraps.

This first wave of pulp SF ended with the beginning of the first world war—sales had actually begun to fall in 1910. The second wave began in the early 1920s. In 1918, following the Revolution, the Soviet government issued a decree sus-



pending the publication of all serialized literature, and even labeled genre fiction as bourgeois spectacle. But during the "New Economic Period" (1921-1928), after the Revolution was over and when the West's attempt to overthrow the nascent Soviet Union had failed, the Russian people began buying and reading adventure novels of all genres. Many Western writers were popular, from Jack London to Joseph Conrad, in large part because Russian novels had traditionally been slow-moving, with an emphasis on a character's psychology and motivation, and Western novels stressed action, adventure, motion and thrills. Classic adventure novels were popular, but most popular of all were the cheap, disposable, and above all regularly-published pulps, including those featuring Nick Carter, Nat Pinkerton, and the endless Sherlock Holmes knock-offs.

The Soviet government immediately began pressuring writers and publishers to make the characters more ideologically correct. In a few cases this led to a backlash: Yevgeni Zamyatin (1884-1937) was critical of aspects of the Revolution almost from the start, but it is at least arguable that his glum dystopia *We* (1921), set in a completely regimented and controlled city-state—sexual partners are assigned by the state and even the number of jaw motions used to chew food is regulated by state order—would have been less morose and despairing of the future without government meddling. But generally the influence of the government is least slightly positive, so that the Russian Nat Pinkertons—unlike his American strike-breaking counterpart—are openly sympathetic to the workers, and the Russian Sherlock Holmeses are sardonically critical of capitalism's excesses.

In 1923, the Soviet government began a more organized campaign for the exploitation of the popularity of the adventure genre and of Nat Pinkerton in particular for ideological and propagandistic purposes. This campaign was the *krasnyi Pinkertonitscha*, or "Red Pinkertonism" movement, which made use of the classic tropes of adventure and detective fiction, but slaved them to the theme of international class struggle and the triumph of Revolution. As the most popular genre detective fiction was the most heavily influenced, and the Russian Nat Pinkertons became overt communists. But the burgeoning genre of science fiction was also influenced, and over the next decade a large amount of communist pulp SF appeared. The archetypal character of both 1920s Soviet pulp SF and of the *krasnyi Pinkertonitscha* in general is Marietta Shaginian's Mike Thingsmaster, who appeared in three novels (1923-1925) as well as a German pulp in 1924 and a film serial in 1926. Mike Thingsmaster is an American woodworker who leads Mess-Mend, a secret international alliance of workers who are dedicated to cleaning up the mess left by capitalism and fascism. Thingsmaster and Mess-Mend fight international conspiracies of capitalist oppressors and, despite the capitalists' possession of technologically-advanced planes and bombs, ultimately triumph and ensure the survival of both the Soviet government and the worldwide communist movement.

However, most of the science fiction of this time had little to do with *krasnyi Pinkertonitscha*. Alexei Tolstoy wrote *Aelita* (1922, as a film 1924) and *The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin* (1926). *Aelita* is a planetary romance in which Los, a Soviet scientist and inventor, travels to Mars and, with the help of a Red Army officer, overthrows the fascist civilization there and institutes a Communist paradise. (The film version of *Aelita* was parodied in a 1924 cartoon *Interplanetary Revolution*, which depicts what happens when a group of capitalist and national socialist "ghouls," who literally drink the blood of the workers, encounter the communist Martians). *Engineer Garin* is about the titular American engineer who invents a "hyperboloid," a laser-like heat ray, and uses it to try to conquer the world. He briefly succeeds in ruling the decadent, capitalist United States before he is toppled thanks to the efforts of a sexy adventuress and a poor-but-honest Russian policeman.

Ilya Ehrenburg's *D.E. Trust: A History of the Demise of Europe* (1923) describes how Jens Boot, bastard son of a Dutch peasant and a European prince, forms the D.E. Trust, dedicated to the complete destruction of the decadent, avaricious, and materialistic societies of Europe. In 1940, after thirteen years of effort, financed by American millionaires and using germ warfare viruses and poison gas, Boot and the D.E. Trust succeed in smashing every European country. Valentin Katayev's *Erendorf Island* (1924) describes an attempt by Matapal, the world's richest man, to create the perfect capitalist paradise after what is predicted to be a world-destroying series of earthquakes and tidal waves. Vsevolod Pudovkin and Lev Kuleshov's film *Death Ray* (1925) has a death ray created by a downtrodden factory worker sufferer under an oppressive capitalist dictatorship. Aleksandr Beliayev's *The Struggle in Space* (1928) has a timeslipped Russian from the modern era witnessing a future conflict between the technological utopia



of the Pan-European and Pan-Asiatic Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the vile, corrupt capitalist United States. In the war death rays, energy shields, cellular telephones, powered winged jet packs, and remote-controlled tanks are all used. Beliyev's *Lord of the World* (1929) describes the duel between a Soviet engineer with mental powers and his wicked German opposite. And Yevgeni Zamyatin's *The African Guest* (1929-1930) is about the slow conversion, through careful indoctrination, of an African ape to Soviet communism.

But nearly as much pulp SF that appeared in the Soviet Union during these years was only lightly communist, despite the efforts of the government, and much of it, with few if any alterations, could easily have appeared in the west. Aleksandr Beliyev (1884-1942) was one of the Soviet Union's leading writers of science fiction during this era, and much of what he produced was pulp. *Professor Dowell's Head* (1925) is about a mad scientist who turns his colleague into a Brain-in-a-Jar. *The Man Who Does Not Sleep* (1926?) and *Flying Carpet* (1927?) describe the efforts of wacky, unlucky inventor Professor Wagner to cure people of the need for sleep (German capitalists steal his cure and inflict it on their workers) and to create artificial means for men to leap as far and high, proportionally, as fleas can (Wagner ends up jumping into the stratosphere). *Hoity-Toity* (1927?) is about the shenanigans which ensue when a human's brain is transplanted into an elephant's body. And *The Amphibious Man* (1928) is about an Argentine boy who has sharks' gills implanted into his body and grows up as an amphibian.

Venjamin Kaverin (1902-1989) was better known as a literary writer, but wrote *Engineer Shvartz* (1923), about the imminent invasion of the Soviet Union by the two-dimensional Country of Geometrists, and *Cask* (1924), about the discovery that London and its suburbs are actually on the inside of a giant wine cask which is rolling along an extra-dimensional surface. Mikhail Bulgakov, better known as the author of *The Master and Margarita*, wrote *Fatal Eggs* (1924), a *kaiju* novel *avant-la-lettre* about an inventor whose attempt to grow giant chickens to feed the masses creates snakes, crocodiles, and ostriches, which rampage across the countryside outside of Smolensk. Bulgakov also wrote *Heart of a Dog* (1925), in which a scientist surgically implants the testicles and pituitary gland of a dead criminal onto Sharik, a stray dog, in an attempt to create a "psychically lofty personality." The dog becomes a lewd, foul-mouthed, alcoholic half-man half-canine who terrorizes the scientist and achieves great success in Soviet society. Vladimir Obruchev wrote *Plutonia* (1924), about a trip into the Hollow Earth, and the film *Wings of a Serf* (1926) describes what happens when a serf in late 16<sup>th</sup> century Russia invents a flying machine.

The *krasnyi Pinkertonitscha* movement continued through the 1920s into 1932. Its authors faced increasing criticism from hardline literary critics for their "bourgeois" elements, from the formulaic characters to the supposed ideological incompatibility of Soviet collectivist values with individualistic protagonists. But the Soviet government did not put an end to the *krasnyi Pinkertonitscha* until 1932, when the government decreed that Soviet literature and film must be explicitly collectivist and Communist, and literature bearing foreign influence, such as genre fiction, was fundamentally suspect. The production of pulp SF, like pulp detective fiction, began to dwindle, although it did not disappear until the start of World War Two. As late as 1938 Aleksandr Beliyev wrote "Black Light," about an eye transplant which gives its recipient the ability to see electrical currents, telegraph signals, and even the human nervous system. In 1935 Georgi Grebner made the film *The Loss of Death*, about an American inventor who invents a set of robots who are very strong, inexhaustible, and lack the ability to feel emotions. Wicked capitalists soon take the robots away and bad things follow.

But the archetypal Russian pulp SF took place in the 1930s, during the years when it was being phased out. Just as the archetypal Gothic, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, was published in 1820, near the end of the Gothic's era, so did Ilya Selvinsky write the ultimate Russian pulp SF in 1933. Selvinsky's play *Pao-Pao* is about a German scientist who transplants a human brain into the head of an orangutan. The result is Pao-Pao, who the scientist teaches to become a proper communist. He succeeds, and Pao-Pao tries to help his primate brethren in the Moscow Zoo, but he is rejected by a gorilla, and when a Soviet scientist tries to rescue Pao-Pao the scientist is killed. The play ends with Pao-Pao holding up the body of the Soviet scientist, turning to the audience, and saying, "Now do you understand the meaning of life?"



## PART THREE: JAPAN

Japan, like Germany and Russia, has a long tradition of science fiction literature. And as in Germany and Russia, pulp science fiction flourished under Japan's totalitarian governments during the 20th century.

Japan's pulp science fiction must be differentiated from the more serious variety. (I'm using "pulp" here in the broadest sense; Japan had no pulp magazines). Japan's proto-science fiction, such as the *mirai-ki* ("chronicles of the future"), was usually written with due seriousness, and the Japanese science fiction which appeared following the 1865 translation of Pieter Hartig's *Anno 2065*, was, if not Art, than sober, humorless futurological extrapolation.

It wasn't until the 1878 translation of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* that pulp science fiction as we now think of it, emphasizing action and adventure over characterization and narrative style, began to appear in Japan. Verne was influential on Japanese science fiction writers, who may well have seen Vernean science fiction as a lighter and more enjoyable option to write and to read than the more mainstream futurological science fiction novels. (A similar choice faced Japanese fiction writers of the era: Art or genre stories, such as detective and samurai adventure?).

Yano Ryūkei's *Ukishiro Monogatari* (1890) may be the first work of pulp Japanese science fiction. Yano took the basics of *20,000 Leagues* and replaced the misanthropic, Romantic Captain Nemo with a stalwart Japanese patriot. Aided by a crew of Japanese naval ensigns, the submarine captain fights against and destroys Caucasian pirates of no specific nationality. But the first important work of Japanese pulp SF was Shunro Oshikawa's six "Captain Sakuragi" novels (1900-1907). In the series, Captain Sakuragi, a naval officer, grows disgusted with the Japanese government's inability to do anything to resist the imperialism of Western governments in Asia and Japan. Sakuragi builds himself the *Denkotei*, an "undersea battleship" armed with futuristic weapons, including torpedoes and high explosive shells, and begins fighting for Japan on the high seas, first against white pirates and in later novels against the Russian, British, and French fleets.

Like Yano, Shunro kept the trappings of *20,000 Leagues* and remade Captain Nemo into a patriotic Japanese submariner. But Shunro had timing on his side; when he wrote the Sakuragi novels, Japan's rivalry with Russia was hitting its peak, leading to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 and its aftermath, when Japan was denied the respect it felt was its due from Western countries. Shunro's combination of Vernean concepts, pulp adventure, and xenophobic patriotism struck a chord with the reading public, and made the novels an archetypal form of pulp science fiction for Japanese writers. Japanese pulp writers emulated Shunro throughout the pre-WW2 period, with Nobumasa Ikeda's "Submarine Silver Tiger" (1938), and its Sakuragi-esque pilot and his flying submarine and American foes, being a late example of Shunro-esque pulp fiction.

The Japanese drive toward modernization during the Meiji Period (1868-1912), a drive which affected many levels of society, sprang from Japan's desire to become industrial and military equals with the powers of the West. Behind this desire stood a feeling of insecurity toward the West and a belief that to imitate was to master. One of the ways in which this belief manifested itself was in the rush to imitate Western forms of popular culture. Detective stories, especially after 1920, were popular with writers, and science fiction repeatedly appeared in these stories. Sano Shoichi's stories about the Sherlock Holmeisan Homura Soroku (1937-1938) were private detective stories in the American mode, but filled with science fictional concepts: an Evil Surgeon who removes his own limbs and magnetically attaches more powerful synthetic limbs to his torso; an engineer who kills using a form of liquid hydrogen; and a high-tech-wielding mad scientist.

As a concept the mad scientist did not exist in Japanese popular culture before the Meiji Period. (A related concept, the evil vivisectioning surgeon, did, however). But during and after the Meiji Period the mad scientist was taken up by a number of creators and put to use in various stories. In one *kamishibai* (stories for children told by wandering performers) of the early 1930s, a Japanese doctor transplants the heart of a gorilla into a wounded man, resulting in the



transplant recipient transforming into a monster who drinks the blood of animals and humans and goes on a rampage clad only in a peasant's straw winter coat. And in Yumeno Kyusaku's novel *Dogura Magura* (1935) a mad scientist and his partner decide to prove their theory of "cell memory"—that the feelings and memories of ancestors are physically transmitted to descendants—by impregnating a woman and then triggering a genetically-based rage in the woman's son.

Some Japanese imitation of Western popular fiction was more overt. Murayama Kaita's "Maenden" (1915) is a replay of Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," this time featuring a super-powered monkey who re-enacts the Rue Morgue murders in contemporary Tokyo. And Daijo Aoyama's 1938 *Edo ni Arawareta Kingu Kongu*, a remake of *King Kong*, features King Kong swimming to Edo, the seat of the Japanese government during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and going on a rampage there, similar to Kong's in New York, but also featuring an enormous ant lion and a giant, deadly bee.

Japanese feelings about the West led to a large amount of political science fiction. During the 1910s and 1920s a pan-Asian sentiment grew in Japan; Japan saw itself as the most advanced Asian nation and therefore the nation best placed to unite all Asian countries, and to become their leader. (This sentiment would later become explicitly stated in the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere). At least initially, many Japanese held this notion idealistically and honestly, as an anti-colonialist belief rather than (as it later became) as a pretext for Japan to dominate Asia for financial and military gain. One example of this pan-Asian sentiment appeared in Shunro Oshikawa's serial "Tessha Okoku" (1910). In the serial a group of Japanese travel to a secluded island somewhere in the South Pacific and create a technologically advanced nation, the "Iron Car Kingdom." From there the Patriots unite the Asian peoples of the world and fight against their true enemy, "the false civilization of the West."

But this loyalty to rest of Asia ended in 1931 with the Japanese invasion of the Chinese region of Manchuria. What replaced the loyalty to Asia was the view that other Asians were not oppressed victims of western colonialism, but barbarians and criminals deserving of conquest. Shimada Keizo's comic strip "Dankichi" (1933) is about a young Japanese boy who falls asleep while fishing and drifts out to sea. When he wakes up his boat has reached the island of Banjinto ("Savage Island"), whose inhabitants are cannibals. In an overt allegory about Japanese manifest destiny and the Yellow Man's Burden, Dankichi is forced to civilize the natives of Banjinto before he can begin defending them against greedy, evil, technology-wielding Europeans.

Rising tension with the West, particularly the United States and Great Britain, led to the appearance of a recurring character type, the White Peril. A counterpart to the Yellow Peril of Western popular culture, the White Peril consists of Westerners whose racist imperialism is not only oppressing Japan and other Asian countries, but is preventing Japan from expanding into Asia in the ways that the Western powers did in China. Unlike the Yellow Peril stories, White Peril stories rarely have memorable individual White Peril characters; there is no Japanese version of Dr. Fu Manchu. White Perils are usually stock characters understood to be representative of the United States, Great Britain, and the West. The first major White Perils appeared in Shunro's Captain Sakuragi novels and following them became commonplace. The 1928 film *Chikyu wa Mawaru*, set in the near future, describes a Future War between Japan and a White Peril Western country, beginning with a Pearl Harbor-like attack on Osaka. Hirata Shinsaku's 1936 serial "Sin Senkan Takachiho" has a similar sneak attack, when a Japanese naval expedition to the Arctic in search of a secret route into the Atlantic is suddenly attacked and sunk by the forces of the countries "A" and "B," implicitly America and Britain. (The survivors of the attack are saved by a flying battleship). And Yamanaka Minetaro's 1939 film *The Invisible Airplane*, set in the near future, depicts a White Peril America controlled by an evil Jewish cabal which attempts to colonize Japan before the protagonist inventor creates the titular airplane and defeats them.

Not all Japanese political pulp science fiction was supportive of Japan's militarism and imperialism. Hayashi Takashi's serial "Midori no Nisshoki" (1939-1940) describes how a pair of Japanese boys discover the Land of the Green Rising Sun, a techno-utopia located under the deserts of Central Asia. The Land was founded by a Japanese man who wanted to succeed where Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria, failed, and to embody Japan's morals but live up to the potential that Japan has squandered. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Land still view Japan as their moral compass, and when Japan launches the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 the Land commits suicide in disapproval.



The Japanese insecurity about the West also manifested itself in pulp science fiction stories that were direct responses to current events. The Washington Naval Conference of 1921 led to the Washington Naval Treaty, which limited the number and size of the capital ships, especially battleships, that the major powers (including Japan) could build. The fact that Japan's limit was so much less than the United States' and Great Britain's was a source of great discontent and anger in Japan. Miyazaki Ichiu wrote "Nichibei" (1922-1923) as a response. In the serial Japan flouts the Naval Treaty and launches eight new super-battleships, which leads to a naval war with the United States. The serial's protagonists, retired Admiral Nango and his grandson Takuki, go to a secret Japanese base on a hidden island in the Indian Ocean and lead a fleet of technologically advanced super-submarines against the American forces.

During the 1920s and 1930s large numbers of Japanese emigrated to South American countries, including Brazil, to become farmers and businessmen. The vast majority of these men and women were law-abiding, but they were often met with local hostility, exacerbated when the Japanese government took actions like trying to form actual Japanese colonies in the host countries or trying to become primary debt-holders for the host countries' merchant marines. This friction between Japanese immigrants and natives played out in the *kamishibai Cry of the Andes* (1933), in which an honest Japanese farmer moves to the Chilean Andes but becomes the target of the Bat, the masked leader of a ring of horse-riding bandits. Various Western adventures ensue, but a Lost Inca city is also discovered.

The Japanese invaded the Chinese province of Manchuria and conquered it in 1931, turning it into the puppet state of "Manchukuo." But although war was not formally declared between Japan and China, conflict between Chinese guerrilla forces and the Japanese occupiers continued for years, and by 1934 the Japanese presence in Manchukuo was seen as part of an ongoing conflict with China, rather than a settled war. That year Gajo Sakamoto wrote and drew the comic strip "Tanku Tankuro," about a cannonball-shaped steel robot who can turn into a plane or a tank. He is adopted by the Japanese Army and put to use fighting the Chinese guerrillas.

Not all Japanese pulp science fiction was so heavily affected by external influences. Kuze Juran's "Chitei Jukoku" (1939) is about Dr. Yaroslavsky, a Russian scientist who is sent by the Soviet Academy of Sciences to investigate whether a natural tunnel underneath Mt. Lobatka in Siberia reaches to Sakhalin, where it could be used for an attack on Japan. Yaroslavsky and the rest of his group encounter gigantic dinosaurs and other Vernean creatures. And in "Ken-chan Banzai," a *kamishibai* performed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a sentient tuberculosis bacillus deliberately targets the internal organs of Ken-chan, a young Japanese boy.

And some Japanese pulp science fiction came out of traditional Japanese popular culture forms. While there were no pre-1945 Japanese plays with science fictional content (that I'm aware of, at least), there was a substantial amount of published fiction combining science fiction with traditional Japanese tropes like the costumed samurai, the man or woman with unusual abilities, and the magic child.

In Japan, period dramas are commonly called "jidaigeki." Modern *jidaigeki* are commonly set during the Edo period (1603-1868), while 19<sup>th</sup> century *jidaigeki* were set in previous eras. A common character type in *jidaigeki* was the costumed vigilante samurai or ninja. (This character type appeared in Japanese popular culture long before the costumed vigilante appeared in Western popular culture). One typical combination of the *jidaigeki* with science fiction was in the Sarutobi Sasuke novels of the 1910s. In Japanese folklore Sasuke is one of the "Ten Heroes of Sanada," the ten ninja bodyguards who supposedly assisted the samurai Sanada Yukimura (1567-1615) during the Sengoku period. In the anonymously-written novels, which ran from 1911 to 1925, Sarutobi Sasuke was raised by a band of monkeys and has monkey-like abilities, from strength to jumping ability. Other characters in the Sasuke novels have similar superhuman abilities.

Men and women with unusual abilities also appear regularly in Japanese culture. Often these powers derive from Buddhist meditation, but sometimes there are more science fictional causes. Takeo Nagamatsu's Ogon Batto appeared in *kamishibai*, pulps, film, and anime from 1930 to 1969. Batto ("Golden Bat") is a superhuman warrior from Atlantis put into suspended animation in the year 8000 BCE and awakened from his Egyptian pyramid tomb by a Japanese archaeologist. Among others, Batto fights a cyborg crime lord, Batto's evil Atlantean opposite, and Nazo, the "Emperor of the Universe." A similar *kamishibai* character was the Prince of Gamma, who appeared in street



theater throughout the 1930s. The Prince of Gamma is an alien superhero prince who lives in Tokyo in the guise of a street urchin and uses his superhuman powers to fight threats to Tokyo and Japan, from laser-eyed brain-shaped aliens to White Perils who use *Nautilus*-inspired crab-shaped submarines to sink Japanese shipping.

Though less common than superheroes, the magic child is a somewhat common Japanese character type. In “Madojiden,” a 1916 series written by Murayama Kaita, two Japanese boys with a variety of psychic powers fight a prolonged duel in Tokyo, both on the ground and in the air. (Any resemblance to *Akira* is in all likelihood coincidental).

The advent of the war with the United States put an end to published science fiction, although the *kamishibai* were still performed and science fiction did continue to appear, but in film, and colored by the usual sorts of wartime preoccupations. In 1942 Tsutomu Kitamura directed the film *Daigoretsu no Kyofu*, about a young Japanese scientist who discovers the secret to a “soundless airplane engine,” only to be targeted by the Chinese spy and *femme fatale* Agent YZ7 and the White Peril British spy Pastor Scott. Heroic agents of the *Kempeitai* eventually discover the spies’ plans and kill them. Similar films were made throughout the war, even as late as 1945. (A similar phenomenon took place in Germany. In 1944, as Germany was losing the war everywhere, six pulp titles were published, and four were published in 1945). In 1945, even as American bombs were falling on Tokyo, Mikio Naruse directed the film *Shori no Hi Made*. In the film a patriotic Japanese scientist and inventor discovers a way to shore up morale in the military: he invents an “entertainment bomb” which when dropped on an island in the South Pacific causes various comedy routines to break out among the soldiers and sailors who were caught in the explosion.

#### PART FOUR: SPAIN, BEFORE AND DURING TOTALITARIANISM

Like most European countries Spain has a tradition of science fiction and proto-science fiction which predates the genre’s 20<sup>th</sup> century establishment. A brief glance at [Spain’s entry](#) in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* shows that science fiction in Spain before 1900 was not unknown, even if Spain did not produce a Verne or a Wells.

But a second glance at the *Encyclopedia’s* entry on Spain shows that there is a gap in its coverage, between the turn of the century and the 1950s. This reflects the common view that science fiction was not published in Spain before the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 and especially not under Franco’s rule. However, there was Spanish science fiction published between 1900 and 1945, what can be called the pulp era, and if those works of science fiction were not as numerous in other European countries, it was still a genre that attracted a number of writers over a period of decades.

In the United States science fiction matured during the pulp era. The same cannot be said of that Spanish science fiction, which as mentioned in the *Encyclopedia* entry did not develop into a modern literary genre until the 1950s and 1960s. Most Spanish science fiction published during this era had the pulp sensibility, of action and adventure being more important than characterization and narrative style. But the genre did develop in certain ways.

It might be thought that a line of demarcation for Spanish pulp science fiction, as with so much else in modern Spanish history, would be the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)—that the pulp sci-fi published during the Spanish Republic (1931-1936) would be significantly different from that published under the fascist regime of Gen. Franco (1936-1939). But the dividing line is actually earlier, in 1929. (Why 1929 and not the Civil War is a question that I’ll leave for Spanish historians to answer).

As a general rule, the science fiction of the pre-1929 years is more seriously intended; the author’s intent was to produce intelligently-written fiction which aspired to more than providing entertainment to the audience, if not Art itself. Salvador de Madariaga’s *La Jirafa Sagrada* (1925) is set on the African island of Ebony in the 70<sup>th</sup> century, and examines a matriarchal African society existing centuries after Europe has sunk into the sea and the white race has been exterminated. De Madariaga’s intent is satirical, focused upon modern Spanish culture, politics, and academic scholarship. A. Ibanex Barranquero’s *Jerusalen y Babilonia* (1927), a utopia, is set in a distant future when sunspots have ren-



dered much of the Earth uninhabitable and the Spanish have created Jerusalem, a Catholic Republic utopia. And Jesus R. Coloma's *Entre dos Continentes* (1928), set in the future, depicts Spain and Portugal as having formed into the United States of Iberia and digging a tunnel beneath the Strait of Gibraltar, only to be confronted by the International Zionist Conspiracy, which foments a holy war between the Muslims of North Africa and the Christians of the U.S.I. Barranquero's intent is to warn the Spanish reader about the dangers of Jews and Muslims—reprehensible to modern sensibilities, but a seriously intended political message on Barranquero's part.

However, from 1929 on, serious science fiction dwindled, and the pulp sensibility took hold. Salvador Mestres' "Guerra en la Estratosfera" (1937), a sober adaptation in comic strip form of H.G. Wells' *Shape of Things to Come* (1933), is a rare exception. More typical of the science fiction of this era is Jesus de Aragon's *Los Piratas del Aire* (1929), in which Abdahalla-Fan, a Yellow Peril, threatens all of India from his dragon-shaped airship. With the help of his gorilla co-pilot, Abdahalla-Fan kidnaps an Englishwoman, forcing a heroic English pilot to pursue him to his Mt. Everest base.

Not coincidentally, prose science fiction became rare in Spain after 1929. What replaced it was comic strips, comic books, and pulps. The Spanish comic book industry essentially began in 1933, and the high points for the Spanish pulp industry were 1930-1934 and 1941-1946. Science fiction was a popular genre in both media.

The post-1929 era also saw the rise of professional science fiction writers. Before 1929 there were some Spanish writers who published science fiction over long periods, most notably Jose de Elola, who under the pseudonym of "Colonel Ignotus" published seventeen novels, from 1918 to 1935, about Mari Pepa, an inventor of high technology in Seville in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, and who uses her creations to visit the planets of the solar system and have adventures among the aliens on those planets. But the establishment of the pulp and comic book industries allowed writers and writer/artists to concentrate largely or entirely on science fiction as a genre. Comic book writer Jose Canellas Casals spent years writing primarily science fiction comics, from *Los Vampires del Aire* (1933-1934), about a gang of criminals using flying suit technology, to "Zimbra y los Dragones Humanos" (1938), about a scientist revived from suspended animation to fight an alien race of Dragon Men, to *Mario del Mar* (1941-1942), about a Spanish inventor who creates a technologically advanced submarine and uses it for exploration and adventure. Writer/artist Francisco Darnis had a similar career, from Lost Race adventures ("Las Hazanas de Nick, Pecho de Hierro," 1933-1936?, "En Busca de un Mundo Perdido," 1934-?) to Planetary Romances ("Tom el Dominador del Universo," 1934-1935) to straight science fiction ("El Vampire Polar," 1940-1941, which involves a pair of Spanish explorers who use a *Nautilus*-like submarine to fight an alien vampire who has a high-tech base at the North Pole). And Jose Jordan Jover was able to make a long career of the comic "Roberto Alcazar y Pedrin" (1940-1976), about Lost Race Queens, Yellow Perils, gorilla assassins, and King Kong clones.

One thing that did not significantly change after 1929 was the degree to which Spanish creators were influenced by and responded to the creators and works of other countries. Popular culture is rarely created in a vacuum, and the pulps of the European countries reflect a web of influences, from the United States, Great Britain, and the various European countries themselves. But—not to put too fine a point on it—Spain is exceptional in the degree to which its science fiction was influenced by, rather than influenced, the creators and works of other countries. Even during the Franco years, when Spain deliberately isolated itself from Europe both culturally and economically, Spanish science fiction was imitative rather than original.

This is not to say that these imitations didn't have serious aspirations; Manuel Bedoya's *El Hijo del Dr. Wolffan* (1917), about the Frankenstein-like Dr. Wolffan and his attempt to create an artificial man, tries to go beyond Shelley in its condemnation of scientific hubris and modern science, as well as make a political statement about Spain's government. But more often, especially after 1929, the imitations were pure pulp, intended only to entertain.

Some of the imitations were in response to specific trends in other countries. As seen in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction's* [entry on Spain](#), Spanish authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote tales of space travel and Planetary Romances, but both became far more popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after Wells and Verne and after the many Planetary Romance dime novels and pulps of the other European countries. Child protagonists became common in Spanish pulp SF in



the 1930s, long after they had become popular in the pulps of other European countries. Children-going-into-space-and-meeting-aliens pulps were popular in France, so writer Marc Farell wrote the pulp *Un Viaje al Planeta Marte* #1-24 (1933-1934), about two Spanish boys who take a rocket to Mars in pursuit of the Three Tigers Gang, only to discover that Mars is inhabited by a variety of species. And occult detectives were popular across Europe, especially in the [Sar Dubnotal](#) mode, so Spanish pulps published *Kram. El Hipnotizador* #1-8 (1930-1931) and *Khun Zivan El Terrible* #1-16 (1932-1933).

One trend that saw particularly heavy use was the crossover. The crossover was a common device in European pulp sci-fi during the pulp era, both externally (using other authors' characters) and internally (through self-created universes). Sherlock Holmes and detectives Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton appeared in numerous European pulps, while authors like the Danish pulp master Niels Meyn wove together numerous crossovers between the various pulps they wrote. (Meyn is particularly notable for this; of his nine major pulp series, eight crossed over with the others). Typical among the examples of this in Spanish pulp science fiction is Arizona Jim, a sheriff who appeared in over 250 issues of three pulps between 1929 and 1942. Arizona Jim teams up with Sherlock Holmes, duels with Fu Manchu, and captures Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*. (Arizona Jim also becomes an undead mentor to his Chinese sidekick in later issues, though that was an original concept rather than one copied from somewhere else).

And some of the imitations were of specific characters. Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon were popular choices (Jamie Tomas' "El Universo en Guerra" (1935-1937), Edmundo Marculeta's *Barton* #1-5 (1941-1942), Victor Aguado's *Doctor Brande* #1-3 (1943), R. del Villar's *Ray de Astur* #1-7 (1943), F. Hidalgo's *Escarlata Kondor* (1944), the anonymously-written *Joe Dal* #1-3 (1945), and Juan Martinez Osete's *Red Dixon* #1-6 (1945)). Jose Canellas Casals' *Mack Wan* #1-20 (1933-1934) is about a costumed vigilante based on Alexandre Dumas' Edmond Dantes; Mack Wan's sidekick, Jim, is a boy whose face was mutilated by a gang of smugglers who sell deformed children to circuses—a naked life of Victor Hugo's *L'Homme Qui Rit*. The main character in *Javier Montana* #1-20 (1940-1941) has a variety of adventures modeled on those of [Brick Bradford](#). Manuel Vallve Lopez's Hercules (*Hercules* #1-6, 1942-1943) is a Doc Savage-like Basque hero active in Bilbao. F. Hidalgo's Tong-Khan (*La Secta de Tong-Khan* #1-2, 1943) is the Spanish Fu Manchu. Guillermo Sanchez Boix's El Murcielago (*El Murcielago* #1-6, 1943) is the Spanish Batman. Enrique Pertegas' Ultus (*Ultus, Rey de la Selva* #1-14, 1943) is the Spanish Tarzan. Guillermo Lopez Hipkiss's Yuma (*Yuma* #1-14, 1943-1946) is the Spanish Shadow. And Emilio Freixas's Capitan Misterio ("El Capitan Misterio," 1944-1949) is the Spanish Phantom.

One unique aspect of Spanish pulp science fiction during this era is its use of Spain itself. The countries with the largest pulp industries—the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and France—all used their major cities as settings for stories. But for the most part the pulp writers of those countries used either a generic urban setting or the country's largest cities—New York, London, Berlin, Paris—as the setting for stories. Conversely, Spanish pulp writers were as likely to set stories in Barcelona, Bilbao, and Seville as they were in Madrid.

Another interesting aspect of Spanish pulp science fiction involves an absence. Compared to the pulp science fiction of America and Europe, the pulp sci-fi of Spain is politics-free. This is to be expected during the Franco years, when press censorship was an onerous reality, but even before the Spanish Civil War there was little pulp science fiction that addressed Spain's domestic instability and the rise of right- and left-wing movements. Likewise, post-Civil War pulp science fiction did not refer to the Civil War in any way—neither to criticize its ending (which would have been shocking, given the Francoist press censorship) nor to celebrate it. The only mention of the Civil War is in Guillermo Lopez Hipkiss' *Yuma*, which makes a point of stating that it is set in a Spain in which the Civil War never happened. Nor were there contemporary references to World War Two in any of the Spanish science fiction pulps.

A third interesting aspect is the Spanish view of the future, as expressed through pulp science fiction. Utopias such as the one in Barranquero's *Jerusalen y Babilonia* (see above) are rare. Much more common are dystopias. Three typical ones are in Agustin Piraces' novel *Rinker* (1933), Riera Rojas' comic strip "La Ciudad Aerea" (1935-1936), and A. Olle Bertran's pulp *El Espectro* #1-4 (1944-1945). In *Rinker* the titular tyrant dominates the Earth in the year 2000. In "La Ciudad Aerea" the world is dominated by the airplane monopoly, and when a Spanish aviator and inventor creates a new form of propulsion and makes a flying platform using it the monopoly takes action against him. And in *El Espec-*



tro all the countries of Central Europe have banded together into the tyrannical Confederation of States of the Danube, with Hungary as the last holdout.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Jess Nevins* has written extensively on international popular culture and pulps before World War Two, including **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PULP HEROES**. He is a college librarian in Texas.



# Cristian Tamas

interviews

## PROFESSOR ARIELLE SAIBER

*“I think what would mostly help to increase the visibility of lesser known SFs — at least in the US — is to find a scholar or scholars who would be interested in translating works into English and publishing them in a critically edited anthology (like Wesleyan has). The main reason Italian SF is internationally unknown is that virtually nothing has been translated into English”.*

**An interview with Prof. Arielle Saiber, Bowdoin College (Brunswick, Maine, U.S.A.) - Cristian Tamas**

*Arielle Saiber is Associate Professor of Italian, Bowdoin College (Ph.D., Italian Literature, Yale, 1999). She has published articles on medieval and early modern Italian literature; early modern mathematics, print history, and advice manuals; literature and science studies; genre theory and experimental electronic music; and Dante in contemporary culture. Her book [Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language](#) was published in 2005 (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate Press), and her co-edited anthology [Images of Quattrocento Florence: Writings on Literature, History and Art](#) appeared in 2000 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). She has also co-edited special issues of *Configurations* (“Mathematics and the Imagination”) – Bowdoin College : Faculty*

**CT: Dear Prof. Saiber, thank you very much for agreeing to this interview !**

**AS: My pleasure! I am happy to know there are others interested in Italian SF !**

**CT: The areas of interest and research you list include things like “medieval and renaissance literature and philosophy,” “intersections between mathematics and literature,” “the literary fantastic,” “the imagination,” “theories of “space,” “technology,” and “science fiction.” You’re a Ph.D. from Yale University and an Associate Professor of Italian Literature at Bowdoin College. You’ve earned prestigious fellowships, grants, and awards. You have very impressive professional credentials and you’re considered an exceptional scholar with a multitude of publications, lectures, and conference papers. But science fiction? Isn’t that a little mundane for a Professor like you? *Some academic establishments would be absolutely horrified...science fiction !?!***

**AS: It has always amazed me how many people—scholars, publishers, and general public alike—excoriate (or ignore) SF. How can they not see the complex world views that SF writers explore, and the important thought experiments that many authors perform, often with their express purpose being to educate, critique, and warn us, but also to give us the opportunity to contemplate how to alter and improve ourselves as a species?**

With recent SF blockbuster films and t.v. series, it seems to me that there is a shift in many cultures’ views of SF, acknowledging its fascinating postulates and sensing the urgency of many of the issues being addressed in SF (massive environmental change, waning natural resources, economic disparity, religious/cultural/race/gender intolerance, technology’s triumphs and horrors, globalization, etc.). As a Philosophy major in college, I recall that examples from SF literature were often invoked in class and some texts were even assigned. Today, more literature scholars are also dedicating themselves to the research and teaching of SF. As with any genre or body of literature (or film, or any artistic medium), of course there are innumerable examples of mediocre (or worse) works; works lacking vision,



originality, power, and good writing. But as those of us who have read widely in SF know, there are many brilliant authors and works that illuminate our minds and stun us with their masterful narrative and turns of phrase. When I encounter these works I am, literally, over the moon, as they offer a banquet for the intellect, the imagination, and one's literary exegeses.

**CT: Are you as science fiction fan, Prof. Saiber?**

AS: Yes. Big time.

**CT: Who are your favourite SF writers ? Why ?**

AS: Among the classics: PKD, Bradbury, Le Guin, Ballard, Delany, Silverberg, Sheckley, Clarke, Ellison, Lem, Butler, Gibson, Lindsay (of *Voyage to Arcturus*), and... many more. As to why—there are too many, and too varied, reasons why to explain in brief here!

Of the earlier group of Italian SF writers: Lino Aldani, Anna Rinonapoli, Sandro Sandrelli, Roberta Rambelli, Vittorio Catani, Luigi Rapuzzi, Renato Pestrinero, Piero Prospero, Gilda Musa, Teodoro Giuttari, and Cesare Falessi.

Of Italian writers who wrote narrative that engaged science, even if not locatable necessarily within “genre SF”: F.T. Marinetti, Alberto Savinio (Alberto De Chirico), Dino Buzzati, Primo Levi, Tommaso Landolfi, and Italo Calvino.

Of contemporary Italian SF writers, there are many I find fascinating and who are worthy of note, many who could be considered writing in “cross-over” genres, especially that of fantasy and noir. Valerio Evangelisti and Giovanni De Matteo are two excellent examples.

**CT: In September 2011 you gave a lecture entitled “Italian Science Fiction” at the Society for Literature, Science and the Arts, in Ontario, Canada. Everybody knows that science fiction means American science fiction! Why in Heavens name Italian science fiction?**

AS: Absolutely! The panel was on “World SF,” which is currently a popular area of study in academic circles.

**CT: You wrote in your study, “[Flying Saucers Would Never Land in Lucca: The Fiction of Italian Science Fiction](#)”, *California Italian Studies* 2 (2011): 1-47. Special Issue: *Italian Future*: “Worse, perhaps, than calling Italian science fiction ‘derivative’— as has often been recited by science fiction readers and critics—is thinking it does not, or could not, exist. Consult a science fiction (hereafter, ‘SF’) anthology in English, the ‘it’ language of SF, from any period and you will be hard-pressed to find a single author from Italy (see Appendix I)... A study dedicated to Italian SF in English, or an anthology of Italian SF, however, has yet to see any light.” **How do you explain this situation?****

AS: My article, as well as excellent studies done by Italian scholars and critics, have proposed numerous reasons as to why Italian SF has not become a presence in the SF landscape, either at home or internationally. It would be difficult to summarize the many obstacles and prejudices Italian SF authors faced from the official “birth” of genre SF in Italy in 1952. I’ll just say that forces working against SF in Italy operate on many levels and are both external pressures and beliefs, and more subtle internal ones held by publishers and authors themselves.

**CT: You also wrote: “Ask a non-Italian to name an Italian SF author, and you will likely get a blank stare. Ask a non-Italian SF fan to name an Italian SF author and they will laugh, pause, and realize sheepishly they do not know.” As a far as you can tell, is it the case that Italian science fiction is really so unknown in US? Why is that?**

AS: Yes, alas, it is unknown. Some Americans think of Italo Calvino as a SF writer, but he never thought of himself as one, and whether his work—marvelous and science-rich it is—should be included in the genre is debatable. Occasionally, someone will think of the Futurists, but few have ever read Marinetti’s literary writing, some of which could, I believe, be considered proto-SF.



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The main reason Italian SF is unknown is that virtually nothing has been translated into English. The bibliography in my “Flying Saucers” article presents a very short list of Italian SF works—all that I could find (there may be a few I missed, but I would venture to say, very few). As to why it hasn’t been translated—this is, of course, primarily a consequence of the problems SF has had around being published and distributed in Italy itself.

We all know the reasons why Anglophone SF has been and continues to be the main language of SF, although wonderful societies such as [SFRA](#) (Science Fiction Research Association); blogs such as Lavie Tidhar’s [World SF Blog](#); academic publishers such as Wesleyan University Press who are releasing [anthologies of and studies on World SF](#); and other media (film, t.v.) are contributing a great deal to re-mapping the SF landscape.

One other reason I think Italian SF hasn’t been translated into English, is that there are not many Anglophone speakers/scholars of Italian, especially not ones who also happen to be interested in SF, or have the time and support to do the long hours of work tracking down Italian SF texts and authors. When I tell people who love Italy and things Italian that I am working on Italian SF they often laugh, saying that “Italian SF” must be an oxymoron; they have never heard those two things uttered within the same breath, nor imagined they could be! This widely-held stereotype is at the core of the vicious cycle that has held Italian SF back, both inside Italy and around the world.

**CT: In your opinion what is specific to Italian science fiction? Do you think that conceptual differences exist between the science fiction of the European romance countries, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and Romania ?**

AS: Excellent question. As I have not read a great deal of SF from Spain, Portugal, and Romania (although I have read some from France), I would be remiss in proposing an answer to this question.

I think it would be wonderful to hold a conference with European SF authors and critics to explore what each nation believes to be unique to their national SF. In one sense, though, of all genre literatures SF has the potential to be the most universal, especially when addressing issues that are results of global and/or species-based crises, or are aimed at impacting global, galactic, and/or extragalactic concerns. Yet each culture has its own social, political, religious, economic, and aesthetic history and present concerns, and SF narratives of course reflect these time-and-place-specific institutions and beliefs.

I do think there has been (though less now) something different in the SF written in countries, like Italy, that are predominantly Catholic versus those that are Protestant, or they were Communist, or of other faiths/political positions. In “Flying Saucers...” I talk some about the ways in which the Catholic religion—with its saints, miracles, and its views of the soul and the afterlife (among other elements)—fills Italian daily life, and even if someone is not a practicing Catholic, it provides a great deal of suggestively supernatural material to satisfy, in some ways, a person’s imagination.

Another particularity of Italian SF—early SF especially—I have noticed is that when there are aliens, they are often cast as good and helpful, much more so than in American SF written during the same time. There is also a notable number of women SF writers in Italy, and this has been the case since SF’s official beginning in the 1950s.



**CT: You're currently working in collaboration with Giuseppe Lippi, editing "Piazza Galattica: An Anthology of Italian Science Fiction from the 1860s-1960s." First, congratulations! Can you tell us something about your intentions in publishing a book like this?**

AS: This will be the first-ever anthology of Italian SF in English.

Wesleyan University Press has a series called [Early Classics of Science Fiction](#) and they have released two wonderful volumes of non-Anglophone SF in the last few years: [Cosmos Latinos](#) and [The Black Mirror](#). Our *Piazza Galattica* will follow their model of including around 30 short stories and excerpts, introductions to each author, a general Introduction, and a bibliography, but will diverge from these anthologies by shortening the period: from proto-SF beginning in the mid-nineteenth century through the 1960s.

Giuseppe and I feel that there is so much excellent work in these early years that we need a volume that shows the range and scope of Italian writers in this period. We also feel the writing from the 1970s onward deserves an equal amount of attention, and we hope to publish a second volume in the future with a selection of pieces from later authors. Wesleyan Press is, however, considering expanding the page count of *Piazza Galattica* so that we could include later authors. They are also considering having a novel or two of Italian SF published simultaneously or before our volume.

**CT: You delivered a conference paper entitled "The Space of the Fantastic in Italian Literature" (Space and Literature, Northeastern Modern Language Association, Cambridge, MA, US) and in your teaching you expressly include the fantastic in Italian literature, for instance in "Hallucinatory Landscapes: The Fantastic in Italian Film and Literature." Is the fantastic a prominent feature of Italian literature ?**

AS: How perceptive of you to mention this! Yes, the "fantastic"—which is not "fantasy literature" (i.e. Tolkein, etc.), but narrative in which phenomena of uncertain origin intervene and questions of reality are left unanswered—is a large undercurrent in Italian literature—often erudite literature, from the middle ages through the present. I would argue that the "fantastic" is found throughout Italy's literary production, but some scholars define the "fantastic" as isolated to a genre of short stories that begin appearing during the time of the Industrial Revolution. I could go on and on about the literature of "the fantastic," but I will spare you!

**CT: Are you teaching Italian science fiction courses, too at Bowdoin College? Or would you?**

AS: I am not teaching a whole course dedicated to Italian SF at the moment, but hope to in the future when *Piazza Galattica* is published. I would prefer to teach it in English, as the student body could then include SF readers from all disciplines.

**CT: Please be so kind as to explain to the readers what SFRA is and why you decided to join this organization.**

AS: SFRA is the [Science Fiction Research Association](#).

**CT: Have you ever read a Romanian SF or fantasy story? And what do you recommend to help increase the international visibility of lesser known science fiction?**

AS: I have just begun to read Romanian SF thanks to you, and I look forward to reading more. I think what would most help to increase the visibility of Romanian SF or lesser known SFs—at least in the US—is to find a scholar or scholars who would be interested in translating works into English and publishing them in a critically edited anthology (like Wesleyan has); having Romanian SF writers and critics going to World SF conferences and publishing essays and reviews for newly released books (in translation) on sites like Tidhar's World SF Blog; and trying to get as many stories as possible published in internationally distributed, widely read SF publications. I know it is hard to get published in these places, but the SF world has become World SF, and I do believe there is every chance for great SF from everywhere to obtain recognition.



**CT: Could you address a few words to European SF fans and readers ?**

AS: I look forward to reading more SF from Europe and reading/hearing what issues are most central to European SF writing. I do hope a sort of workshop could be organized one day in which national particularities and visions could be discussed, so we could celebrate how global we have all become (and maybe have always been) on the one hand, and how differently we imagine ourselves and the world around us on the other.

**CT: Thank you very much again for your time, support, and kindness.**

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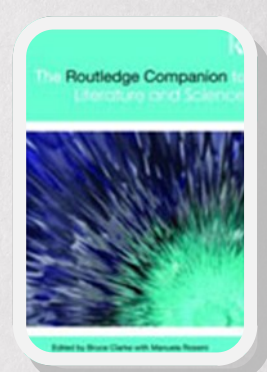
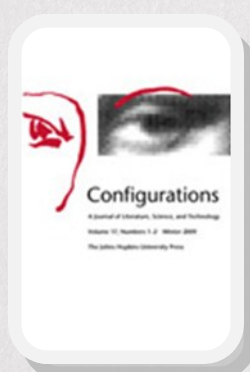
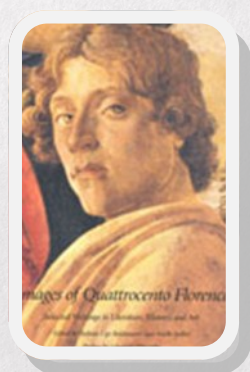
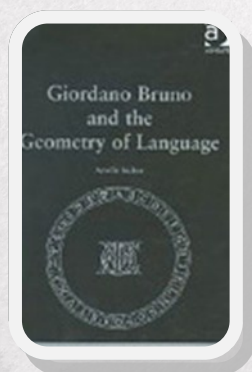
## ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

### Prof. Arielle Saiber's Research Interests:

- Medieval and renaissance literature and philosophy
- Intersections between mathematics and literature
- The literary fantastic
- The imagination
- Theories of "space"
- Technology
- Science fiction

### Prof. Arielle Saiber's Teaching Areas:

- Dante
- Medieval and early modern Italian literature,
- The literary fantastic,
- Science and literature







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"Tri-gradation: The Three *Giri* of *Paradiso XXXIII*."

with Deanna Shemek and Mary Ann Smart, ed. *Sound*. A special issue of *California Italian Studies*.

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## ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER

**Cristian Tamaş** is a Romanian essayist, translator, and SF fan who has been active in speculative fiction since the 1980s. He is a founding member of the [Romanian Science Fiction&Fantasy Society](#) (SRSFF = Societatea Română de Science Fiction& Fantasy), and coordinates ProspectArt, the SRSFF's SF club relaunched in April 2009 in Bucharest (Romania) and the annual Ion Hobana Colloquium. He is a member of the Ion Hobana and a SRSFF's Jury Awards. He is also editor of "Bella Proxima," a trilingual Croatian SF anthology (English-Croatian-Romanian), together with Antuza Genescu and Aleksandar Žiljak (Eagle Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012). He had interviewed **David Brin**, **Juliet Marillier**, Prof. **Rachel Haywood Ferreira** (Division Head of the International Fantastic division of the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, Iowa State University, USA ; research focus : Latin American science fiction), Prof. **Arielle Saiber** (Bowdoin College, USA; research focus : italian science fiction), **Mariano Martín Rodríguez** (SF scholar, Spain), **Alexandre Babeanu** (Prix Solaris awarded Canadian SF author), **Ugo Bellagamba** (French SF author awarded with Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire & Prix Rosny ), and **Judit Lörcinzy**, a Hungarian SF author and artist.



## JANUARY REVIEWS FOR ISF MAGAZINE

## SEAN WRIGHT

Cory Doctorow quotes Timothy O'Reilly as saying that obscurity is the greatest threat to authors in the digital age. Your audience needs to find you among the flood of published works. For authors of international speculative fiction, I would add that there is a raft of additional barriers to contend with: some works need translation to reach the English speaking market, some work has trouble getting to that market even in a digital age—ask those authors whose countries Amazon does not service.

So my aim with this column is to find international works worthy of being held above the growing surge of published fiction, to focus your attention on that fiction which finds it difficult to break into the mainly western, mainly English-speaking, speculative fiction market.

In addition, I want to share with you the joy of finding new writers who bring something fresh to the genre, whether that freshness stems from a different cultural perspective or just from a different reading experience of texts, canonical or otherwise.

When I interviewed Singaporean author Joelyn Alexandria (featured in *Ayam Curtain*) I asked her what she thought was the most prevalent misconception that western readers held of Singaporean writers. Her answer was that many did not seem to understand that Singaporean writers write in English.

For me—whose bilingual ability extends only to ordering coffee in German—entry into the pleasure of reading Singaporean speculative fiction cannot get much easier than that.

So I would like to share with you one the recent products of the small but vibrant speculative fiction community of Singapore, [Ayam Curtain](#).

*Ayam Curtain* is an elegant book, in conception, construction, and content, a delight to read and perceive. It is one of those joyous books that are a work of art not just because of the words on its pages but also in how those pages are presented.

I first became aware of the collection after stumbling across one of the editors, Joyce Chng, on Twitter. She is worth checking out individually—as are all the writers in the collection—from the Alvin Pang to the Clara Yeos.

*Ayam Curtain* is split into two distinct parts. The first, *Speaking Bird Language* or kong jiao wei (translated as a cock and bull story, a flight of fancy), is a collection of micro fiction that gives the reader short fluttering glimpses of an alternate Singapore.

The pieces vary widely in construction and tone from JY Yang's "Interview," which covers class, control, and language as an inhibitor of social mobility, to "They Called Me the Hyacinth Girl" by Victor Ocampo, a haunting tale of a crow's flight around the city: "Dejected, rejected it returns to the parliament of trees, the ninth circle of hell where Indian Troops sing to the dead of Changi: Manasu marugudhey, manasu marugudhey." Being a collection, *Ayam Curtain* doesn't carry the emotional punching power of a novel, but there are pieces that peck at my emotions, stories that flit in and out of my perception, evoking memories and images.

The sum, then, is greater than its parts, with each of the small pieces forming a cacophony of bird calls that seems to have a distinct sound about it. Nostalgia perches easily side by side with perceptions of the future.



The second part of the book, *The Ayam Curtain*, features longer works of up to 1000 words each. The effect is much the same, diverse tone and style but with an overall synthesis that gives a tangible sense of speculative Singapore.

“Woodwind” by Clara Yeo underlines Singapore’s deforestation as the protagonist, a young child, imagines that she can hear the life story of a Rosewood table as she lies listening to it while her parents talk.

JY Yang posits the real reason for the frustrating SMRT train breakdowns in “The War going on Beneath Us,” a hidden world of warring armies doing battle on Singapore’s rail lines.

The intention of the collection was to uncover the diversity of writers’ voices in Singapore and to explore local issues, all under the larger wing of speculative fiction. The editors have achieved this vision. I step away from the book with a number of new writers that I want to follow up and a tangible sense of the issues that are foremost in the minds of the speculative fiction community of Singapore.



Now, steampunk has been criticised for its rose-tinted view of the Victorian age, a focus on brass goggles, corsets, and gears, with little examination of the poor, the colonised, and the various underclasses on which the foundation of Empire rests. To be fair, that has changed and recent years have seen a number of works that interrogate the genre a little more vigorously.

*The Steampowered Globe* is the third book produced by the Happy Smiley Writers Group, a cadre of Singaporean writers, who banded together in late 2008 in an attempt to raise the profile of Asian genre fiction and to battle against the trend of what they termed “misery literature”.

It features seven short stories that freely interpret the Steampunk theme. With the emphasis on fun, as per the group’s *raison d’être*, *The Steampowered Globe* veers away from what you might expect from writers who live in post-colonial Singapore. There are no overt criticisms of colonisation or colonisers. No, what we are treated to is refreshing Steampunk stories from a different perspective, stories that ask a different “what if?”

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Leow Hui Min Annabeth’s “Ascension,” which asks: what if Ada Lovelace fled the British Empire and established herself as an engineer in service to the Dowager Empress? What if the Chinese had liberated South East Asia from colonising Europeans?

“Ascension” is one of my favourite pieces. It proposes the scenario outlined above, riffs off established Steampunk icons, and presents a dark side to the use of Steampunk technology.

Claire Cheong’s “No They Dream of Mechanical Hearts” tips its hat to P.K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* with a tale of an alchemist infusing her mechanised labori with Aether to give it a soul. She then sets this drama against the backdrop of an anti-Labori purge.

“Morrow’s Knight” by Vicki Chua deals again with mechanised life, but with a nod to Mary Shelley. Her tale is set in England amidst the struggle between naturalists, the religious, and the new field of automaton design.

Yuen Xiang Hao’s “Colours” feels a little more like military fiction, and is the least Steampunk for me. Still, it’s a good tale of courage, sacrifice and the razor-thin line between glorious victory and ignominious defeat.

The tone is lifted by Mint Kang’s “How the Morning Glory Grows,” which is comedic in tone and reminds me somewhat of that strain of Hong Kong comedy action films that feature incompetent and overbearing English superiors and long suffering members of the constabulary.



“Help! Same Angler Fish’s Been Gawking for Eight Minutes!” by Ng Kum Hoon takes Steampunk into Vernean territory. A job applicant descends to the bottom of the ocean to meet his employer at a power-generation facility that uses deep sea pressure to produce ultra-pressurised steam. What do you do when disaster strikes twenty thousand leagues under the sea?

The collection ends with June Yang’s “Captain Bells and the Sovereign State of Discordia,” a tale of intrigue and assassination, air ships and invention. It features a lesbian couple as lead and support character and is a fast paced adventure that hints at a larger, tantalising setting.

It is difficult to come up with fresh Steampunk tales, but I think the Happy Smiley Writers have done it and it is interesting to note that “Ascension” and “Captain Bell’s Sovereign State of Discordia” have been included in Ann VanderMeer’s third steampunk collection, *Steampunk III: Steampunk Revolution*.



I feel as if I have only scratched the surface in reading *Ayam Curtain* and *The Steampowered Globe*, caught a glimpse of talent previously hidden in, and just emerging from, Singapore.

I suspect the experience will be similar when my journey takes me on to other authors and communities. The difficulty in finding good international speculative fiction will not be that it does not exist, but that there are barriers to its discovery. I invite you along to share this journey, hoping to entertain and enlighten.

Until next issue, good bye and good reading.

Sean Wright

[Ayam Curtain](#), June Yang & Joyce Chng Eds., (Math Paper Press, 978-981-07-4008-5, USD \$18.00, 157pp, pb) November 2012.

[The Steampowered Globe](#), Rosemary Lim & Maisarah Bte Abu Samah, (Two Trees Pte. Ltd 978-981-07-0549-7, USD \$15.00, 144pp, pb) January 2012.

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER



*Sean Wright is a Ditmar Award-nominated podcaster and fan writer. He maintains a book review and news blog focussing on Australian speculative fiction called [Adventures of a Bookonaut](#), files audio interviews for the podcast [Galactic Chat](#) and collates the [Austral-Asian Speculative Fiction Daily](#).*

*Sean grew up in the arid interior of Australia, consequently his only source of science fiction and fantasy was books and the national broadcaster’s reruns of Dr Who. He swears that it has not handicapped him in any way.*

*When not reviewing, interviewing, or procrastinating on Twitter, he works at writing publishable speculative fiction.*

*He has a bachelor’s degree in education and currently supports his adventures in science fiction and fantasy by teaching high school. You can find him on Twitter as [@seandblogonaut](#).*



## REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORIES

# JORGE CANDEIAS

“Las Pelotas que Vinieron del Espacio”, which could be translated (if you can get past juvenile sexual innuendos) as “The Balls that Came From Space”, by the Spanish author Ángel Torres Quesada, is a comedic, or satirical, science fiction story with deeply political content.

Based on the old clichés of first contact and alien invasion—and totally aware that it's based on clichés—this story is an allegory about the abusive behaviour of corporations that attempt to maximize profits at the expense of their customers by entrapping and cornering them in places they are unable to get themselves out of. The subject is timeless, for this semi- criminal (or fully-criminal) behaviour never changes. However, and perhaps *because* it's timeless, it has been treated so many times, using so many different approaches, that it has become a cliché in itself.

Despite that, Quesada's story does possess some originality in the shape, so to speak, of the trap: extremely cheap balls that the aliens bring with them, which provide a limitless amount of energy for a year. The problem lies in what happens to them once that year comes to an end.

I do like the message. More: I think it could hardly be more relevant, particularly in these times and especially in Southern Europe. So, I did find the story interesting, but I can't really say that I liked it. The writing didn't fully convince me and, even though I'm not bothered by the use of clichés, especially when writers are aware that's what they're working with, I did find them to be just too many here, and used with insufficient subtlety.

Interested readers, able to read Spanish, can [find this story online](#).



“Jardim no Inverno” (which could be translated as “Garden in Winter”) is a short fantastic story by José Saramago, published in 1969 as a chronicle. In it, the narrator enters a garden he's never been to before and, in the rain, meets a strange man who doesn't react when he gets closer. But then the man smiles and starts to grow, becoming a statue.

The biggest point of interest in this short short, as far as I'm concerned, is to find an author not yet showing his characteristic “voice,” writing without most of the peculiarities of his later works, but already testing some the themes and techniques he went on to use with great success. For example, the lonely man facing a magical—or at least inexplicable—eruption in the urban landscape shows up, in various forms, in several of his novels, both pre-Nobel and post-Nobel.



“Llanto por un Astronauta” (which could be translated as “Tears for an Astronaut”) is a melancholic, soft SF short story by one of the most revered Spanish authors: Domingo Santos. Set in a bar, during the centennial celebrations of the Space Age, it shows us a former astronaut, disillusioned with his life and with what happened to the space program—something that once was a heroic movement toward the stars having become a commonplace activity driven by economic and industrial interests. This is a story that is quite typical of the authors of a certain generation—those that watched, full of wonder and hope, mankind's first steps away from our planet, and slowly became disillusioned with the path space programs took, distant from the romantic dreams of those first promises.



I confess I read this story with some irritation: most of the thoughts it's based upon could hardly be further away from my own ideas on the subject. But I do acknowledge its qualities. Domingo Santos is an experienced storyteller (he should be, having published some 40 books since the 1960s, including novels and short story collections) and, judging by this example, he is also good at it. His writing style is clean and effective, and this story does have emotional power.

If you understand Spanish, you may [read it online](http://axxon.com.ar/rev/162/c-162cuento6.htm) <<http://axxon.com.ar/rev/162/c-162cuento6.htm>>.

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER



*Jorge Candeias was born in the picturesque Portuguese region of Algarve a few too many years ago. Since then he's made an unsteady living, which is the same as saying he's learned a lot. Reading has always been a big part of his life, and at some point he began writing too. Not well enough, though, despite having scored a few minor successes and hoping for more in the future. He learned English by getting it wrong and persisting in getting it wrong until he finally got it right. Now he makes a living as a freelance translator and has worked with authors such as George R. R. Martin, Frank Herbert, and Robin Hobb, among others. He also loves writing about the stuff he reads and does so frequently. He hates writing his own bios, but sometimes he just has to. He's also me, damn him.*



# HAUKE VAGT

Hauke Vagt was born in Hamburg, Germany, but currently lives and works in Lisbon.

Lisbon is one of his great influences—he draws numerous panoramas of Portugal’s capital, which he sells on Internet alongside caricature works. This part of his art is characterized by a bright palette of colors and funny, cartoonish manner.

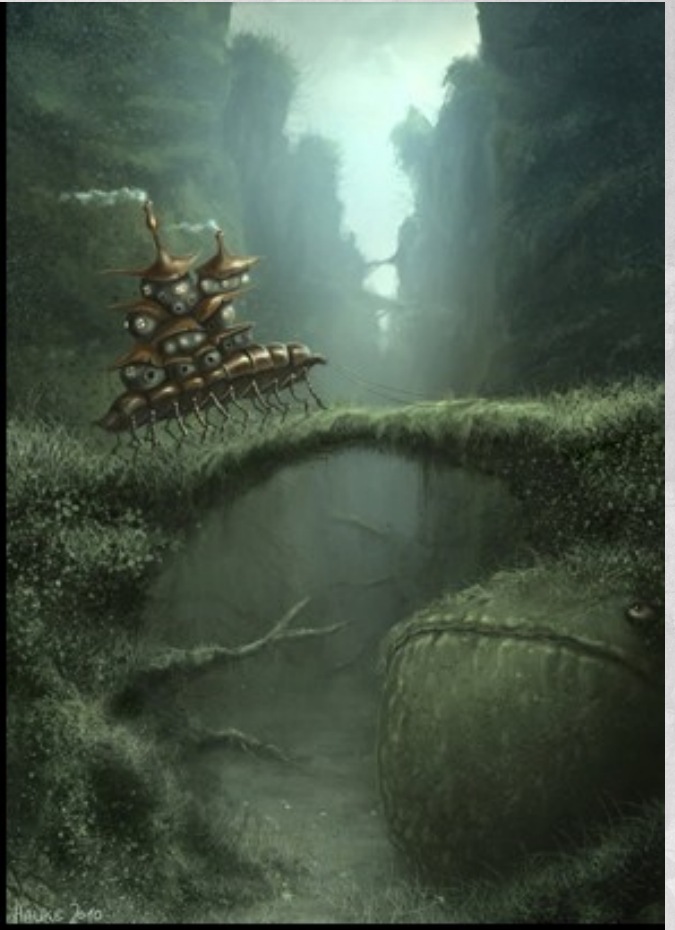
Hauke also draws with modern digital tools and you can find his breathtaking art on Deviant Art (amongst other places), where he explores his fascination with dark speculative fiction, especially horror and science fiction. His art is full of weird monsters and other creatures. His works in darker tone are not only very atmospheric, but also strange.

He created covers for “bizarro” novels such as “The Travelling Dildo Salesmen” by Kevin L. Donihe, “Tentacle Death Trip” by Jordan Krall, “A Town Called Suckhole” by David W. Barbee, “Metamorphosis Blues” by Bruce Taylor, “Gigantic Death Worm” by Vince Kramer, “Abortion Arcade” by Cameron Pierce, and the anthology about the most bizarro deity of all — Flying Spaghetti Monster.

In Portugal, he has illustrated the cover of the Fanzine Fénix (a number edited by ISF Editor in Chief Roberto Mendes).

If you are in Portugal, you can visit his work in his studio at: Rua do Salvador, 49, Lisboa. For those of you who are not in Portugal, please consider visiting his sites: <<http://vaghauk.deviantart.com/>>, <<http://hauke.vagtmedia.de/>> and <<http://www.zazzle.pt/haukevagt>>.













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# Submission Guidelines

## Fiction

**Length** – Less than 7.500 words;

**Language** – English;

**Nationality of the author** – We will consider fiction from authors of any nationality, although we will give preference to non-anglophone writers.

**Type of document** – We will appreciate .doc files (Arial 11, single space);

**Essential Elements** - Small biography and picture of the author and an abstract of the short story;

**Themes** – We are looking for International Speculative Fiction submissions. Pieces of fiction of various genres such as Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror and many other sub-genres. Please consider the following definition to get an Idea :

*“Speculative fiction is an umbrella term encompassing the more fantastical fiction genres, specifically science fiction, fantasy, horror, supernatural fiction, superhero fiction, utopian and dystopian fiction, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, and alternate history in literature as well as related static, motion, and virtual arts.”*

(in Wikipedia)

We are looking for original pieces of fiction. However we will also appreciate pieces of fiction published solely in their original languages;

**Submit to** – correiodofantastico@gmail.com with the subject “Submission of Fiction to ISF”.

## Articles

**Length** - Less than 7.500 words;

**Language** - English;

**Nationality of the author** - All nationalities.

**Type of document** - We will appreciate .doc files (Arial 11, single space);

**Essential Elements** - Small biography and picture of the author and an abstract of the article;

**Themes** - We are looking exclusively for articles about any kind of International Speculative Fiction.

We are looking for original articles. However we will also appreciate articles published solely in their original languages;

**Submit to** - correiodofantastico@gmail.com with the subject “Submission of Article to ISF”.



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We're excited to work with International Speculative Fiction to help them promote the work of non-Anglophone authors to a wider audience!

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